



Personal from...

Is Specialized Talent God-Given?

Last night I heard the Diva Montserrat Caballé at the Ambassador Auditorium in Pasadena. The Auditorium was jam-packed—even six rows of seats—three on each side—on stage. The orchestra pit, which is a huge elevator, was lowered so that heads of those seated on it were just above stage floor level. Nearly a hundred were seated in the orchestra pit.

What extraordinary talent the world-renowned Diva displayed before a rapt and delighted audience! Standing ovations demanded five encores before the audience would let her retire.

Such talent is a rarity. Caballé is one of two or three sopranos rated at the top in the world.

The director of the Performing Arts Series at the Ambassador Auditorium told me the Diva would like to meet me after the performance.

“Such exceptional talent!” I exclaimed on meeting her. “Yet, as I remember Elbert Hubbard saying some 68 years ago, ‘genius is 1 percent inspiration, and 99 percent perspiration.’”

She smiled. “Yes, that is true,” she agreed. “If one has talent, one must apply oneself and work very hard to develop that talent.”

I have come to know a few who have obtained world fame in the performing arts. Arthur Rubinstein, the famous pianist. Isaac Stern and Yehudi Menuhin, violinists, for example. Were they specially talented above other people? Undoubtedly, yet everyone began while quite young—and stuck to it with



Left: Warren Watson—PT Right: J. Heffeman, courtesy Angel Records

determination day after day, year after year. They didn't quit. They *worked at it*. They continued improving. They were not content with mediocrity. They became real "PROS"!

I knew a boy who had the *talent* of a child prodigy on the piano at age 6 or 7. But he tired of that, turned to blowing a trumpet, tired of that, reached maturity unable to do much of anything in any area.

Are the "great artists" specially endowed with talent above others? To some extent, yes.

But specially God-given?

Not necessarily, except by ordinary heredity. By natural heredity some are talented in one direction, some in others, while still others have at least not discovered any special aptitudes at all.

All human talent was created by God in the fact that He created man, and endowed man with capacity to reproduce. Some, by natural heredity, have certain aptitudes, some have others. Heredity does play a certain part in one's success or failure in this life. So does environment—by which I mean whatever external influences are exerted. Yet the biggest factors in determining success or failure in life are MOTIVATION,

DETERMINATION, DRIVE, PERSISTENCE.

I have outlined the Seven Laws of Success as (1) the right goal; (2) education and training for that goal; (3) good health; (4) drive, self-propulsion, energy; (5) resourcefulness—ability to *think* about what one is doing while one is doing it, thinking one's way through to solutions; (6) endurance—stick-to-itiveness—never giving up; and (7) last in order but first in importance, the guidance and help of God through Bible understanding, prayer, abiding faith, yieldedness.

Of course the number-one goal, above all others, is to achieve eternal life in the Kingdom of God. While most need an occupation to earn a living—at least the man of the family, yet the over-abiding goal must be to be born of God. And, regardless of subgoals, this supreme goal must take precedence and no other must impede or replace it. And this supreme goal, also, must be *worked at*, day in and day out, with persistence. One must GROW spiritually in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. One must continually *overcome*, after complete repentance and faith, and receiving God's Holy Spirit.

The Christian life requires the same continuous, diligent, no-letup effort that a great pianist, violinist or singer must exert.

There is the easy road that leads to failure, but the way to achievement, whether in a profession, or entrance into eternal life in the Kingdom of God, is the hard, difficult, never-give-up way of persistent, determined effort and self-prodding.

Most professing Christians think they had it all made when they "received Christ." They had it no more "made" than a great performing artist had it "made" into world fame on first deciding, as a child, to become proficient in his or her chosen profession.

But is it worth the effort? Apparently most professing Christians have never come to see how GREAT is such salvation and eternal life! Sure, it's a free gift. One can't buy it. One can't earn it. The eternal life is free—a free gift by God's grace. Yet the great God of LOVE won't give it to one in the pain, anguish, sorrow, discontent and unhappiness produced by SIN. Sin is the transgression of God's law of LOVE toward God and toward neighbor. To live above that transgression demands effort. Yes, a PRICE has to be paid.

God paid a price beyond description when He *gave* His only begotten Son. Jesus paid the SUPREME penalty of death in your stead to make possible that free gift. And YOU have to pay the price of repentance, faith, obedience, overcoming, growing spiritually in knowledge and love and obedience and faith and endurance!

Jesus said, "He that endures unto the end, the same shall be saved." Even though eternal life is a free gift, a price had to be paid by the Giver. You may be saved by grace, but your reward shall be according to your WORKS. In the parables of the talents and the pounds, the one who did nothing with what he had been GIVEN had taken away from him even that which had been GIVEN! That's why God's Word tells us to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. □