

**A POCKET SYSTEM OF  
THEOLOGY FOR SABBATH-  
SCHOOL TEACHERS AND  
CHURCH-MEMBERS GENERALLY**

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A Pocket System of Theology for Sabbath-School Teachers and Church-Members Generally by  
John Reid

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# POCKET SYSTEM OF THEOLOGY

FOR

SABBATH-SCHOOL TEACHERS

AND

CHURCH-MEMBERS GENERALLY.

BY THE

REV. JOHN REID,

AUTHOR OF "VOICES OF THE SOUL ANSWERED IN GOD," ETC.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY THE REV. JOHN HALL, D. D.



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## INTRODUCTION.

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THERE have been made in our time many and comparatively successful attempts to render into popular form and language the processes and results of those sciences which are commonly studied with care only by specialists. The effect has been good on the whole. The range of thought has been widened. The modest have been encouraged to prosecute study in departments which they would otherwise have deemed beyond their reach. Now, if men have thus gained on common lines of thought and investigation, surely yet more may be hoped from the like course in reference to theology—"the most excellent of the sciences."

The facilities—in the existing knowledge of religious truth and interest in it—are greater to the popular teacher of theology than to a like laborer in the fields of physical, or even of intellectual, science; and for this reason; that through God's goodness to the land there is wide acquaintance

with the text-book, and there is a certain amount of exact knowledge in a multitude of minds. He who has, for example, committed to memory and retained there a good Catechism, has a certain preparation for further exact statement, and is prepared to appreciate truths in their relation to one another and to general thought and life.

Over against this must, indeed, be set the fact that the natural man is not in sympathy with spiritual things, and that human pride is all too ready to place revelation on the same basis with the results of human speculation. But on this very account it is all the more important to give definite information regarding the grounds of religious belief, and to show the elements that distinguish it from common conviction.

It is sometimes suggested in the press, and even in the pulpit, that the age does not want theology—that, in fact, it is an incumbrance to the Church. Humanity, culture, ethics (so called, as if theology did not carry with it the true and highest ethics!) and other vague terms are commended as describing the wants of the time. Of this two things may be said.

In the first place, whatever God revealed to man in ages past for his spiritual good must still be for



that good unless some important element has undergone a radical change. But what radical change has taken place in the nature of God? or of man? or in their relations? or in the nature of moral evil? or of moral good? or of their influences on mankind?

And in the second place, it is generally conceded that in order to practical efficiency in the various departments of human effort exact intelligence must be kept within practical reach of the laborers. Discontinue the teaching of spelling and grammar, and the influence will soon appear in human speech and writing. Drop the study of mathematics, chemistry and allied sciences, and the influence will soon be felt in the related arts. So abandonment of exact theological teaching will soon be followed by loose thinking; but "as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." Let sin, for example, be an unhappy incident, a slight misfortune, a piece of "bad form" simply, in a man's mind, and he will not be as watchful against it or as sorry for it as will one who has learned to count it transgression of God's law, of which the wages is death.

The author of this little book, deeply impressed with these convictions, aims at bringing theological inquiry to the level of ordinary intelligence. His

previous efforts in the press entitle him, by their recognized character and influence, to speak again. He enjoys the confidence of his brethren. A venerable and trusted teacher of theology has read the work and given it approval, and from the examination I have been able to give to portions of it I do not hesitate to commend the work as fitted to guard against loose and inaccurate statement; to counteract the bad impressions made by indiscriminate sentences uttered in the interests of supposed "liberal" thought and specially broad charity; to show that the "dogmas" which are denounced are often not understood by their critics, and that the arbitrary decrees of Church authority in the Middle Ages are one thing, the doctrines given to men by inspiration of God are quite another.

JOHN HALL.

NEW YORK, 1st FEBRUARY, 1884.

## PREFACE.

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THE Puritans of the seventeenth century were theologians, and it was their theology which strengthened them and made them the great men of their age. When Holland, Scotland and New England lost their theology, they lost their power. The religion that despises doctrines is a religion that will be despised. A departure from orthodoxy, instead of being the sign of spiritual progress, is the sign of spiritual declension. It is morally impossible for saintly men like Leighton and Edwards to trample upon fundamental truth. The heart more generally leads to error than the head. The new is not always true, and the true is not always new.

There is needed just now a profound theological consciousness—that is, a sense of God, a feeling of awe and reverence, a high conception of the divine rectitude, in order to give tone to our views of the divine mercy—then a devotional spirit that will make the secular habit and the merely intellectual to be an impossibility. The end of all truth and