

The Cult of Intellectualism

by Keith Keyser

The sermon argues that formal theological education is not necessary for Christian service, and that the Holy Spirit is the true professor of the Bible.

Scripture: Proverbs 9:10, Luke 10:39, John 16:12, Acts 4:13, Galatians 1:12

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Holy Spirit"

Description

Keith Keyser challenges the common notion that formal theological education is a prerequisite for Christian service, emphasizing that God has historically used both educated and uneducated individuals to fulfill His purposes. He points out that the early apostles, including Peter and John, were unlearned men who had been with Jesus, highlighting the importance of spending time with the Lord for preparation. Keyser stresses that the Holy Spirit is the ultimate teacher of the Bible, and believers should prioritize prayerful study of God's Word and systematic instruction in the local assembly over academic attainment.

Transcript

The following quote appeared in a recent discussion of dispensationalism by a well-known Bible teacher: "Many of these men [i.e. early proponents of dispensationalism] were self-taught in theology and were professionals in secular occupations. Darby and Scofield, for example, were attorneys, and Larkin was a mechanical draftsman ... Unfortunately some of these early framers of dispensationalism were not as precise or discriminating as they might have been had they had the benefit of a more complete theological education. (Emphasis added.)

It is unfortunate that a highly capable author, in an otherwise excellent book, makes such a statement! Sadly, the above sentences reflect a prevalent attitude in the education-crazed ranks of twentieth-century evangelicalism. It is commonly believed in many quarters that in order to serve God, one must first obtain "formal training" in theology and the Scriptures; this, of course, requires attendance at a Bible College or Seminary. While it is not my intent to defame such institutions (for they can prove helpful in their place), I do balk at the idea that formal theological study is a prerequisite for Christian service. This common notion finds no support in Scripture, and moreover, erodes the truths of the priesthood of all believers, the exercise of spiritual gifts, and the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit (John 16: 12-15) Instead, this idea finds its roots in the modern preoccupation with academic attainment.

An examination of the credentials of the early apostles shows us that God has not made formal education a mandatory requirement for His servants. Among the twelve we find several businessmen, including

fishermen and a tax-collector. As far as the Bible reveals, we do not know of any of the twelve who were formally instructed in theology. In fact, the defining characteristic of the early apostles is summed up by the impression that the Sanhedrin received: "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus." (Acts 4:13, emphasis added.)

Undoubtedly, someone will cite the example of Paul as a violation of this principle. Certainly, Saul of Tarsus was educated at the feet of the great rabbinic scholar Gamaliel. I would direct the reader, however, to Paul's summation of his post-conversion theological education: "For I neither received it [i.e. the Gospel] of man, neither was I taught [it], but by the revelation of Jesus Christ ... But when it pleased God ... to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus." (Gal. 1: 12,15-17.) Like his compatriots Peter and John, Paul's preparation for Christian service consisted of time spent with the Lord Jesus.

The belief that a formal course of study in theology is essential for a right understanding of the Bible contradicts Scripture. In John 16, the Lord Jesus unequivocally showed that the professor of the Bible is the Holy Spirit. (vs. 12-16) The divinely prescribed means of preparing Christians consists of prayerful study of God's Word. The local assembly has been selected as the place of instruction for the believer (see for example, Eph. 4:11-16.) Unfortunately, many local assemblies are not giving adequate place to systematic instruction of the young people in their ranks. Furthermore, many gifted brethren are not exercising their gift, nor training their younger brothers and sisters in the doctrines of the Bible. The local assembly needs to reoccupy its position as the place where believers are taught and edified.

Throughout the history of the Church God has used both educated and uneducated men and women to do His will. He has sometimes used highly intelligent Christians such as Martin Luther, George Whitfield, J.N, Darby and B.B. Warfield to accomplish His purposes. On other occasions the Lord of the Harvest sovereignly used unlettered men like Harry Moorehouse, D.L. Moody, and Billy Sunday. He delights to use "the foolish things of the world to confound the wise." (I Cor. 1:27) This is not to say that there are no prerequisites for Christian service. If we are to be used of God we must first emulate Mary and sit at the feet of the Lord Jesus. (Luke 10:39-42) Proverbs affirms that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom"-, consequently, the potential servant of Christ must spend a great deal of time alone with the All-wise Son of God. (Prov. 9:10) Our usefulness to God will be measured more in the time of our prayer and Bible study with the Lord Jesus, rather than our academic transcripts. Serious Bible reading with Godly teachers in the local assembly will bear more eternal dividends than mere occupation with academic minutiae.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/keith-keyser/the-cult-of-intellectualism/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net