

WATCHMAN OF THE SOUTH.

DEVOTED TO THE PROMOTION OF PRACTICAL PIETY, THE DIFFUSION OF RELIGIOUS AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE, AND THE PROPAGATION OF THE DISTINCTIVE TENETS AND INSTITUTIONS OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

VOL. II.—No. 3.

RICHMOND, THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 1838.

Whole No. 55.

FRIENDSHIP PERPETUATED;

IN A COLLECTION OF LETTERS ORIGINALLY WRITTEN TO
MR. JUDITH A. SMITH, IN AN ACTUAL CORRESPONDENCE.

BY REV. DRURY LACY, A. M.

LETTER XVIII.

August 3, 1835.

Miss Judith,—I this minute cut a sheet of paper into two pieces, one of which I have devoted to you, and the other to your sister N. I would not have you imagine by the word *devoted*, that I mean to offer you any kind of adulation or adoration; for that would be acknowledging you more superior to me than my pride will contentedly admit. I have never compared you to Venus, or to any other goddess of the heathen tribe; and, I believe, if you were acquainted with the distinguishing characters of those female deities, and knew what the poets have said concerning them, you would not be ambitious of that honor. What am I doing? Writing to you, as if you had complained I had not treated you with sufficient respect, when I am persuaded nothing is farther from your thoughts.

I have frequently amused myself, in thinking of you when writing a letter. I have imagined I could see you sitting with a pen in your hand a considerable time, before you could determine what you would write about, or how you would begin. At last, after snuffing the candle about six times, you resolve to make the attempt; for the more you try to think of anything worth communicating, the more confused your ideas appear. You write a line or two, read it over, and wish you had expressed it otherwise. However, by reading that, something else occurs, which you set down. You write on a little further, and on reading it, could almost wish you had never engaged in a correspondence; but feel afraid to neglect it now, lest it should be ascribed to your ignorance. When you have finished the paper, you read it all over, and think what a poor little thing you are, and how little you have said, that was worth putting into a letter. You think, "if I had this place to write again, I could express it better, by putting in such and such words; and if that, I would alter it so and so;" till you are ready to condemn the whole performance to the flames. Then you read it to your sister, and ask her opinion; and she says, "O Judy, it will do right well!" That encourages you to send it. But after all I must assure you, that there is no lady of my acquaintance who writes a more correct letter, or in an easier and more elegant style, than you do. What I have written above is nothing but mere conjecture. I do not know that you ever experience one of the difficulties I have mentioned. But should you at any time feel such embarrassments, I cannot advise you better how to get over them, than by directing you to read a good deal, in the most sensible authors, and frequently to write; for the oftener you write, the more you will find to write about.

When I began this letter, I intended to have made some critical remarks on the poem you sent me; but have proceeded too far to engage in it at present. I would just beg leave, however, to make one remark on a little quotation in the latter part of your letter. You have quoted these words, "Real friendship is a slow grower, and never thrives, unless ingrafted upon a stock of known and reciprocal merit." The observation I prize, because it is true. But (with submission to your judgment) I think it improperly introduced. Had you been speaking of any two persons except ourselves, it might have been entirely right. But when we were the persons between whom the friendship subsisted, it was saying in a pretty direct manner, "We have both a stock of merit, which is known to each other;" &c. You cry out, "Stop." I obey you; and as it is now near 12 o'clock, I wish you good night. I am, as usual, yours, &c.

LETTER XIX.

January 25, 1836.

Miss Judith,—At twenty minutes after 12 o'clock in the night, I begin to write this letter. Your wonder is already excited, and will probably not be diminished, when informed that I rose this morning, or rather yesterday morning, at 4 o'clock. To keep you no longer in suspense, Mr. M.'s little son is no more. Nothing but his shade now remains amongst us; and my attention to that has kept me awake till this hour.

I was alarmed last night, at the time above mentioned, by Mr. M.'s calling me and informing me that his child was dying. It had been unwell for two or three days, but without any symptoms of danger. I made all the haste I could to his house, and to my unspeakable surprise, found it violently convulsed. It would have drawn compassion from any heart, less capable of being affected than mine, to have seen the struggle the poor little creature made for life. However, it did not die immediately, as I expected, but lived a sad monument of misery till noon. All this time it was agonizing with strong convulsions. Sometimes it would lose its breath till every one present would conclude it was dead; then with a violent gasp, it would again discover signs of life. No more need be said, than that it is snatched away from a world of misery. It is no longer mortal. It has got before us, and gone the way in which we must follow. Happy would it be for us were we as innocent! How it would smooth the much dreaded path! The little babe has not lived to sin against God, by abusing his mercies and rejecting his grace, as we have done. I believe it is now before the throne of God, adoring the blessed Jesus for the merits of his death, which opened a door for its admittance into the regions of endless felicity. O, how uncertain is life; and yet how little do we think of the change that we must experience at death!

There is something in death shocking to nature, but the horrors of a guilty conscience are much more terrible; for

"If sin be pardon'd, 'tis secure,
Death hath no sting beside."

Yes, there was something shocking, indeed, to the fond parents, although they never would have seen a time when they would have given him up more willingly. Cannot you drop a sympathetic tear with them, on the loss of their first, their only son? I know your compassionate heart cannot refrain. However reasonably and philosophically one may discourse on such events, when no affliction threatens him, it frequently requires a greater share of for-

titude than most possess to submit to such bereavements with composure. But I must say, and to the praise of both be it spoken, or rather to the praise of religion, that they appear to submit to this afflictive dispensation with becoming resignation. They act and speak as if reason preserved its authority over passion. Religion holds out to them a consolation which they embrace. They acknowledge that the child was the gift of God, which he had a right to take whenever he pleased. They believe that he still exists in an improved state; and that the body will be reanimated and restored to them again, in all the perfections of immortal beauty, where pain, death, sorrow, and parting shall be known no more. What a source of comfort! How absurd the infidel, who stupidly rejects it!

Well, since I am sitting with the little shade by myself; every one else in the house asleep; all nature wrapped in darkness as in a funeral shroud; every thing hushed to silence, as if to heighten the solemnity of the scene, and promote serious thoughts; then

"Why not think on death? Is life the theme
Of every thought? and wish of every hour?
And song of every joy? Surprising truth!
The beaten sparrow's fondness not so strange!"

Would it be too much of a paradox to say, death is the most important transaction of life? It is a great event to be born, and placed here in a state of probation for eternity; but it is a greater to die; for then our fate will be unalterably fixed. Why, then, this reluctance to indulging the thought of death? It could not do any harm, but might do much good; and surely it becomes reasonable creatures to think about an event of such vast consequence. Let me turn my eyes to that little corpse. A few hours ago, every breath drew seemed to pierce the hearts of its afflicted parents. Now it sleeps in peace, without feeling or communicating distress. Perhaps I may have no friend near me to so lament my exit. Be it so, provided Jesus is high. I know that death will approach, and that the king of terrors must be encountered. But if God be for me, I always remember that in the midst of life I am in death; and so conclude my letter, with

"As he is now,
So must I be."

I am yours, &c.

THE ASSEMBLY OF 1838.

LETTER II.

SOUTH HANOVER, JULY 7, 1838.

Editor of the Cincinnati Journal:

Sir—We most cordially approve of your publishing in the last Journal parts of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church. Many, no doubt, have formed their opinion, which is to influence their practice, without a knowledge of this document. Possibly there may be officers in our church who have publicly and solemnly expressed their approbation of this form of government, and who at the same time, are but partially acquainted with it, having never read it. The provisions of the constitution, in some few cases not anticipated by its framers, may be deficient; and in a few passages the language may be somewhat obscure. But as it regards the great question now before the Presbyterian church, it is sufficiently full and explicit to enable every candid inquirer to form a correct opinion. In the present discussion, this is "the law and the testimony." Understanding the words in their current sense, to this Judge with confidence we appeal.—What, then, are the particulars essential to a constitutional General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church?

One thing essentially necessary, is a commission—see chap. 22, Form of Government. This commission must bear the name of the presbytery which grants it, and also their place of meeting; it must be dated and be signed by the moderator and clerk. The commissioner himself must be ordained, according to the form prescribed in the constitution, to the office of the gospel ministry or that of ruling elder. If one of the questions embraced in said form should be omitted, or if proposed, not answered in the affirmative, the ordination would be unconstitutional. The presbytery has no authority to commission any but those who are so ordained. If any should, however, grant a commission to a man not thus ordained, their act would be unauthorized and of no avail. The time and place must be fixed by a vote of the Assembly immediately preceding. The Assembly of 1837 decided that the Assembly of '38 should be organized on the third Thursday of May, and in the Seventh Presbyterian church of the city of Philadelphia. If the process of organization had been gone through on the second or fourth Thursday, or in the third or tenth church, the Assembly would not have been constitutionally organized. The presbytery granting the commission must be in connexion with the General Assembly. For "the General Assembly shall constitute the bond of union"—See chap. 12, sec. 4. If a presbytery belonging to the Associate Reformed church should commission one of its members to the General Assembly, he could not be admitted as a member; not because the commission is not in due form, but because the presbytery granting it is not in connexion with the General Assembly. See Digest, p. 48, from which it appears that this connexion must be through the synod. The Charleston (S. C.) presbytery applied to be taken into connexion with the Synod of the Carolinas. The Assembly decided, however, that they must be connected with the synod "if they would be, come a constituent part of our body." The Presbytery, therefore, that is not in connexion with the General Assembly, cannot grant a commission that will entitle the bearer to a seat in the house. Another thing indispensably necessary, is a Moderator. See chap. 12, sec. 7. "On the day appointed for that purpose, the Moderator of the last Assembly, if present, or in case of his absence some other minister shall open the meeting with a sermon, and preside until a new Moderator be chosen." The second of the General Rules directs that if the Moderator of the last meeting should be absent, the last Moderator present shall discharge the duties of that office until a new Moderator be chosen. If the Moderator appointed by the Assembly of 1837 had been absent on the third Thursday of May last, the Moderator of 1836, if present, though not a commissioner, would have been the constitutional Moderator. Finally, the commissions,

according to the present regulations, must be submitted to the stated and permanent clerks, who are a standing committee for this purpose, to be by them examined and reported to the House. "For no commissioner shall have a right to deliberate or vote in the Assembly until his name shall have been enrolled by the clerk, and his commission examined and filed among the papers of the Assembly." Commissions found to be defective in any respect are laid on the table, and afterwards submitted to a committee of elections. Was it the old or new school Assembly (we use these terms solely for the sake of distinction) that was organised with the concurrence of all these particulars? Let us examine this subject.

On the third Thursday of May, and in the 7th Presbyterian church, the time and place appointed by the last Assembly, we find convened together a number of ordained ministers and elders, commissioned in due form by presbyteries in connexion with the General Assembly. We find the clerk, the standing committee of commissions, who for ten years past have discharged this duty, ready to receive, examine and report on these commissions. We find the Moderator in the discharge of his duty organising the Assembly, "possessing by delegation from the whole body all authority necessary for the preservation of order." For he is as truly the Moderator of the Assembly of '38 until a successor be chosen, as he was during the sessions of '37. Under his direction the Assembly is ultimately and completely organized. The Assembly, therefore, thus organized, is and must be the constitutional Assembly. This must be the fact, or the Moderator, as he does not resign, must be constitutionally deposed. As this is the ground which you assume and undertake to defend, we will now attend to this matter.

The deposition of a Moderator is a case for which the constitution has made no explicit provision, nor has an instance of the kind ever appeared before in the Presbyterian church. We have, therefore, neither law nor usage to direct us in coming to a decision on this subject. The discipline directions given respecting deposition to the ministerial office. See chap. 5, especially section 12. We find from that deposition is the act of the judicatory which elected or ordained to office. We find also that it is a judicial act, consequent on charges exhibited, witnesses examined, and a sentence pronounced; for it is punishment inflicted for the violation of some law. Now, if the Moderator of the last Assembly was deposed, was his deposition according to this rule? Was it an act of the Assembly, performed in the usual way, by a vote? Were there charges exhibited, witnesses examined, and criminality thus ascertained deserving the censure of deposition? Nothing of all this, as you very well know, took place. The Moderator was not constitutionally deposed, and therefore still remains in office, and is therefore bound to discharge the duties of Moderator.

But supposing him deposed, we next inquire, what was the crime for which he incurred this severe censure? All that you allege is, that he "refused to act, refused to put the question, a failure in the discharge of his duty." But does he indeed refuse to act, or fail to discharge his duty? He takes the chair and offers up the introductory prayer, and is proceeding to organize the House. Dr. Patton rises, and wishes through him to offer a resolution to the house. On this the Moderator acts promptly, deciding, according to his own convictions of duty, that it was out of order. Dr. Patton protests, and on this appeal he acts with equal promptness, deciding that it was also out of order. Then, by his direction, the clerk reads the roll of the commissioners. Thus the house is partially organized. Dr. Mason rises and makes a motion, on which the Moderator acts, deciding it, together with the appeal taken, on it, to be out of order. In the same manner he acts on the proposition made by Mr. Squier. Here Mr. Cleveland rises and commences reading a paper. The Moderator seriously believing Mr. Cleveland to be out of order, did not fail to discharge an imperative duty, by calling him to order, and when this was disregarded, he called him to order a second and a third time. Up to this very moment, we see, therefore, that he did not fail to act, nor did he fail to discharge what he honestly believed to be his duty. At this time there was indeed a suspension of action for a short time. This suspension was deemed prudent on account of what was then going on in the house. Mr. Cleveland's voice, while reading his paper, was much louder than was necessary for the simple purpose of being heard. The New School brethren who voted on his nominations to office, being interspersed amongst their Old School brethren, and uttering their ayes with great force of voice, rendered it advisable in the Moderator to suspend business for a short time. Add to all this, the nomination and appointment of a second Moderator, the motion and vote for adjournment, the prayer of the Moderator, the clapping the hissing—though this is probably a mistake; for the Editor of the Southern Religious Telegraph, who was present, and observed the whole scene, assures us that he did not see any hissing; but he affirms that there was a spontaneous burst of applause in the gallery and on every side of the house. Surely this state of things justified the suspension of business until, as the N. Y. Observer states, order was again restored, but can this suspension of business during this scene, be considered in any sense criminal? Was it not rather the course pointed out as proper by prudence and wisdom? If a hail storm had been raging against the house, rendering the voice inaudible, would it have been wrong, rather, would it not have been prudent to suspend all business till the storm was over?

With sincerity, your friend, &c.

JOHN MATTHEWS.

THE MILLENIUM.

O there is a day—call it the millennium, or by any other name—there is a period yet destined to bless the earth, when it shall no more be necessary to witness for God, for all shall know him; the knowledge of his glory shall fill the earth as the waters cover the sea.—Happy state of Christian triumph!—a day without a cloud—the reproach of indolence wiped away from the Church, and of ignorance from the world. Truth shall have completed the conquest of error—Christ shall have given law to the world—and, impressing his

image in every heart, shall receive the homage of a renovated race. Brethren, these are visions—but they are the visions of God; and let nothing rob us of the inspiration to be derived from gazing at them. They are visions—but visions painted by the hand of God—dear in every age to the Church of God—gazed on in death by the Son of God. Yes, then they were brought and set before him, and such was the joy with which they filled him, that he endured the cross, despising the shame.—Then, on the lofty moral elevation of the cross, all the ages of time and all the triumphs of the Church passed in review before him. He saw our missionaries go forth in his name to distant climes—again he looked, and saw them surrounded by ten thousand converts to his grace. He saw the veil fall from the heart of the Jew, and heard their bitter mourning as they stood looking at him whom they had pierced. He saw Ethiopia stretching out her hands unto God; and heard her, as the slave-chain fell from her loins, exulting in a double liberty. He heard his name shouted from land to land as the watch-word of salvation, and marked how its very echo shook and brought down the pillars of the empire of sin. He saw the race of Ishmael, that now traverse the desert tracts of Arabia—the castles of India, with their numbers infinite—the national Chinese—the Tartar hordes—the unknown and snow-concealed inhabitants of the north—the tribes of Europe—and all the islands of the sea; he saw them flocking into his kingdom—his grace the theme of every tongue—his glory the object of every eye. He saw of the travail of his soul, and was satisfied; his soul was satisfied! Glorious intimation! Even in the hour of its travail it was satisfied. What an unlimited vision of human happiness must it have been! Happiness not bounded by time, but filling the expanse of eternity! His prophetic eye caught even then a view of the infinite result in heaven. His ear caught the far, far distant shout of his redeemed and glorified Church, singing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to be witnesses for God—if we would catch the true inspiration of our work—we too must often cross, as he did, the threshold of eternity, transport ourselves ten thousand ages hence into the blessedness of heaven, and behold the fruits of our instrumentality there, still adding new joy to angels, new crowns to Jesus, new tides of glory around the throne of God. Realizing that scene, we should gird up our loins afresh, as if a new command had come down from heaven, calling us by name to be witnesses for God.—Harris's Sermon.

HEARING THE VOICE OF THE SHEPHERD.

Now I will tell you when you "hear the voice" of Christ; it is when just as you are about to do wrong, something within stops you, and says, "God is looking at you, forbear to do this;" you hear it, too, when the time of duty comes round, and something whispers within you, "you ought now to do what your parents have bidden you; it is now time to read your Bible, or to say your prayers, or to prepare your lessons, or to do your duty in that state of life which it has pleased God to call you to." And you "follow" the good Shepherd, when you do good and show love to those around you; when you curb violent tempers or angry passions, because you are afraid of sin; when just as an evil word is trembling on your lips, you forbear to utter it; when you come away from those, however lively or agreeable they may be, whom you know to be wicked children, therefore would be dangerous companions; and, above all, you follow the good Shepherd, like the lambs of his own flock, when you give up that which you want, or desire, in order that you may give pleasure or do good to others. I say, *above all*; for this is just what Christ did; "he gave himself for us," he laid down his life for us; and "we ought," says the apostle John, "to lay down our lives for the brethren;" and if he said that we ought to lay down our lives, we ought certainly to try to please those who love us, those whom it is our duty (and should be our delight) to please in every thing that we do, although to do this we must sometimes give up dear children; this is a sacrifice, for which you will always, when you have made it, be well repaid.

Rev. Thomas Dale's Sermon.

For the Watchman of the South.

IMPORTANCE AND ENDS OF DOCTRINAL KNOWLEDGE AND PREACHING.

It has been remarked as one of the ominous features of the present day, that doctrinal expositions of God's word have been neglected, and by many undervalued. It has been said by men in high places, that religion is altogether a matter of feeling—and teachers in Israel, and that too of the Presbyterian name, have unhesitatingly avowed that we no longer need so much instruction for our Faith, as exhortation for our practice. Men, say they, are sufficiently informed, and only need excitement. The missionary to the heathen may indeed instruct his benighted hearer, but in this land of Gospel light, under the wonderful operation of the spirit of improvement, in this nineteenth century, the pulpit essay, the elaborate argument, the dull-lecture-like sermon, (for by such sarcastic terms has doctrinal preaching been often caricatured,) are all entirely useless.—"Spare your pens, ye men of books, keep your manuscripts in your drawer, we want no such preaching, we want electricity and fire. Magnetism and steam are the order of the day in the physical world, and they must be represented in the moral." It is to be lamented, that because some, who dwell much on the delightful doctrines which are according to godliness, have been often ill-timed, or lacked a gift for instructing—or were unprepared for their undertaking—distaste for real solid truth has grown up. But we had as well discard all exhortatory and admonitory preaching, because some present specimens of it, under the form of unintelligible (not because unheard) ranting, understanding neither what they say nor whereof they affirm, as to decri doctrinal preaching because it has been abused. The word of God stands sure, and it becomes us; rather to inquire what is right, what is useful; than what is popular, or what is easy.

Doctrinal knowledge is to be produced by doctrinal preaching, by Bible class and catechetical instruction. Most men have not books, and many who have, do not, or will not read them. It devolves on the minister to search out acceptable and tried words, and he should

"still teach the people knowledge"—a doctrine. It was the praise of the early disciples, that they continued in the Apostles' doctrine, Acts ii. 42. "Till I come," says Paul to Timothy, "give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Take heed to thyself and to the doctrine; continue in them; for in so doing thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee." To Titus he said, "Shew thyself a pattern of good works, in doctrine uncorruptness." He charged all ministers through Timothy to "teach no other doctrine," (1 Tim. i. 3,) than what he had taught of the truth of the Gospel.

There is much indirect testimony on this subject to be gathered from Scripture, thus—Our Saviour prayed that his people might be sanctified by the truth. And in Ephesians iv. 12-15, we learn how this truth is to be applied to their edification. The whole work of salvation is based on correct knowledge. "For God begets us by the word of his truth," Paul said, "the time would come when men will not endure sound doctrine;" and this he assigns as a reason for exhorting Timothy "to preach the word, be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long suffering and doctrine." And a consideration advanced to shew that Titus "should hold fast the faithful words," is, "that he might by sound doctrine be able both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers." This leads to the remark, that precepts are founded on doctrines. The exhortation to repent, must be attended by an explanation of repentance, and when men are told to believe, they should be informed what faith is. That God is merciful, is a doctrine; that men are to impute his mercy, in the forgiveness of sins, is a precept based on it. That God is just, and yet the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus, is the doctrinal basis of every exhortation to trust in a Saviour. The one must be explained, in order to enforce the other. The promises of God may be shewn in the same way to depend on important doctrines.

The history of the Church proves the importance of doctrine. Men have sometimes been persecuted for the shape of their dress, for their peculiarity of life, and for political opinions, but since the days when the "Apostles were accused of filling all Jerusalem with their doctrine," through the period when all Europe was filled with the doctrines of the Reformation to this day, when the advocates for sound doctrine are aspersed and vilified with a spirit of a similar persecuting character, it has been against doctrinal truth that persecution has waged. Men hate the light. It is in view of this fact that we account for "improvements in Theology." Men who are sincerely desirous, perhaps, to bring others to the Saviour, finding an indomitable aversion to truth, undertake so to modify it, as to render it agreeable. Some truths are not fully stated, others kept out of view, and others entirely mis-stated, in order to render them consistent with human reason.

Some of the good ends of doctrinal knowledge are these—

1. "Every Christian is thus enabled to give a reason for the hope that is in him," which a preacher of the oldest school, one Peter, strenuously exhorted Christians in his day to do. This would shut up those, "I do not know," "I hope so," "I think so," "I expect it is so," which render some Christians so uncertain.

2. Error will be kept out of the Church.—This was said by Paul to be the proper effect of sound doctrine. We have fallen on evil times, when men ask, rather who says so and so, than what is said. "I am of Paul and I of Apollos," is the principle of action, rather than "I believe this and I disbelieve that."

3. We ascertain the true friends of righteousness. Men who are for principle, will be men of firmness.

4. Particularly beneficial would doctrinal knowledge be, if more diffused in our church. Many, like Mr. Leavitt, have become Presbyterians for convenience. So many are religious for convenience; for example, there was Simon Magus and Demas. Presbyterians are now said to be less liberal because more strict. Constantly do men reiterate the charge, "that the Presbyterian church is losing its liberality." Did they ever inquire whether the spirit of the times has not changed? Had not the mixture of other people's notions corrupted ours? And has not Presbyterianism lost its old character in many places? Men who make the charge above referred to, are often found to be those who never knew what Presbyterian doctrine and discipline were till they had become saturated with other stuff.

5. Lastly, "Be ye doers of the word," as well as hearers. "He that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, shall be likened unto a man, who built his house upon a rock, and the rains descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded on a rock." The promises of God, "exceeding great and precious," are founded on his truth, and

"Firm as the earth thy truth must stand
When rolling years have ceased to move."

B. M. SMITH.

SELECT REMAINS

OF

REV. JAMES W. DOUGLASS.

PSALMODY.

One of Paul's exhortations is—

Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom. The Word of Christ, is, in general, the Word of God, but, especially, it is that "word of reconciliation" which was committed to Paul; or, as it is in ch. i. 5, "the word of the truth of the gospel." It is called in Phil. ii. 16, "the word of life," because it reveals Christ, who is the life, and is quick and powerful, instrumentally, to produce and maintain life in us.

Let this Word of Christ "dwell in you." It "is come unto you," but that is not enough—Let it dwell in you. In your memory, your conscience, your heart. So that you can say with the Psalmist, "Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee." Let it dwell in you richly, by being well and fully understood, and remembered, and observed. "Many have the word of Christ dwelling in them, says one, but it dwells in them but poorly; and has no mighty force and influence upon them." Now the Apostle would have us all, "filled with the knowledge of his will."

And that, as it is there added, "in all wis-

dom and spiritual understanding." So here, "in all wisdom." This refers to practice. We must know the word, and also know how to use and apply it. Not catching at a promise when a threatening is due, nor the contrary. Not misapplying, nor misusing. But, being enriched with the principle, and imbued with the spirit of the Bible, that we may be able, truly, to exemplify and recommend the heavenly system which it reveals.

The Apostle proceeds—
"Teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." And whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks unto God and the Father by him.

Christian psalmody is here introduced as a teaching ordinance, and as a means tending to the rich indwelling of the word just before mentioned. Let us attend, for a little, to the subject of sacred music, as a means of grace to us, and a medium of praise to our Maker.

By *Psalmody* here, we understand the psalms of David, which had been always sung in the Jewish worship; and by *hymns and spiritual songs*, other sacred compositions of the same kind, collected out of the Scriptures, or composed among themselves. Among the gifts of the primitive church, some would possess that of composing sacred poems, to be rehearsed or sung in their assemblies. These, together with the psalms of the Old Testament, the Apostle gives occasional directions as to the use of. To the Corinthians, holding himself forth as an example, he says, "I will sing with the Spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also." To the Ephesians, "making melody in your hearts to the Lord." And in the words already quoted, "singing, with grace in your hearts, to the Lord."

Singing may be
Personal,
Social, or
Public.

1. Singing in private may very properly and profitably be connected with other closet exercises. And taking the passage in Ephesians, as it stands in our translation, we can make out an express precept to that effect. "Speaking to yourselves," in psalms, &c. The habit of talking to themselves, which some persons have, is generally ridiculed. But to speak to ourselves in a hymn is unexceptionable. And so profitable do some find it that they as regularly sing a hymn, in their closet devotions, as they read and pray. Bush, in his Commentary on 1st Psalm, on the 2d verse, observes that the term rendered *meditate* implies "both the mental act of meditation, and that low, murmuring sound of the voice in which a person deeply absorbed in an interesting train of thought, is apt to give utterance to his musings;" and quotes from President Edwards, a remark about his private meditations, "While thus engaged, it always seemed natural for me to sing, or chant forth my meditations, or to speak my thoughts in colloquies, with a singing voice."

Dr. Alexander thus speaks of singing in private devotion. "But why should not the singing the praises of God form a part of secret devotion, as well as that which is social?"

To which I would add that the duty of private singing seems to be enjoined in James (v. 13), "Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray. Is any merry, (or prosperous and in comfort) let him sing psalms." The prayer we should infer was private prayer; and if so, the singing would seem to be private singing.

But why should not singing the praises of God form an essential part of secret devotion, as well as that which is social? If God has authorized and enjoined this part of divine worship, it would seem to be as proper, and as really a duty, in the closet, as in the church. Indeed there is no situation in which the heart is likely to be more susceptible of the softening and elevating effects of sacred music, than in the solemn stillness of solitude. A large part of the book of Psalms exhibits the private exercises of David and other inspired saints. And these still serve to express most perfectly the feelings of the pious heart. Some eminently devout men, as we learn from their private diaries, have accustomed themselves to singing their private meditations, employing such tunes as were dictated by their feelings; and have found this an excellent method of fixing the attention and exciting the devout emotions of the heart; but to most Christians, a good selection of hymns, adapted to the closet, with suitable tunes, will be most preferable. There is scarcely any thing more needed than some means of removing the reluctance of the soul to engage in the spiritual duties of the closet, and of confining the roving thoughts, and exciting the dull feelings of the heart, when we attempt to draw near to God in secret. I need not say how deep and frequent are the lamentations of serious persons in regard to this matter. Now, what will be more likely to render this service interesting and profitable, than the introduction of sacred music into our private devotion? Paul, who seems to have overlooked nothing which has a relation to the exercises of piety and practice of devotion, has strongly recommended singing, in his epistle to the Ephesians, as a means of exciting devotional feelings in our own minds. "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, making melody in your heart to the Lord; giving thanks unto God and the Father in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ."

If for any reason there be no capacity for singing, the reading of hymns may be recommended to all sorts of persons, as a pleasant method of contemplating the truth, and a means of improvement in piety.

2. This exercise should form a part of family religion. It was formerly almost universal to sing a hymn in family worship. Now, in some parts, that duty is generally omitted. This change must, I think, have grown out of a disposition to save time, although it is a very unworthy and improper motive, yet I cannot find a better, for, certainly, the ability to sing is as general with us, as it was with our fathers.

It is much to be desired that the singing of a short hymn, or part of a hymn, should be made an ordinary part of your family worship. Whatever advantages we may derive from the exercise, in any place, we may derive from it in the family. The Apostle's precept, if it binds us elsewhere, binds us here. And there are, besides, some particular reasons which, I think, you must appreciate.