

THE STANDARD AND EFFECTS OF EDUCATION

“And he spake three thousand proverbs:
and his songs were a thousand and five.
And he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon
even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall:
he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes.”
- I Kng. 4:32,33 -
(see also, the 28th of Job)

The learning of Solomon was anything but shallow, yet never a sound-minded Christian would consider this man a lofty *intellect*. And in the primitive generation of Job, when so little was yet revealed of the knowledge of God, yet we find a man who possessed in the reservoir of his soul vast deposits of the riches of wisdom! Still, we find no austerity about the works of his wisdom. When a man grows in knowledge who has laid the foundation before mentioned (*i.e.* the fear of God), his wisdom tends only to meekness and lowliness of heart and mind. Whereas the knowledge built upon the foundation of self-advancement will always breed a cold, proud air of intellectualism. We are not against higher education, as long as it's higher up Jacob's ladder, and not success' ladder. Jesus said, “Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest for your souls” (Matt. 11:29); thus if a man professes to have learned from the meek and lowly Jesus, and yet he is proud and lofty, then something is amiss. Consider the knowledge of these men, men who in their generations were the friends of God, and the favorites of heaven. Consider also that, “the proud he knoweth afar off” (Psa. 138:6), so not only were these men exemplary for their minds, but their proximity to God himself. These men were not heady, or highminded, but were the meekest men of their day. “Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with *meekness* of wisdom” (Jas. 3:13). What is the true sign of wisdom? Humility.

These texts (mentioned above) show us, not only the standard of education, but the effects. Job, before ever the law was given, while yet the light of the knowledge of God was still dim, has pulsing in his veins, and throbbing in his heart the very life-blood of experiential religion! This man, as well as his friends, knew more of their God, more of his sovereignty over all things, more of his immutable will, more of the fury of his wrath, more of his eternal attributes than most of today's pastors of many decades standing – and these men didn't even have a Bible! In the 28th chapter of Job, we see a stunning display of intellectual prowess as Job takes us, as it were, to the heights of wisdom, and to the depths of knowledge with all manner of natural science, biology, chemistry, *etc.* And, as if being stifled by his own knowledge, declares that he has no knowledge, but tells with whom it is to be found – God omniscient. The wisest men in their field are those who can confess how little they know of their subject. Thus is Job's display of wisdom.

And thus we see true wisdom displayed - it works rather to the humiliating of the self, and the stifling of the mind. A man who has taken a few advanced high-school level chemistry courses, would be a fool indeed to approach the world renowned top chemist

and attempt to speak to him concerning the structure of a cell, or pretend to know something of enzymes or atoms. But the mind that has been truly exercised by knowledge, confesses that it yet possesses so little of that knowledge it has desired to attain unto regarding its subject.

As we read the credentials of Solomon they are astonishing to our minds. The brilliance exhibited seems altogether peerless. Solomon's were a thousand and five songs, and we are given (preserved in God's holy word) one, namely, The Song of Solomon. The chiefest of his songs, no doubt, for its priceless picture of the enraptured love of God upon his people, and there's to him. Yet he had written over a thousand more, each with its respective roles and plots, and maybe all longer than this relatively short canticle – each one probably equally rich in its spiritual significance. His “spoken” proverbs were three thousand, that is, I believe, those which he had ready upon his tongue according to the power of his recollection. This is not mentioning those which were only written. The book of Proverbs which we have would make up still less than a third of this great body! Imagine this king upon his throne of judgment, with such wisdom pouring from his lips! It is no wonder that sinners broke, nations crumbled and righteousness was wrought before such a man.

Imagine the thoughts that pierce the heart of such a man as this, when he looks up into the clear, black, glittery night and beholds the moon and stars running their courses! Imagine the thoughts as he stands aloft the rocky steep beholding the mountain goats dancing down the crags as waterfalls! To have all of one's learning founded in, and tempered by, the fear of God unstops the ear and allows the heart to receive the preaching that God has vested in his creation with the utmost soul-profit. God wills that every time we cross a fallen, rotting tree in the wood we would consider *our* end, and how few are *our* days; he wills that each time we see the Spring-time blossom of the Bradford Pear, that our hearts would incline to consider the kind Providence which maketh all things beautiful in his time. God has so staged the scenes of this transitory world that a man who fears the Lord would be incessantly spoken to within the God-ordained bounds of his habitation. Thus we fear not knowledge, but welcome it rather so long as it stays upon its base, and is ever leading us on to the knowledge of our God.

It is amazing, and almost incomprehensible, for it is almost altogether unknown in our day, how a man can be so filled with knowledge and yet be so humble. Yet this, we see, is the biblical standard and effect of that wisdom which has its origin in heaven. Therefore we who believe in our God, and desire the same for our children, ought to take them up the rocky steep, and down the path with the fallen, rotten pine, and deeply instruct them in the things, which, with the blessing of God, will hasten their salvations, and bring them to that true wisdom: the knowledge of God.