

# Scholarship & Spirituality


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# Scholarship & Spirituality

- Let's begin by defining each term.
- Scholarship:
  - A manner of living that seeks to discover and understand the facts in some field of academic study.
- Spirituality:
  - A manner of living which seeks to conform oneself to the standards set by the Holy Spirit in Scripture.

# Some Tensions: Scholarship & Spirituality



# Some Tensions

- Neglect of spirituality
- Ignoring or isolating one or the other
- Misuse of consensus
- The danger of positivism

# Neglect of Spirituality

- We may become dominated by our field of study to the detriment of things needed for spirituality
  - An academic version of becoming a workaholic.
- We cannot devote all of our time to our studies/research.
  - We cannot do this & be faithful to our Lord.
  - This may mean we won't advance as far in our field as we might otherwise have done.
- Yet some spiritual people have gone to the top of their fields:
  - Joseph, Moses, Daniel

# Ignoring or Isolating

- We may try to solve complex questions of interaction between our academic field and Scripture by ignoring one or the other, or by isolating one from the other.
  - Perhaps we misunderstand the Bible here.
  - Perhaps we wish to get along better with our academic colleagues, or with our fellow believers.
- Our responsibility is to be fair, both to the academic field and to the Bible, whether this position is popular or not.

# Consensus

- We may tend to identify scholarship with the consensus of scholars in our field...
- ... or spirituality with the consensus of Christians.
- We must instead go back to the data in both cases.
- Again, this may mean loss of advancement in one place or the other.

# Positivism

- We may tend to identify scholarship with some sort of positivism:
  - We must believe nothing we cannot observe or test academically.
- But some problems may only be soluble by revelation.
- Others may have more than one possible solution, but the data is currently insufficient to make scholarship better than a guess.



# Some Reinforcements: Scholarship & Spirituality



# Some Reinforcements

- Spirituality frees one from fear of other humans.
  - The best scholarship is done when peer pressure can be ignored.
- Scholarship is invaluable for understanding what Scripture really says.
  - We need to know the original languages.
  - We need to know the culture and writing conventions of the original authors & audience.

# Some Reinforcements

- Spirituality gives us an absolute basis for diligence, honesty, truth-seeking, etc.
  - Without these, scholarship cannot flourish.
- Scholarship emphasizes:
  - freedom to investigate,
  - importance of believing only what is true.
- Both of these are needed to advance in spirituality & to avoid two common problems in the modern church:
  - Excessive dogmatism,
  - Refusal to practice doctrinal discipline.

# Conclusions

- Christians need both spirituality and scholarship.
- Understood as a general method (rather than as an academic profession), scholarship is a subset of Christian morality.

# The End

If we seek to be scholars,  
may we be spiritual scholars.