

There was a time when the raising of the question as to the importance of Christian scholarship might have seemed to be ridiculous; there was a time when a man who does so much talking as a minister or a Sunday School teacher does, . . . in the propagation of the faith to which he adheres, would have regarded it as a matter of course that he ought to know something about the subject of which he undertakes to talk.

But in recent years we have got far beyond all such elementary considerations as that; modern pedagogy has emancipated us, whether we are in the pulpit or in the professor's chair or in the pew, from anything so irksome as earnest labor in the acquisition of knowledge. It never seems to occur to many modern teachers that the primary business of the teacher is to study the subject that he is going to teach. Instead of studying the subject that he is going to teach, he studies "education"; a knowledge of the methodology of teaching takes the place of a knowledge of the particular branch of literature, history, or science to which a man has devoted his life.

This substitution of methodology for content in the preparation of the teacher is based upon a particular view of what education is. It is based upon the view that education consists primarily not in the imparting of information, but in a training of the faculties of the child; that the business of the teacher is not to teach, but to develop in the child a faculty which will enable the child to learn.

This child-centered notion of education seems to involve emancipation from a vast amount of drudgery. It used to be thought necessary to do some hard work at school. When a textbook was given to a class, it was expected that the contents of the textbook should be mastered. But now all that has been changed. Storing up facts in the mind was a long and painful process, and it is indeed comforting to know that we can now do without it. Away with all drudgery and all hard work! Self-expression has taken their place. A great pedagogic discovery has been made—the discovery that it is possible to think with a completely empty mind.

It cannot be said that the results of the discovery are impressive. This child-centered notion of education has resulted, particularly in America, where it has been most ruthlessly applied, in a boundless superficiality of which we Americans certainly have little reason to be proud; but it has probably not been confined to America by any means. I wonder when we shall have that revival of learning which we so much need, and which I verily believe might be, in the providence of God, as was the Renaissance of the fifteenth century, the precursor of a reformation in the church. When that revival of learning comes, we may be sure that it will sweep away the present absurd over-emphasis upon methodology in teaching at the expense of content. We shall never have a true revival of learning until teachers turn their attention away from the mere mental processes of the child, out into the marvelous richness and variety of the universe and of human life. Not teachers who have studied the methodology of teaching but teachers who are on fire with a love of the subjects that they are going to teach are the real torch-bearers of intellectual advance.