

V. SYSTEMATIC AND APOLOGETIC THEOLOGY.**A Manual of Theology.**

By Joseph Agar Beet, D.D. A. C. Armstrong and Son, New York. 1906.

This is a comprehensive volume of 559 pages, charmingly written and pleasing in its mechanical execution. The author is sane, scholarly and spiritual. He is at home in various branches of allied knowledge, and therefore presents his topics in large and attractive perspective. He is well acquainted with the history of doctrine, and is aware of the theological trend of the present day, but what is far better though of less frequent occurrence, he has an intelligent, profound and sympathetic grasp of biblical truth. The scope of the work can be best indicated by giving the topics of the eleven parts into which the book is divided. Nature and God; Christianity and Christ; The Sacred Records; The Father, Son and Spirit; Man: Created and Ruined; The Gospel of Pardon; Through Christ Jesus; The New Life in Christ; The Divine-human Christian Life; The Church of Christ; The Last Things. The author unifies a study of the Canon, Ecclesiology, Pastoral Duties, a brief history of many important doctrines, and the topics ordinarily discussed in theological treatises. He meets critical problems fairly and adopts a judicious historical method. He keeps both eyes open, and is not afraid to adopt traditional views when they seem best, neither is he slow to modify them when his investigations lead him to this conclusion.

The author seems to be fair-minded and does not deal in acrimonious denunciations. His spirit is admirable, style clear, vigorous and unusually attractive. He gives copious references to the Bible, and shows rare power in their combination and interpretation.

He is a Trinitarian and Post-Millennarian. He hinges his faith in miracles on the resurrection of Jesus Christ

which he considers historically proved beyond the shadow of intelligent doubt. As to the atonement he says that "in the death of Christ, we see the Father not over-riding but submitting to his own law." God in the death of Christ maintains the inevitable moral sequence of sin and death. The atonement "safeguards the announcement of pardon for all who repent" and prevents man from perverting the forbearance of God and the doctrine of forgiveness. "In the need for this safeguard against immoral misuse, lies the absolute necessity of the death of Christ for the pardon of sins, which underlies the entire New Testament." But one is inclined to ask whether the atonement is intended more as a preventive of man's misuse of divine mercy, or as a necessity of God's holiness and man's sinfulness. The discussion of this topic is fresh and vigorous though one may dissent from his position, or believe that he falls short of the full biblical presentation. He accepts the position of the original innocence of man, and consequent fall so that all are now by nature the "children of wrath."

He is unusually clear in his presentation of the believer's union with Christ by personal faith and the privilege and duty of a blessed assurance of salvation. His doctrine of the "eternal forethought of God" in which the "two elements in God's purpose of salvation are a selection or choice or election of the objects of salvation and a marking out beforehand or foreordination or predestination of the goal to which he purposes to lead them," is clearly presented. He thinks the original material creation included merely a homogeneous substance, "for heterogeneity would imply a previous history." The original matter was divinely endowed with all the necessary forces for the future stages of Theistic evolution. He bases his doctrine of human freedom upon the testimony of conscience and history. "We can not throw off a conviction that we are ourselves the ultimate source of our own action" and that our sense of

responsibility is such a powerful deterrent from sin that it cannot be considered a delusion. He traces the church idea from the congregation of Israel where membership was national to the assembly of the saints in Christ where the membership is personal. He frankly admits that there is no scriptural authority for infant baptism but strangely argues that as Abraham was circumcised when an adult and Isaac when an infant, so the descendants of Abraham may be baptized in either maturity or infancy.

The infants of any parents, believers or unbelievers, may be baptized. How does the following sound in this day of classical and biblical learning? In speaking of baptize he says: "In classical, and more frequently in later, Greek, the word is occasionally used in the sense of dip, or sink, or soak." His remarkable comment on Rom. 6: 4 and Col. 2" is thus presented as a rebuttal to the contention that "buried with Christ" means immersion. "But in ancient Greece, the sprinkling of a handful of dust was a valid burial." His array of scriptures on the topic of future retribution is excellent but his conclusion is foggy. "The New Testament writers agree to describe with more or less definiteness, the doom of the lost as utter ruin including actual suffering and final exclusion from the blessedness of the saved. They do not say or suggest that their agony will ever sink into unconsciousness; nor do they plainly and categorically assert its endless continuance. A few important passages look forward to the universal homage of a ransomed race and universe; but not in a way which implies the ultimate salvation of all men now living."

All in all it is one of the best of the valuable English treatises on theology, in thought, comprehensiveness, development, style and spirit.

BYRON H. DEMENT.