

THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY.

VOL. I.

OCTOBER 1897.

NO. 4.

Doctrinal Theology.

BIBLIOLOGY.

(Concluded.)

The doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture, the essentials of which have been presented in our last issue, is the cardinal topic of Bibliology. According to this doctrine, the Bible was written by divine inspiration¹⁾ inasmuch as the inspired penmen²⁾ performed their work as the personal organs³⁾ of God,⁴⁾ especially of the Holy Spirit,⁵⁾ who not only prompted and actuated them toward writing what they wrote,⁶⁾ but also suggested to them both the thoughts and the words they uttered as they wrote.⁷⁾

1) 1 Tim. 3, 16.

2) Rom. 15, 15. 1 Cor. 5, 9. 2 Cor. 2, 3. 4. 9. Gal. 1, 20. Phil. 3, 1. 1 Tim. 3, 14. 1 John 1, 4; 2, 1. 13. John 5, 46. 47. Luke 3, 4. Matt. 13, 14; 15, 7. Luke 20, 42.

3) Matt. 2, 5. 17; 8, 17; 12, 17; 13, 35; 24, 15; 27, 9. 35. Acts 2, 16; al.

4) Matt. 1, 22. Acts 4, 24. 25. Hebr. 4, 7. Rom. 9, 25; 1, 2.

5) Acts 1, 16; 28, 25. 2 Sam. 23, 1. 2. 2 Pet. 1, 19—21. 1 Pet. 1, 11. 12. Matt. 13, 11. Luke 12, 12.

6) 2 Pet. 1, 21. 2 Tim. 3, 16. Rom. 15, 18. 19. Gal. 1, 11. Jer. 30, 2.

7) Jer. 30, 2. Rom. 15, 18. 1 Thess. 2, 13. Acts 2, 4. 2 Pet. 1, 19—21. John 10, 34. 35. Matt. 22, 43. 44. Rom. 15, 9—12. Gal. 3, 16. Rom. 10, 16. 1 Pet. 3, 6. Heb. 12, 26. 27; 8, 8. 13; 7, 20. 21; 4, 7. Rom. 4, 6. 7. 9. Eph. 4, 8. 9. John 7, 42. Luke 16, 17.

The Pulpit.

DEDICATORY SERMON.¹⁾

TEXT: PS. 117.

Dearly Beloved in Christ Jesus:

“The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth His handiwork.” “The invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead.” Nature speaks a plain language. She tells of Him who has made all things. His handiwork, His glory, His power and Godhead are engraved upon the things that surround us. Sun, moon, and stars are set on the canopy of heaven to give light, and to beautify it; grass, shrubs, flowers, trees are planted to clothe the earth; silver, gold, gems, and diamonds lie imbedded in the sluggish earth and insensible rock: each and every one stamped with the immutable glory of its Maker. Go where you list, and you will find the eternal power and Godhead of the Creator recorded in indelible characters. Look at the plains: a vast scroll enrolled over space, fertile soil, producing all manner of precious grain. Turn to the hills and mountains, scraggy and rugged and high, towering into the skies and cleaving the clouds with their proud summits. Go to the river that rolls at the foot of this city, incessantly washing the boundaries of two states and carrying its waters from a cold north to a sunny south. And what do these grand works of Nature tell you, tell every mortal? Do they say they made themselves? No, no,

1) This sermon was preached at the dedication of Grace Lutheran Church of St. Louis, December 14, 1890, by the late Rev. F. W. Adams, and contributed by Rev. O. Kaiser.

they speak of the infinite wisdom of Him whose handiwork they are!

For this purpose they were made, and the object of their being is to show forth the glory of their Maker. Although Nature has been blighted by the disobedience of man, and although she is travailing under the curse of man's transgression, she still praises God by partly fulfilling the object of her creation. Thus the sun praises the Lord by obeying His command and giving light to the earth, moon and stars likewise, and so on down to the birds that fill the air with their warbling music.

We read in the Holy Scriptures of another class of beings whose great work it is to praise God always. They are holy and invisible spirits. "Bless the Lord, ye His angels, that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word." "He maketh His angels spirits; His ministers a flaming fire." The angels by executing God's commands praise Him incessantly; and also the song of the redeemed in heaven is a song of praise unto the Lamb that was slain.

You see, beloved friends, the visible world praises the Lord; the invisible world praises the Lord; all creation is engaged in praising God; where is man with his praise? Shall we not praise Him, whom we owe so much, more than the earth, more than heaven, yea, more than the angels of light? Of a truth, we owe praise unto the Lord! Therefore let us follow the exhortation of the Psalmist:

O PRAISE THE LORD!

- I. *For His truth, and*
- II. *For His merciful kindness.*

I.

"O praise the Lord, all ye nations; praise Him, all ye people, for the truth of the Lord endureth forever." God's truth abideth forever. This truth is laid down in the

Scriptures. "Thy word," says the Savior, "is truth." The Bible is God's word; therefore it is truth. God is the source and fountain of all truth. Man may imagine and think, but if his thoughts are not in conformity with the divine mind it is not truth, but falsehood and blank delusion. God alone is truth and has truth, and it pleased Him to dispense truth unto man by nature and by revelation, the latter being infinitely superior to the former. And it is this truth, contained in Holy Writ, that the Psalmist speaks of here. Hence, will you know what is meant by this word "truth," the answer is: God's word, the Bible. Man may not entertain a doubt concerning this, for "all Scripture," the whole Bible, "is given by inspiration of God," and "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," by the Spirit of God. "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth." The Bible, not only its contents, but the very words are God's. Shall not man praise the Lord for this precious gift, that He has revealed unto us the truth, His word?

This truth of the Lord "endureth forever;" it is for eternity. Human thoughts perish; the works of great men are forgotten; the dreams of the learned dissolve in vapor; the day dies; time flees; empires rise and fall; colossal structures crumble into dust; everything is fleeting, passing, nothing abiding, lasting, save the truth of the Lord. It was the same in the lovely bowers of Eden, it was the same in Abraham's day, it was the same in the time of David, it was the same at the birth of Christ in poverty, it was the same in the days of Luther, it is the same in this 19th century, it is the same to-day; it knows no change. Years, centuries, cycles, eternities cannot alter it, for it is eternal, "the truth of the Lord endureth forever."

Surely, this truth can never, never be prized too highly by man, for you have here a firm, a lasting rock, upon which you can securely rest; while everything flees away.

Where is anything like it? Shall we not praise God for it? One man will seek repose and contentment in riches, another in honor and high stations, still another in the pleasures of this world. They all follow the unwise man in the parable whose fields brought forth plentifully. To store away what his fields had produced, he tore down his barns and built larger ones, and said to his soul: "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." But God said unto him: "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." The pillar he rested upon was not the truth, but a delusion that vanished in the hour of death. Such is the case with all that are not built upon the eternal truth of the Lord. But they that are built upon it will praise the Lord for the abiding truth.

This truth is to be proclaimed unto men, to be preached as it has been delivered unto us. And it is for this object and purpose that we have erected this house. It is to be a house of God, where God's truth, and nothing but His truth, is to be heard. This edifice is not dedicated unto any favored dreams, opinions, or ideas, but unto God's word only, that word which is able to save for eternity. Here man is to hear of the abject depravity of his entire nature, that he is vile and naked and blind, yea, "dead in trespasses and sins," and that this wretched condition dates from his birth, yea, from his conception, for "the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Man will at this place hear, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die," for it has transgressed God's law. Eternal damnation is what awaits it at the end of a short life on earth. You shall here learn that we *deserve* such punishment, that I deserve it, that you deserve it, that all deserve it, for "there is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." You are here to gaze upon a spiritual disease that is beyond description, a disease

which ruins body and soul, and which makes the sinner an object of God's wrath. And when pining away under the blows of the law, truly penitent, you will here be directed to Him who was wounded for our transgressions, who was bruised for our iniquities, upon whom was the chastisement of our peace, and with whose stripes we are healed. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." You will here be asked to behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. You will here be invited to look to Him who shed His blood and gave Himself for you, who His ownself bare our sins in His own body on the tree, and whose name is Jesus, for He saves His people from their sins. Jesus, Savior of sinners, your Savior, my Savior, our Savior. These are the contents of the Scriptures, of God's truth; for Jesus says: "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me." Since the truth is such a sweet message to sinners, and since this house will be devoted solely to the preaching of such tidings, we owe God unbounded praise therefor. O praise the Lord!

Then, behold, this truth, this revelation, is for all, for every human being. God gave His word not merely to one nation or one people, but for all. Christ's salvation is not held out to a certain number only, but unto every one. As all have sinned, so all are in need of being saved. "God will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." "The Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live." As salvation is general, yea, universal, we heartily invite all to hear the truth; whether they be great sinners who have gone to unusual lengths in sin, or such as are not guilty of so gross a transgression: all are asked to partake of this salvation in Jesus Christ, and the doors

of this house are opened for all. For our text says: "O praise the Lord, all ye nations; praise Him, all ye people," for the truth, the eternal truth, the saving truth, the universal truth!

From all that dwell below the skies
Let the Creator's praise arise;
Let the Redeemer's name be sung
Through every land, by every tongue.

Eternal are Thy mercies, Lord;
Eternal truth attends Thy word;
Thy praise shall sound from shore to shore,
Till suns shall rise and set no more.

Your lofty themes, ye mortals, bring;
In songs of praise divinely sing;
The great salvation loud proclaim,
And shout for joy the Savior's name.

In every land begin the song;
To every land the strains belong;
In cheerful sounds all voices raise,
And fill the world with loudest praise.

II.

A second cause mentioned in the text for praising the Lord is His merciful kindness which is great toward us, indescribably great. In giving us His truth God has already manifested His mercy towards us. In sending us a Savior, He has given us an infallible token of His grace. In leading us to Him by His Spirit He assures us of His merciful kindness. But He also continues in showering upon us His mercies, by leading us onward in our pilgrimage towards the celestial city.—If this earth were the home of happiness, the seat of bliss, the paradise of glory, we would not need such mercy and kindness. But now what is the earth and its grandeur but a battle-field, the habitation of care, of labor and toil, an immense lazaret, a poor-house, an orphan-asylum, a place of mourning, a wide burial ground:

that is the world. Travail and pain usher man into the world, sin and sorrow follow him, until the grave shall swallow him up. Ah! what, then, is more needed than merciful kindness from on high! And God vouchsafes it unto man in all states and conditions, and it is in the church where you hear of such merciful kindness of our God, for which you owe Him praise.

Or is it not thus? Look at the comfort which is dispensed here. Have you been toiling all the week and eating your bread in the sweat of your brow? Happy man, if you can go to church where you are greeted with the salutation, "The Lord be with you.—Come unto Jesus, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, He will give you rest. Take His yoke upon you and learn of Him; for He is meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

If in poverty, pursued by care for food and raiment, the future dark and gloomy, the question ever before you: "Whence shall I obtain bread?"—happy are you, if you can go to your church, where you hear: "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your Heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they toil not, neither do they spin, and yet your Heavenly Father clotheth them. Are ye not much better than they? Cast all your care upon Him, for He careth for you. He will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

Has sickness visited you or your family; is a loved one sorely afflicted; does worry, pain and sorrow fill your heart: can you not rejoice when in your church you hear: "Whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth.—We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.—In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, Jesus Christ, thy Savior and thy God, has overcome the world.—The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.—And we know

that all things work together for good to them that love God, whether it be pain or sickness, agony or distress."

Do enemies molest you and do you injury in property or body, going about speaking evil of you, bearing false witness against you, slandering your name: is it not a comfort, if in the house of worship you hear: "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven."

Or has death entered your house, called away a husband, a wife, a child, a mother, and tears have freely flown, and all the comfort and consolation that the world can give, could not console you, where is balsam for the wound? Happy are you if you can go to your church and hear: "Weep not, for thy Savior, Jesus Christ, hath abolished death and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. — Christ is the resurrection and the life, whosoever believeth in Him, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in Him, shall never die. — O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Or have you transgressed, committed a grievous sin; is your conscience ill at ease; are despair's talons fastening upon you? Happy if you can go to your church where you hear: "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. — Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. — Jesus sinners doth receive. — The blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanseth us from all sin. — Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

There is a fountain filled with blood
 Drawn from Immanuel's veins,
 And sinners plunged beneath that flood
 Lose all their guilty stains."

Where shall I conclude enumerating the merciful kindness of God towards man, as dispensed in the church! Indeed it is great. It shows man the way of salvation by faith; it points out the path for his feet; leads him onward; is with him, comforting him in all straits, and brings him finally into the home of many mansions. God's mercy unto man is infinite. What a blessing, then, to have a house in which this merciful kindness is freely offered!

Shall we, then, be silent since God has done such wonderful things among us? The earth praises God, the creatures thereon praise Him, the angels praise Him, the redeemed in heaven praise Him: and shall we not praise Him, —we whom He has created, we whom He has saved by the death of His Son, we whom He daily comforts by His truth and merciful kindness; shall we not praise Him? Yes,

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Hallelujah. Amen.
