

## Our Contributors.

### The Bible Doctrinally.

An Address before the Pan-Presbyterian Council by Rev. G. L. Leyburn, D.D., St. Louis, Mo.)

"The Bible Doctrinally," i. e., the doctrine or doctrines of the Bible. Doctrine is "whatever is taught or laid down as true by an instructor or master. A body of principles connected with or related to religion." In this sense what doctrines, or system of doctrine, or "body of principles" does the Bible contain and teach? A large subject this, and all to be compassed in twenty minutes!

Two remarks or three as to the Book itself. First, the Bible is God's book. As true of no other book, the Bible is of God, from God, by and for God; in it, by it, through it, God tells men what to believe and what to do. This I assume to be the common faith of all the Reformed Churches represented in this Alliance. For only of this book can it be said, "given by inspiration of God;" and every Scripture inspired of God is profitable for doctrine," and the end of all controversy." We need insist upon no theory of inspiration, only upon the great fact. And surely we all agree that "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," for no prophecy ever came by the will of man; but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit." (R. V. Am. Edition.)

Second, this Book of God is true. For God is the true God, the God of truth, and Jesus says, "I am the truth." Again we may not all and always agree as to what the doctrine is, or just how it is taught, or why. But when we get at the mind of the Spirit in the Bible we get at the truth. When we find the real meaning of the words we find the truth, and when we know what God meant to teach or declare in the Book we know the truth. Here also we surely are all of one mind and heart. For every true disciple will reverently say Amen when the Master solemnly declares "Thy word is truth."

Third, the great purpose of the Bible is instruction, and its teaching is one. To teach the people knowledge, to reveal to man God's will and the way of salvation, this is God's purpose in the Book. And the teaching is one, the doctrine is self-consistent and really identical. There is development, growth, greater fulness and clearness, but no radical difference; the great principles of truth and duty taught here are, like their author, "the same yesterday, today and forever," from beginning to end, from Genesis to Revelation, the same God, the same sinful man, the same Saviour from sin, the same great salvation in Christ by faith, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one one God and Father of all. This is the book whose doctrine we seek. And the single, simple question is, What does the Bible teach? What saith the Scripture? The Bible doctrinally and the doctrine Biblically is the subject fully stated.

What then are the doctrines of the Bible? The Biblical system of doctrine, what is it? This question is to be answered, not by quoting one or several or many proof-texts, but by a careful study of every book and a clear understanding of its meaning and purpose; then a comparing of Scripture with Scripture, of books with book, and so on

understanding of the whole Book, a grasp of its teaching, a comprehension of its doctrine. This is something very different from finding a few proof-texts, vastly more difficult to do, more satisfactory, too, when done. E. g., in the book of Esther the text-hunter would find no doctrine of God, for the word is wanting there; but the real Bible student would, he would discern His hand, feel His presence, read His purpose, see His glory there.

As every thoughtful reader of Scripture knows, there are some truths or doctrines more prominent and important than others. But among these three stand pre-eminent, like Mt. Hermon, which the Arabs call the "Jebel Sheik" or Mountain Chief, as it rears its snow capped summit high above the rest; so with these three—they are found on every page, they are treated of directly or indirectly in every chapter, they form part and purpose—the major part and chief purpose—of every book of the Bible, and about these easily gather all the rest. They are God, Man, Salvation. The Bible teaching as to God, or Bible doctrine of God, Biblical Theology; the Bible teaching as to man, especially man the sinner, sinful and sinning, or the Bible doctrine of man, Biblical Anthropology; and the Bible teaching as to salvation from sin by Christ, or the Bible doctrine of salvation, Bible dictionary. Could we get and arrange all the teachings of the Bible on these subjects, we would have an invaluable compend of Bible doctrine, a divine system of theology, the ideal, the true "Biblical Theology." This would indeed be the Bible Doctrinally. But who is sufficient for this? Certainly it cannot be done here and now; it will not be attempted. Yet even we, and in the little while left, may get an idea of the way this may be done and of the results of such study of God's word touching these great doctrines.

I. As to God and what the Bible teaches of Him. Open the Bible at Gen. 1:1. The first words are: "In the beginning God created." There was a beginning of time and things and beings, but in that beginning and before God was. The real "beginning" was when He "created the heavens and the earth." Then verse 2, we have "the Spirit of God moved," etc., and then follow in quick succession these expressions: "God saw," "Said let there and there was," "God divided," "called," "made," "set," "blessed," "said let us make man." So on this first page we have God, an intelligent, self-existent, eternal, omnipotent Being, a mighty Sovereign who plans, purposes, executes, who speaks and it is done, who commands and it stands fast, the great Creator. Further, there is at least a hint, a two fold hint, of more Persons than one in this one God. For in verse 2, we read of "the Spirit of God," and in verse 26, "God said let us make man in our image, after our likeness." All this without turning a leaf. In the next chapter God, "Jehovah God," comes down and enters into covenant with man. In chapter 3, God the Lawgiver and Judge, and God merciful and gracious, \* \* and—But time would fail to speak of the gradual, steady unfolding of this truth, a real "progress of doctrine" concerning God in the Pentateuch, the Historical Books, the Psalms, and the Prophets in the Old; then of the fuller, more perfect development of

this great doctrine in the New Testament.

In such a study several things would be noted by the careful student. One the gradual unfolding of the doctrine of the Trinity, from the first hint in Genesis to its full development in the Gospels and Epistles. Another the mighty emphasis given to God's Sovereignty. Always and everywhere it is God, God over all, the Sovereign God, doing according to His will in the armies and among the inhabitants of earth. Another, that God, has always had peculiar interest in our world and our race, and very special personal relations with part of the race—His elect people. Yet another, God's dealings with this world and with men in it have all been according to a definite plan, a predestined purpose. This plan is from the beginning, "God's eternal purpose;" it is universal, all embracing, including all things and all beings, all His creatures and all their actions from the falling sparrow to the death of Jesus Christ; it is unchanging, "without variableness or the shadow of turning;" it is efficient, never doubtful or uncertain, but always accomplished—"whatsoever Jehovah hath pleased that hath He done in heaven and in earth." Finally, in all His relations and dealings with men, He is "the God of all grace," "a just God" indeed, but also "a Saviour." He "will by no means clear the guilty," yet is He "the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy (R. V. loving kindness) for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin."

II. As to man, and what the Bible teaches of him. The Bible speaks of man as no other book does. None other so exalts him, none other so abases him; none gives him such an origin; none describes such a ruin by sin; none pronounces such a doom upon him because of sin; none ascribes to him even amid this wreck and ruin wrought by such a destiny in Christ. Here several things are to be noted.

One, as to man's origin and nature. "God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him." "And Jehovah God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." Behold him! Man, in the image and likeness of God, upright pure, perfect, the lord of earth, the child of heaven, the son of God." But, alas! the scene soon changes; turn but a page and read the sad story; the tempter comes, man sins, then follow "death and all our woe." From Gen. 3 to the end the Bible treats of man the sinner, a lost sinner, separated from God, under the penalty of violated law, a child of misery and heir of death, "lost and ruined by the fall."

A careful, thorough study of the whole Book makes several things evident. One, that this sin, or sinfulness, is universal. It affects the race; it taints mankind. "All have sinned." Again, that sin came "by one man." The sin of one involved the race in ruin. "By one man sin entered into the world and death by sin." Yet again, it is innate, native. "By nature children of wrath." It descends from parent to child. Sinfulness is a natural trait. "In sin did my mother conceive me." Further, it is pervasive and controlling. It affects injuriously the whole man, every part and faculty and power of body, mind and heart. See Gen. 6:5 and 8:21, etc. And it is controlling; men will sin; nothing can restrain them; "the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil," their very eyes "cannot cease from sin." Finally, it is fatal and deceive. "The ruin irremediable, the loss ir retrievable. "The wages of sin is