

## THE SCHOLARLY ELEMENT IN THE MINISTER'S LIFE.

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The subject that you have assigned me is "The Scholarly Element in the Minister's Life", and I am bound to say that of all the subjects on the list this is that which I should myself have chosen had you put the choice into my own hands. In looking at this title which you have supplied one can see that there is another topic which might be stated in almost the same words, by slightly changing their order. We might, that is to say, discuss the ministering element in the scholar's life, and for some audiences that might afford most profitable material for consideration. Scholarship should ever minister, and if it does not minister there is a strange and subtle but inexorable law that makes it cease to be even scholarship. That, however, is not what we are to discuss this evening, for our theme is not the ministering element in the scholar's life, but rather the scholarly element in the minister's life. For if the scholar sometimes forgets that he should minister, the minister also sometimes forgets that he should, so far as he can, be a scholar; and the people, too, who are interested in the work and preparation and calling of ministers sometimes forget it quite as seriously. Our subject, therefore, lies very near to the very foundation of that work which you and all the rest of us who are in like service are seeking to do to the education of those who are to be our ministers.

But it is not easy, after having undertaken this subject, to decide first how to approach it, for there are many possible ways of doing that. I have, however, after careful thought, decided to enter this theme by a Biblical pathway. There is in the Bible such finality, such a mellow convincingness, such a sweet peace and satisfaction, that I cannot resist the temptation

to lead up to our subject by that way rather than through the more rugged and perhaps more imposing pass of philosophic or of classical erudition.

Now it is worthy of remark, and even of the most serious and careful consideration, that the two great men in Bible history who more than all others (our Lord alone excepted) dominated by their commanding spiritual genius what we call the two dispensations, were men who had the most careful training in the best schools that were available in their time. Moses in the Old Testament and Paul in the New hold a place that is not quite approached by anyone else. If either of them had a peer in this respect it was Moses, but in this case the principle would still remain intact, for Isaiah also was a man of superb scholarship. With the case of Moses, however, we cannot go this evening, for we have chosen rather to discuss Paul, and our theme really becomes—the debt that Christianity owes through the Apostle Paul to higher learning. The implication here is that what the Lord has in this case written so conspicuously at the beginning of Christian history, must apply to the whole length of its life-bringing course. We ought, however, to state quite clearly at the very outset, what no sensible man will ever deny, that trained scholars are not the only instruments in the Lord's hands for working out his purposes of grace. It is part of his plan that workers of all kinds are used and are needed, and this law has many marvelous applications that only make us admire the more the riches of his wisdom. But while the servant of God who has little learning is, if he is humble, used for his own purposes and in his own way by the great Master, we should be very foolish indeed if we permitted this fact to blind us to the large and important place that the Lord has given to consecrated scholarship. There is, to be sure, no place in the mind of a sensible man for scholarly snobbery, even if it wears a Christian garb; but while it is true that an illiterate worker fully surrendered to the will of his Master will achieve for the Kingdom more than the most accomplished scholar who is not thus surrendered, it is also true that in the broad pages of Christian history we read most distinctly the lesson that God has given a large place—and in its kind an in-

dispensable place—to consecrated and humble Christian scholarship. This we must now seek to make clear from the life and power of the Apostle Paul.

Of all the merely human personalities of the New Testament there is not one that at all approaches the Apostle Paul for the variety and subtlety of his gifts, nor for the consequent influence that he has exerted on all subsequent Christian life and thought. Whether we have regard to the richness of his mind and experience, or the breadth of his horizon, or the variety of his interests, or the clearness of this vision, or the fertility and suggestiveness of his thinking, or the keenness of his discrimination, or the depth and fervor of his emotions, or the intensity and the massiveness of his nature, or his practical grasp of affairs, or his wisdom in counsel, or his deep and fervent devotional life, we stand back amazed that such a varied combination should ever have been found in one life. Paul has created once for all the classic phrases for much of our devotional life; he has discovered and asserted for all time the essence of the universal Gospel stripped of what was merely the dress of the time; he has lighted in the first century—that great hill-top of Christian history—a beacon-fire of zeal that burns forever as a rebuke to our coldness when the currents of our life run low; he has laid down for all succeeding centuries the principles and methods of mission work in the propagation of Christianity, and he has provided us with the needed terminology for scientific Christian theology, his contribution in which respect we are sometimes slow to remember. He is like the Matterhorn or some other majestic peak in the Alps, which we must view from all sides in order to gain an idea of the whole, each new view making us wonder that the same mountain should have still another side so different from the last. Professor Harnack points out that, because of this very complexity, this great apostle was never completely understood by the people of his own time, and that for one hundred and twenty years afterward only one man—Marcion—understood him, and he misunderstood him. Indeed, this majestic power and creative genius which he possessed have been of late so generously recognized in some quarters that those of us who try to be as conservative as we may sometimes feel called upon to argue against

a view that substantially makes Paul instead of Jesus the real founder of Christianity. We need not, however, on that account, allow to escape us the incidental proof that this view gives as to the overtowering greatness of Paul.

We propose, therefore, to look now for a few movements at the education of this great man, for that is the next essential step in the proper treatment of our subject.

The influences of Paul's early home must never be overlooked by one who would seek fully to understand the man, and those influences would probably appear more important if we only knew more than we do about them. In this sphere, however, we are left almost wholly to conjecture. We know that at Tarsus there was an important Greek university; we know that Tarsus enjoyed Roman freedom and was no mean city; we know that the ideas of Roman law there prevalent must have influenced the life and thought of the citizens; we know that the scenery around the city, both in front and behind, was peculiarly picturesque with combination in the landscape of river and plain and mountain; we know that in the port of Tarsus, which, as in the case of all ancient cities, was some miles away, there was a mingling of peoples from all parts, and that it was one of the great meeting-places of the East with the West; we know that all these things were there about the growing boy, but, although we may feel morally certain that we can see the influence of them all in Paul's epistles, we can offer no unanswerable proof if anyone chooses to challenge us for a logical demonstration. For, however clear we may be in our own minds that the man who was so open to impressions in his maturity must have been open as a boy to these subtle influences that were so prominent in Tarsus, we can never be quite sure just how far the strict rule of his father's Hebrew home shut him off from the ways of the Gentiles, nor how slowly or how quickly this boy opened out into the almost universal sympathy for which he was born. This is a point on which scholars differ and we must not dogmatize. We are, however, on much surer ground when we give a real place to the Hebrew synagogue and the Hebrew home in Tarsus to which the young Saul belonged. He was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, that is, a Hebrew

from a long line of strict Hebrew ancestors, and the influence of that synagogue and of that home never left Saul of Tarsus.

But the Hebrew father must soon have detected signs of great ability in his growing son, and the Hebrew mother, if she still lived, probably saw these signs earlier than her husband. Now the spell of that strange city perched on its high ridge in the sacred land had never died out of the heart of Saul's father, even in Gentile Tarsus, and so to Jerusalem the boy must go to secure the training that devout Jewish parents considered more important than anything else they could give their children. We shall probably not be very far astray in picturing to ourselves this boy of many hopes and of great promise, leaving at the age of somewhere between ten and thirteen for the Holy City, about which he had read in Scripture history and sung in Hebrew psalms, although we cannot stop now to state the reasons for assigning that age. Whether the first part of the journey was by sea or by land we cannot tell, but in either case the last stage would be practically the same and between Caesarea or some neighboring place, and Jerusalem, Saul would pass over that road which was afterwards to become so familiar to him as a man. He would catch sight of the hills about Jerusalem and enter the city to begin a new and eventful phase of his life's history. At that very time there were in Galilee other boys playing around the lake or perhaps taking their early lessons in the art of fishing, and there was at Nazareth a Boy, perhaps now a young man, learning the trade of a carpenter—the most wonderful Boy the world ever knew.

But Saul of Tarsus was thinking of but one thing, and that was the schooling he was to have at Jerusalem. I cannot think of this without emotion. Here is a boy growing up to get ready for he knows not what, and growing up in obedience to that unerring will of God that always knows how to train the right worker for the right work. We can never tell what is going to happen when a young man comes up to a school of higher learning from the home that has sheltered him up to this time. The autumn days that send our young people flocking from our farms and our towns to the seats of learning are days

that hold in their keeping great secrets that only the coming years will reveal. It is ours to stand by with reverence, and to watch the workings of God and to act, if we may, as servants of his will in this great task.

Saul's teacher at Jerusalem was Gamaliel, and it is very important for our present thesis to remember that Gamaliel was the greatest Jewish scholar of his day and one of the very greatest that the Jewish people have ever had. That the great leader and organizer of Christian life and thought should be trained by such a man is of itself a fact worthy of the most prolonged consideration, for there is in it food for almost endless thought. Gamaliel was noted for his candor and honesty of judgment; he proved his breadth of sympathy and his hospitality to thought from any quarter by his willingness to study and use Greek; and at the same time he was known to cherish the most ardent enthusiasm for the Jewish law. The breadth of sympathy possessed by Gamaliel has indeed been made an argument to prove that Saul of Tarsus cannot have been a pupil of his, because Saul, when he left school, was intensely Jewish almost to narrowness and bigotry. But this argument is hardly valid. Pupils seldom are an exact reproduction of their masters, and they may take perhaps years to work out the principles that their masters inculcate, even when they work them out at all. And then, besides being an erudite scholar with enthusiasm for learning, Gamaliel was an ardent educator with enthusiasm for teaching, as keen to see promise in his pupils as those Scottish school-masters whose greatest joy has been the discovery and training of "lads o' pairts". It was this rare combination in Gamaliel of the scholar and the teacher that made Paul's debt to higher learning so conspicuous.

Of the curriculum through which the youth from Tarsus passed, we may form a very fair general idea from the available literature of the time. For one thing, there would be exegesis and other phases of interpretation, that is, drawing out from a passage the truth that is in it—an art that is rarer than some imagine, and more difficult to acquire than we might suppose. For this course he would have linguistic work in Old Testament Hebrew as well as in Greek, for the ancient Hebrew would in

some sense be a foreign language to him. He would have training also in the study of words, turning them over and interrogating them to make them yield their meaning. Words are more sacred things as deposits of thought than we sometimes imagine. Besides that, he would be drilled in the disengaging of great ideas and conceptions from the language which as a vehicle carried them. Then, in addition to exegesis, there was in these Jewish schools training in the systematic statement of doctrine. This was a very prominent element in Jewish religious education. Indeed, the curriculum tended to become one-sided by reason of a too exclusive emphasis on this department, and the disputations in which the various schools took part against one another in the synagogues of the city were carried on chiefly in the interests of a systematic ordering of theological thought. But beside exegesis and systematic doctrine there was history—certainly the history of the people and, since Gamaliel was the master, no doubt also the history of the great Gentile nations. The proof for this part of the curriculum is not so clear as that for the others, but Paul's epistles give ample evidence of power to make magnificent use of history. There were also practical sides to Saul's training—training in composition, or the power to express ideas, training in meeting and in estimating men, and training in the way to approach the understanding of his own times. The practical grasp of Gamaliel, whose sagacity is shown in the *Acts*, made him a master here also. But besides these four special departments there were two other general directions in what Gamaliel led out his pupils. One was the power to see what is really important. The value of this gift is so great that one is sometimes tempted to say that the difference between an educated and an uneducated man is just this power to distinguish between which is important and which is not. This gift Paul possessed to a remarkable degree. He sometimes, in a surprising way, passed over things that others might be distressed over, and sometimes he saw a principle at stake where the matter involved seemed outwardly trivial, but his correct judgment of true values saved many a situation. The other general gift that he developed was the ability to use his own

judgment and to do his own independent thinking when occasion called for it. This, too, is one of the marks of a truly educated man. It was here, however, that Jewish education was perhaps weakest, for it tended to be merely the providing of a great funnel through which the stored-up grain of knowledge was poured into the minds of the receptive pupils. But the avoidance of this mistake was one of Gamaliel's chief distinctions as a teacher, and few parts of our education are more valuable than this. It is far more important to lead a pupil to think for himself than to cram his memory with multitudes of facts, the significance of which he has never realized. It is far more important to help a pupil to make up his own mind on a vital matter of doctrine than to teach him a long list of names that support this or that view. It is far more important to teach a pupil to see for himself the beauty of literature than to make him learn like a parrot the appreciations of even the most approved critics. I know a father who, in looking over the school reader of his little boy, came to page containing a few verses which began:

“Grandpapa’s hair is very white,  
And grandpapa walks but slow;  
He likes to sit in his easy-chair  
While the children come and go.  
‘Hush! Play quietly,’ says mama,  
‘Let nobody trouble dear grandpapa.’”

At the foot of the page, in a school-boy hand, was written in pencil the word “faveriot”. And the heart of the father was glad. It was not that there was any very great literary merit in the verses, nor that he had overlooked the incorrectness of the spelling, but here was a proof that the boy had begun to think for himself, and to form and to express his own judgments. That father did right to be glad, for that is the road where begins the real literary appreciation that will come later and that may in time appreciate the sublime mystery of Shakespeare, and the stately sublimity of Dante, and the sweet spring-like freshness of Homer and, best of all, the unap-



proachable majesty and grandeur of the Bible. It was this joy (and here we must speak with great reverence) that Jesus had when, at Caesarea Philippi, he saw proof that Peter had made his own observations, and under divine guidance had reached his own conviction that Jesus was the Messiah. When, therefore, Saul acquired this power, he had received one of the greatest gifts that his distinguished teacher could bestow, and one of which he gave a brilliant account when he became Paul the Apostle.

If there were time it would be profitable to go over all these six points in detail and prove how Gamaliel's training of Saul the student came out in the work of Paul the Apostle. But we cannot do that, and it is perhaps not very necessary that we should do that in any case, for your own minds will already have anticipated most of what might be said—about Paul's power to use exegesis in setting forth the real meaning of the Old Testament—about his ability to reconstruct a magnificent system of doctrine with Jesus Christ as the center—about his grasp of history and his brilliant generalizations in proving the place and the divine origin of the Gospel as indicated in the drift of both Hebrew history and of Gentile history—about his practical power to express ideas and to approach living men and to understand the real movements of his own times—about his ability to see the really important—and about his power to think for himself and to look at God's truth through his own eyes. If we have once grasped the real significance of this we shall have no difficulty in admitting Christianity's great debt to higher learning, through the apostle whose influence on the statement and on the propagation of the Gospel has, as we have already seen, been so very great. And if we accept these arguments, as we appear compelled to do, we shall be convinced that consecrated scholarship in Christian work is not a concession to the spirit of an age, but that it has rather been from the first one of God's most honored instruments for the bringing in of the Kingdom of his love.

We should perhaps take time to point out that the general lines in which Gamaliel directed the education of Saul of Tarsus, are the very lines that we are still following in the training

that we of today are seeking to give to our students for the ministry. For success here does not consist in discovering some absolutely new method of training, but rather in applying to each succeeding age the old principles. Our only original work lies in seeing the new modifications that these old principles need in our own times. We are still giving training in exegesis; we are still teaching systematic doctrine and the philosophic principles that it involves; we are still instructing our students in the history of God's dealings with men; we are still seeking to show how practically to apply and express knowledge and how to approach and influence men; we still seek to train our men to see what is really important, and we are still earnestly striving to lead our students to look at truth and at life through their own eyes.

You will perhaps permit me in closing to make a brief application of these principles which we trust have been established. There are probably three classes of people represented here this evening to whom this subject is interesting.

To students, whether those who are technically called by that name or those of us who are professors, it must be clear, if our argument has been sound, that our work is not an impertinence nor an indulgence of mere selfish tastes, but rather a most important part of God's purpose for us. To young men who see and feel the need of the great world, it may often seem like a waste of time to spend months and years in pursuing thoughts in books and in class-rooms when we might be out fishing for men. But, believe me, young men, there is no part of your life that is more distinctly in God's purpose for you than the days of your quiet, patient and persistent pursuit of truth, if you spend those days in prayerfulness and in the fear of the Lord.

To pastors, one who well knows how busy a pastor's life becomes, may yet venture to point out that the scholarly element that we have been arguing for is not superseded, but is only begun when we enter the pastorate. It is in the actual work of the minister that this scholarly element is meant to have its place and its full scope. We do not waste our time as pastors, but rather husband it when we set apart for each day

or at least for each week a fair portion of time that is sacred to study. For the function of study is not selfishly to rob for itself what should be devoted to the service of others, but rather to multiply the effectiveness and joy of our work by bringing it constantly into touch with that which is really great. What counts is not what we merely do, but what we do well.

There are also here this evening men of affairs and men and women who look from the outside at the minister's life and at the scholarly element in it. Our subject has something for these also. There is no money and there is no effort that is more wisely invested than the money and the effort that are put into the work of an institution like this. For fifty years it has been demonstrating what it can do, and, please God, it will for many times fifty years more continue to do its part in helping to preach effectively the Gospel of the glory of the Son of God. It was fortunate in having for its founders very great men, and now that these mighty and revered fathers have gone, it is still succeeding in drawing to itself others who are leading its work with undiminished vigor and are being crowned with the unabated blessing of our heavenly Father, whose work they are seeking to do and whose approval so conspicuously given is its own sufficient and satisfying reward.