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Remarks on the Classical part of a liberal Education.

The spirit of education seems to be gaining ground amongst us; and indeed it is high time that it should. It must be the wish, in particular, of every sound scholar, that the study of the best authors of Rome and Greece should be more highly estimated, and more diligently pursued than it is at present, or perhaps has ever been, in Virginia. To contribute in some degree, to this effect, is the purpose of the following observations. I trust it will appear that the writer has thought for himself on the subject.

Before I attempt to show the advantages of classical studies, I would offer two or three preliminary ideas. Let them not be condemned without a fair consideration.

The first is, that the prime object of youthful education, (I speak throughout this paper of the intellectual culture of the mind only,) is the training of the mental faculties to their utmost capacity and vigor of exertion. Let as much useful knowledge as possible be imbibed during the process; but this is in reality only a secondary object. The first, is to prepare the mind for the happiest efforts; and for the continual accumulation of knowledge after the maturity of manhood has been attained, and indefinitely through the progress of life. You may adopt a system to throw into the young mind, with very little labor, a great many facts and sentiments, and yet leave it after all in a state of miserable debility. What we mainly want is to have habits of steady thinking formed, the inventive powers invigorated, the judgment ripened and

No. IV.

PSALM, CXIX. 11.

"Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."

Scarcely any other part of the holy scriptures affords us, in the same compass, so rich and varied a treasure of experimental religion as this psalm. It is adapted at once to all times, and to all circumstances, and well deserves our deep and perpetual meditation. He who imbibes the spirit which it breathes, is a genuine servant of God, and is ripening for that land of perfect holiness and felicity which God has prepared for them that love him.

In the words before us, two important points demand our attention; namely, the object which a child of God proposes to himself, and the means which he adopts for its attainment.

The object in view is the avoidance of sin. In other words, to obey and please God, and that in every thing; to renounce and escape all transgression of his commandments; is the grand aim and business of the christian's life.

Looking abroad into the world, we observe a great variety of characters among mankind. Some ruling passion exerts its influence upon individuals, and gives its own shape and coloring to the whole texture of their dispositions and conduct. In one you see the love of ease predominating; in another, ambition; in a third, avarice; in a fourth, vanity; in a fifth, devotion to sensual pleasures, and so on. And the numberless modifications and mixtures of human passions still farther diversify the motley exhibition of our corrupt nature every where presented to our eyes. Mean while, it is the present world that bounds the horizon of every unregenerate heart. The "things which are seen and temporal" engross, in some form or other, all its affections, excite all its exertions, and constitute its only dependence for enjoyment. It is no part of the unrenewed sinner's hearty and abiding concern, whether he is obeying the will of God, or setting him at defiance; whether he is pleasing God, or offending him. "Who will show us any good," any earthly good, and put us in the way of gaining it? "What shall we eat, what shall we drink, and wherewith shall we be clothed?" How shall we become rich, and great, and applauded in the sight of our fellow-men? These are the enquiries, the springs of action, which fill the world with eager and continual turmoil.

Here and there, however, we meet with one of a different temper; one who has found out that the world is a poor, unsatisfying and polluted scene; that it ought to be trampled

under foot for the sake of "a better and an enduring substance;" one, in a word, who is supremely bent upon obtaining the favor of God, and acting so as to enjoy his unerring approbation. Such are the children of light and of God. You may discover amongst them also a great diversity of character in things that are morally indifferent, as well as various degrees of advancement in the spirit and habits of obedience to God. But the great, governing principle is in all the same; to avoid sin, to please God, and to seek a full conformity to his holy image.

How comes such a principle as this to take root and commence its transforming operations in the heart of man? It is no product of our fallen, depraved nature. If "every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart is only evil continually," how is such a heart to turn from all this evil unto God? If we are by nature "dead in trespasses and sins," we do not, we cannot return of ourselves to divine life and righteousness. No; this new heart, this right spirit, comes from above. It is the gift of God. He who possesses it sees and feels things in a new manner; in a manner suitable to their real attributes and importance. He sees himself to be a sinner, and has learned to estimate sin as the greatest, the sorest of evils; that abominable thing which God hates; that breach of order which has overspread the once goodly creation of God with darkness, confusion, and misery; that shameful defilement of the soul which degrades it below the level of the brutes that perish, and unfits it for the sublime and beatifying exercise of communion with the greatest and best of beings; that daring provocation of the divine Majesty which deserves the unquenchable fires of hell, and for the punishment of which alone those fires were enkindled. Above all, he realizes, so far as a feeble mortal can, the infinite demerit of sin as displayed in the cross of Jesus Christ. The glorious and spotless son of God is nailed to the cursed tree; he is made a sin-offering for us; he is bowed down with a weight of agonies unknown; and complains, in bitter anguish, that his God has forsaken him. All heaven looks on with astonishment, and asks, what can this spectacle mean? It means that sin is such an evil, such a mischief, so detestable in the eyes of Jehovah, that even his boundless compassion cannot flow forth, consistently with his honor, and the stability of his throne, to pardon and remove sin, without these inconceivable propitiatory sufferings of his only-begotten Son, our Redeemer. These are the lessons of the Gospel. Under such views and impressions, sin comes to be dreaded and loathed beyond all other objects of terror and aversion.—

Nothing but phrenzy can give to sin the features and attitude of a trifling matter, in the judgment of an eye thus opened to discern both good and evil. Poverty, sickness, reproach, persecution, yea, and death itself, are all judged now to be less evils than the pollution of sin, and the frown of the eternal God. And the more that a penitent believer sees of the amazing mercy of God in the scheme of our Redemption, the more he is enabled by the Holy Spirit to appropriate that mercy to himself; just so much the more will his heart be set in opposition to sin: just so much the more will he watch and pray, and strive against all sin, of thought, word, and deed. He feels that "he is not his own, but bought with a price, even the precious blood of Jesus Christ;" and therefore, ardently desires to "glorify God in his body and his spirit, which are God's." "The grace of God which bringeth salvation," does for the wretched sinner, what nothing else ever could do; effectually "teaches him to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world."

This leads us to our second point, the means adopted for accomplishing this escape from sin, and all its consequences. In order that I might not sin against thee, says the Psalmist in our text, "I have hid thy word in my heart." This phraseology gives us two ideas respecting the word of God. The first is that we deem it a very precious treasure. What we highly value, what we esteem of prime importance to our welfare, we naturally reposit in some secret and secure place. We remove it from the danger of loss; from the eyes and the hands of plunderers. Hear how the believer describes this treasure which he has found. I know myself to be a guilty, hell-deserving sinner. "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh," my apostate nature, "there dwells no good thing." But I think I know also, that I am weary of this sinful and miserable condition, and sincerely long for deliverance from it. I desire to escape the vile bondage of sin, as well as its condemnation, and to become, in my humble measure, "holy as God is holy." Blessed be the Fountain of all good for this desire. Opening the word of God, I see the glorious provision, made by divine love, wisdom and power, for my complete salvation. Here are the doctrines which teach me what God is; upon what principles he governs his rational creatures; and especially, how "he can be just and the Justifier of a sinner like me, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." I see that "where sin abounded, grace much more abounds." I see those invitations of mercy which spring from the bosom of the God of love, and in which he

abundantly encourages me to trust. Here are those pure and spiritual precepts by which my heart and life are to be regulated, by which I am to be trained to universal holiness, and the enjoyment of "communion with the Father and with his son Jesus Christ." Here are "exceeding great and precious promises," given by him who cannot lie, that "by them I may be a partaker of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." Here is that all-animating assurance of the abiding presence, the protecting and supporting influence of the Holy Spirit, as my Sanctifier and Comforter. Here are the materials for uniting me, in the most endearing and indissoluble bonds of friendship, with the best of society, the whole family of God, on earth and in heaven. And finally, here is presented before me the prospect of a blissful immortality, of a "crown of righteousness," an "exceeding and eternal weight of glory;" compared with which all the splendors of this world fade into insignificance; and for the sake of which all the troubles I may be called to bear in this transient pilgrimage dwindle into "the light affliction of a moment of time." Bless the Lord, O my soul, for such a treasure of wisdom and grace! And let it be the one great object of my life to learn its value more and more, and to improve it as it ought to be improved!

But our text exhibits a second idea here, an idea too of transcendent importance. In order to avoid sin by means of the word of God, we must hide it, lay it up, "in our hearts," we must receive, remember and keep it in the inmost seat of moral feeling and action. "Out of the heart are the issues of life." One contents himself with a vague, general respect for the bible. If we forbear to call such a man an infidel, we may nevertheless properly ask, and the question is an awful one, how much is he better or safer than infidels? Another studies the sacred book, in speculation, with much diligence and success; and values himself upon the soundness of the creed which floats upon his brain, but never penetrates his bosom. He "holds the truth in unrighteousness," and lives under the dominion of sin. Warping the glorious doctrines of sovereign grace perhaps, and yielding to the most infernal device of Satan, the antinomian delusion, he dares to depend presumptuously upon a Saviour whom he does not love, and to call him Lord, Lord, while he refuses to do his commandments." Whither can these things tend, but to an enormous increase of guilt, and a dreadfully aggravated condemnation? The word of God cannot operate to save us at a distance, if I may so speak; it must come home, with almighty energy, to our very souls. How can the best of food nourish our bodies,

if we despise or neglect it, if it be not eaten and digested? As little is it possible that the gospel, which is compared to a rich and excellent feast, can give us divine life and renovation, unless it be cordially received, and become incorporated with our affections. The word of God must become sweet to our taste; "sweeter than honey, and the honey comb." Every day and every hour, we must make it our companion, our practical adviser and master. And this is precisely what the true Christian does. Thus he uses the heavenly treasure.— From the bible he learns to hate sin as the most detestable of all objects. Hence he discovers its snares, and the perils which beset his path. There he seeks his armour of defence; and learns how to wield the weapons of faith, watchfulness and prayer. And when he feels that he has failed, and his enemies have gained an advantage over him; it is from the precious doctrines and promises of God's word that he derives fresh consolation, and assumes new hope and vigor to recommence the combat. If the Psalmist of old loved the word of God so much, how much more intensely ought we to prize and love it now, with all its extended information, with all its brighter displays of the glory of God in the salvation of sinners? Our attachment to the bible will be as sure and accurate a test as any we can find of our progress in the spirit of holiness. They who love sin cannot, in simplicity and sincerity of heart, relish the bible. But to those who delight to know and do the will of God, his book will be increasingly dear, until they arrive at that world where a written revelation, the present object of our faith, shall no longer be necessary. With this book in my hands, I rejoice to think how many myriads of the sinful children of Adam have been converted from their destructive ways by its instrumentality, and guided under its tuition to the regions of eternal day; what multitudes in every corner of this wilderness of sin are at this moment exulting in its light, and marching to join those on high "who through faith and patience inherit the promises;" and what countless numbers yet to be born shall praise God, while we are slumbering in our graves, for this inexhaustible treasure of life, peace and consolation. Again; I shudder at the thought, how many, to whom the bible has been offered, with all its blessings, have scornfully rejected it, or at least refused to "receive the truth in the love of it," and sealed themselves forever under the tremendous condemnation of those who "loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil;" how many are now acting, and how many in future days will continue to act the same unspeakable folly. O that the God of all grace and power would pour out

his Spirit in the most copious effusions, to give to his word an invincible and victorious efficacy upon the hearts of perishing sinners. And as to myself, and all whom I love, may this thrice precious volume be

“ Our guide to everlasting life
Through all this gloomy vale.”

Our subject affords an excellent criterion by which to try whether the religion we profess be genuine and sincere. We say that we have hopes of entering heaven when this world shall know us no more. Are these hopes well founded? The lesson before us is, that we must renounce and avoid sin; all sin without exception; and as the means of doing so, we are to treasure up the word of God in our hearts. Is this the nature of our religion? Brethren, examine your hearts, I beseech you, by this standard.

Is sin, in all its forms and aspects, the thing which you abhor? Are you ashamed of it as the disgrace of your nature, and humbled before that God, “who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity,” on account of it? Are you in the habit of searching out and lamenting “the plague of your own hearts;” confessing before God those deep inward corruptions which no human eye can see; and which, at the same time, are the sources of all actual transgression? And do you indeed desire and pray to be made “holy in all manner of conversation?”

Do you willingly receive the gospel as “a doctrine according to godliness;” and feel your souls drawn towards the Lord Jesus Christ with grateful attachment, because he is the heavenly Friend who came to “destroy the works of the devil,” and who “saves his people from their sins?” Do you submit to him as the Sovereign who is to bring every thought and every desire within you into complete subjection to his laws, as well as rest upon him for pardon and eternal life? Are you carefully examining, from time to time, what progress you make in this holy salvation? Is sin your pain and trouble, and the victory over it your joy? Do you, while you renounce the merit of your own righteousness in point of justification before God, renounce with equal zeal, the horrible doctrine which would make Christ the minister of sin, and would encourage to “continue in sin because grace abounds?” In short, is it the grand labor of your life, walking after the example of the Redeemer, to attain that entire happiness which can only be tasted and possessed by a spirit perfectly sanctified?

Do you esteem the ministry of God's word, and all the services of his sanctuary, not as unconsequential customs, still less as idle amusements; but as means of helping you to understand and to feel the truths and precepts of the Bible in their practical, renovating power? When you come to the house of God, is it with the spirit of serious reflection, of docility, and of prayer? And do you endeavor to apply the precepts and admonitions which you hear, for your furtherance in the paths of holiness?

Is the Bible your study and meditation day by day; your counsellor at home and abroad, in all the various situations and trials of life? Do you carefully look to it for directions how you may glorify God, do good to your fellow-creatures, and overcome all the temptations of the world? Do you love to redeem time from secular avocations, and avail yourselves of every attainable help, for growing in the knowledge of God and things divine; not resting indolently contented with a conviction of "the first principles of the oracles of God," but endeavoring to "go on to perfection," to explore as far as possible, the vast treasures of that wisdom which came down from Heaven? Can you recognize in your own bosoms any portion of that spirit, which induced the primitive Christians rather to endure the extremest suffering, than to sacrifice the blessed book of God to the malice of its enemies?

These are the ways in which the holy scriptures are to profit us unto salvation. I repeat once more, that the inspired dictates of the Bible must be treasured up in our very hearts, or we can never participate of the high benefits and privileges which they are designed to convey.

This subject warns mankind also against the folly and danger of attempting a preparation to meet God upon any principles but those which he has appointed in his word. The religion of the Bible, we avow it, is an exclusive religion; I mean, it will admit no other moral system to stand on its level, or be put in its place. It is not like one of those superstitions of old Greece or Rome which admitted into fraternity an hundred similar superstitions. Human learning, the customs of a country, and the laws of honor, may create some sentiments and habits useful to society. But they have nothing to do in producing that "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord." We are sinners, be it remembered, depraved and guilty rebels before a holy God. If it pleases him to save and restore us at all, he has the wisdom and the right to prescribe the mode; and this he has done in the Bible. Here is a religion addressed to sinners, and adapted by him, who perfectly knows our frame and condition, to bring

us back from all the ruins of our apostacy. Where else shall we find a motive to repentance, a ground of hope, a Saviour to rest upon? Where shall we find, but in the Bible, a perfect spiritual law for the direction of our hearts and actions? And if we could find it, whence are we to obtain that mighty influence which shall melt our hearts into godly sorrow for sin, and enable us to bring forth the fruits of repentance?—How are we to subdue our enemies, visible and invisible, and triumph over all the obstacles which stand in the way of our moral improvement? Human philosophy, and eloquence, and penal laws, have labored the point; but they have accomplished nothing towards making mankind hate sin, and return to God as their Father and their portion. They lacked the power to reach and regenerate the heart. They were too weak to stem the torrent of its native and universal depravity. But we know what the word of God, armed with the energy of his Spirit, has done, and is doing. We know that the doctrine of the cross, received into the heart, achieves what no contrivance of man ever could, its thorough purification; that the love of Christ shed abroad there is able to bear down all ungodliness before it, and to cleanse the soul, which had been the dwelling of the most malignant and licentious passions. Away with the stupid maxim, that it is no matter what a man believes, provided his practice be right. The practice cannot be right but upon true and sound principles. And particularly, we shall never render to God any service which he will approve, until we submit to his inspired word as our rule, and honor his Son as the captain of our salvation. Let us then bear in mind the solemn truth, that without holiness, we cannot meet God, but as “a consuming fire.” And let us make it our great concern so to hide his word in our hearts, that we may cease from sinning against him, and become fully prepared for the employments and happiness of his kingdom of glory.

MELANCTHON.

For the Virginia Evangelical and Literary Magazine.

THE TRUE MIRROR.

MR. EDITOR.—I take up my pen, at once, to give you an account of a very good dream I have just had for the sake of your readers. You must know, I had set down in my chamber, this evening after tea, with my Bible in my hand, to engage my mind for an hour or two before I retired to rest.