

Allow me a few words without any shrugging of shoulders on the social position of some of these men. Paul was the son of a Pharisee who enjoyed the coveted right of Roman citizenship, and who was able to give him an educational equipment in which apparently no expense was spared, and in the acquisition of which his time was spent until he was 22 or 23 years of age. It is true that he learned a trade, but that in the case of a young Jew was no evidence of narrow circumstances, but only of the strict following of Rabbinical tradition which required that every Jewish boy should make himself master of some handicraft. Barnabas was a man of landed property. John was the son of a man who employed him to labor in his business and who seems to have been at least well-to-do. His mother ministered to Jesus of her substance, and after his crucifixion brought stores of spices for his burial. John, too, young man as he was, was acquainted with the aristocratic high priest in Jerusalem.

Yet, granting all that has been said of the education and social position of these men, still it remains that the majority of the first preachers of the cross were men of lowly circumstances, of little or no literary training, and of no social consequence. But it is not to be supposed, therefore, that these men were chosen on account of such qualities. No; we might almost say they were selected in spite of these disadvantages. They were the best that could be had. The citizens of Jerusalem did not furnish the stuff out of which missionaries could be made, and it was necessary to go to the provinces. The little sympathy that Jerusalem did accord to the Saviour was superficial or patronizing. Those who were honest in their good will were too timid. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea were members of the ecclesiastical aristocracy, but they both lacked the courage of their convictions. And when the choice had to be made between moral courage on the one hand, and the training of the schools with social influence on the other, there was no real alternative. Missionary work in the nineteenth century has still many of the characteristics that marked it in the first. It is still difficult to get the sons of wealthy families of high social position to engage in such work. There were noble exceptions then; there are noble exceptions now. Toronto does not send many of her sons to study in Knox College, and liberally as the rich Presbyterians of Montreal have endowed their college, I have heard that they do even less than Toronto in the giving of their sons.

Interesting as it may be for its own sake to think of the student days of these early ministers of the gospel, it is more to my purpose to call the attention of my student readers to the fact that when the question arose in the early church about sending out missionaries, the men who were sent were not the men who, in the language of prudential committees, "could best be spared," but the ablest and best educated men that were to be found—Paul, the foremost in gifts among them all, and Barnabas, the man of independent means, the man of Jove-like presence, the man of culture and of eloquence. These men, whom many of us would regard as throwing their talents away if they did not occupy a college chair or the most popular of city pulpits; these men, so well equipped in every respect for occupying the most influential positions at home, were the men who were separated by the Holy Ghost for mission work—for laying the foundations of the faith in the Far West, and it was work in which both natural talents and acquired skill could be fully employed.

To plant single-handed the standard of Christianity where it is a new thing; to organize and harmonize discordant social elements; to infuse into a popu-