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e.g. among others, ii. 25. In iii. 3 "did not believe" is as good as "were without faith" and "unbelief" as "without faith"; but "the faithfulness of God" better than "the faith of God"; whilst "without effect" is perhaps better than "of none effect," and "ineffectual" would, I think, be better than either. Chap. iii. 21 is improved by rendering *χωρίς νόμου* "apart from the law," and placing it in a prominent position, and giving the Perf. Tense its appropriate rendering; and injured by the substitution of *a* for *the*. See also iii. 28; vi. 3; vii. 13, et al. Others, almost innumerable, are at least unnecessarily changed; such as ii. 23; iii. 4; iv. 15; vi. 3; vii. 1; ix. 6; xiv. 2, 3, et al. *saepe*.

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## ARTICLE VI.

### DR. DORNER'S POSITION WITH REGARD TO PROBATION AFTER DEATH.<sup>1</sup>

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THE book whose title appears below will without doubt be widely studied in America; for there is no living German theologian whose works are oftener seen in our public and private libraries than those of Dr. Dorner. We are greatly indebted to European scholars for the enrichment of many departments of theology; but it should not be forgotten that the doctrine of future punishment has been worked out more consistently and thoroughly here than in any other country. Discussions on this subject seem indigenous to the soil of America, and are multiplied from year to year. Nor is this strange; for no "state church" has given our people the impression that their salvation was secured at birth or baptism. Every man not an open sceptic stands in full

<sup>1</sup> A System of Christian Doctrine. By Dr. I. A. Dorner, Oberconsistorialrath and Professor of Theology, Berlin. Translated by Professors Alfred Cave and J. S. Banks. In four volumes. Vol. iv. Translated by Prof. Banks. Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark. 1882.

view of eternity, to work out his own salvation according to the best light he can gain. Not only pulpits and theological journals, but every "corner-store" and "local paper," every parlor and cottage have a share in the agitation. Whatever is uttered concerning the retributions of the future life finds at once an immense audience and an intelligent verdict. Thus, though it may be excusable in a German divine to ignore the best works on this theme which come from across the sea, yet if we neglect them ourselves, and go to Europe for our eschatology, we resemble the well-known type of American travellers, who can talk glibly of Rome and Berlin, but never visited Niagara or the White Mountains. Still, the high reputation of Dr. Dorner will give weight and currency to his opinions, and these should therefore be thoroughly examined.

The present review has been prepared on the basis of the original German, but while it was in progress the English translation of the closing volumes appeared; hence, for the sake of convenience, the citations of this Article are made from the latter. In general, the translators seem to have conveyed the author's meaning correctly, though their language adheres too closely to the German idiom (as in the sentence beginning at the foot of p. 216), and there are occasional errors, sometimes quite amusing ones. In the single instance in which President Edwards is quoted (p. 214, n. 1) he figures as "the distinguished President, Dr. John Edwards, sen." "John" should have remembered brother Jonathan better, not to add that the elder Edwards was never doctored. An example of mistranslations which affect the argument is the very singular insertion of the article before the word *κρίσις* (p. 410), which reverses the force of the original.

It is gratifying to us—possibly it will be disappointing to some—to see how squarely Dr. Dorner plants himself on the evangelical theology in the main, as in the great doctrines of the Trinity, the person of Christ, expiatory atonement, and others. He takes pains to refute at length both Universalism and Annihilationism. Still, his own position with regard to

future probation differs widely from that commonly held by our evangelical churches; for he criticises all positive statements respecting the future lot of the wicked, leaving both their intermediate and final destiny undetermined. The purpose of this Article is to inquire into the grounds of his view.

#### A SYSTEM WITH NO CENTRE.

What shall be our final arbiter, the common consciousness or the Bible? This question the author does not answer distinctly; he assigns an exalted place to both. The fundamental thought of his system is that of a scientific method in theology; as in other sciences, so in this, experimental knowledge must be the basis. But the experience necessary in theology is Christian faith. Whatever the principle of Christian faith affirms constitutes the science; hence the title of the book, "Christliche Glaubenslehre," literally "Christian-faith doctrine." On the other hand, a divine revelation is the very contents of faith, and this we have not only in the Christian consciousness, both individual and general, but in an objective, written form, as scripture. The author presents under each doctrine, first, the biblical teaching, then the ecclesiastical development, then the doctrinal discussion. But the question arises, If the principle of faith, as given in consciousness, should come into apparent conflict with the written word, which is to prevail? The difficulty is solved in a practical way, for the author refuses to formulate points of doctrine when the two sources of evidence clash. Thus, in regard to the endless duration of future punishment, he concedes that the scriptural evidence in the affirmative preponderates, and then adds (p. 424), "but we have therewith no dogmatic proposition, because the latter must also be derived from the principle of faith." A valid objection, then, to this position, is the indefiniteness of the system from which it results. It is neither biblical, historical, nor doctrinal theology. It has no centre, but revolves around two foci, which are themselves not clearly determined. Accordingly, the final destiny of the wicked is one of the

things which, according to Dr. Dorner, cannot be known. But why is the principle of faith supposed to contradict the evidence of Scripture in the present case? The answer appears in the author's theory of the will.

#### CONTINGENCY OF VOLITION.

“The objective reason why no categorical affirmation can be made on dogmatic grounds, lies in human *freedom*. It does not admit the assertion of a universal process leading *necessarily* to salvation” (p. 424). A similar remark follows with regard to endless suffering, and also (p. 427) to annihilation. In these passages, and many others, we encounter the familiar confusion of necessity and certainty, and the radical difference between the German conception of free-will and our own. Dr. Dorner regards a wicked will as like a pyramid on its point; there is no telling what will happen; only the righteous possess true freedom. In this way he seeks to escape the objection that the eternal destiny of a saint must be as uncertain as that of a sinner. But not even so acute a thinker as he can avoid the inconsistencies on this subject into which the Edwardses were wont to force their opponents. Compare page 423, where “freedom is the power to sunder spirits into *absolute* contrasts [the emphasis is Dorner's] deeper than any contrasts in mere nature,” with the very next page, where conversion is said to be possible “so long as freedom of any kind exists.”

#### GOD CANNOT FOREKNOW FREE ACTS.

In the *Bibliotheca Sacra* for January and April 1879 an abstract was given of Dr. Dorner's remarkable papers on the unchangeableness of God, published in the *Jahrb. für deutsche Theologie*, 1856-58. The ground he takes with respect to the divine omniscience is that all events are ever present to God, but that he knows the contingent only as contingent; for instance, he knows at a certain time that Judas *may* betray his Master, but does not know that he *will* till the choice is actually taken. “His knowledge of human acts as actual

occurrences must therefore, in some sense or other, be gradually acquired, as they pass out from the sphere of the possible, constituted by the divine will, into the sphere of the actual, of which the human will is a determining factor.”<sup>1</sup>

In the present work also Dr. Dorner distinctly holds that God cannot foreknow the contingent except as contingent. It follows that even He does not know as yet whether all men will be saved or not. If there be a future life, then, probation after death is an absolute certainty; for so long as a wicked man exists, he must be in a state of probation. The advocates of this view would simplify matters much, when they are asked whether any one is to be forever lost, if instead of replying, “We do not know,” they would answer boldly, “God does not know.”

#### SCRIPTURAL PROOFS OF ENDLESS PUNISHMENT EVADED.

Our author considers (p. 418) certain passages of the Bible which are regarded as teaching eternal punishment, but mentions only four: the unpardonable sin, the lake of eternal fire, the worm which dies not, and the woe upon Judas. He includes under the first, however, a few texts like 1 John v. 16, and under the second a few others like Matt. xxv. 46. The great mass of scriptural testimony which brings out the “dread aspect of finality” so often insisted upon (e.g. Luke xiii. 24–30), Dr. Dorner quietly ignores. As to the unpardonable sin, he remarks that it is uncertain whether this ever has been or will be committed. This reply is hardly tenable in view of Mark’s statement (iii. 30) that Christ spake these words about the sin against the Holy Ghost, “because they said, ‘He hath an unclean spirit.’”

When we come to the texts containing the image of fire, the same line of defence is attempted. “John does not say who or that a man will be cast into the lake of fire; the hypothetical form is rather chosen, ‘If one is not inscribed in the book of life,’ ‘If one worship the beast [*εἰ τῷ*, Rev. xx. 15; xiv. 9], he shall drink the cup of wrath,’ all of which affirms

<sup>1</sup> Bib. Sac. Jan. 1879, p. 55.

nothing of persons, but of the principle." But this time, certainly, Dr. Dorner leans on a broken reed. The supposed hypothetical form of Rev. xiv. 9 is changed in the eleventh verse to a direct statement, and so combined with *ei tis* as to show that the latter is correctly rendered "whosoever." Still more careless is this evasion so far as it relates to Rev. xx. 15, which is not at all hypothetical, but a statement of what John saw in vision. The context reads, "And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire." Then follows, not "If any man is not found written in the book of life, he *shall be* cast into the lake of fire," but "If any *was* not found written in the book of life, he *was* cast into the lake of fire." Dr. Dorner says the lake of fire denotes the second death, and the second death may signify a state of spiritual ruin. But the Bible says not only the lake of fire is the second death, but the second death is the lake of fire, and this implies positive torment, though not necessarily resembling natural fire. The devil has been in a state of spiritual ruin ever since his apostasy, but according to Rev. xx. 10 he is to receive judicial sentence. Also, it is plainly taught, when we compare these three passages from the Apocalypse, that the impenitent wicked are to share in the fate of Satan. And if any one objects to the highly-wrought imagery of this book, and the mythological character of the beings mentioned, he is reminded that the Son of man himself has told us that the wicked will share the fate of Satan, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. xxv. 41). "There is much that is figurative in passages of this kind," says Dr. Dorner. True, but every figure used by our Lord is of profound importance. These terrible emblems of fire and worm may perhaps signify the burning of conscience and the gnawing of remorse; but at least they signify something; they are not to be emptied of all meaning. The image of fire occurs not only in the parables of Christ, but in his own explanation of two of them; and in one case there is no suggestion of fire in the story itself. When we see fisher-

men sorting their fish and casting the bad away, no one thinks of fire; but in *interpreting* the parable of the draw-net Jesus doomed the wicked to the furnace of fire. The exact nature of this fire is mercifully hidden from us, just as the exact time of the judgment is unknown; but the Bible tells us that this sentence will come at the end of the world; that it will consign to torment all who are then adjudged guilty; and that its duration will be eternal.

But it is replied, that "in the strongest passages the word *αἰών*, *αἰώνιος* occurs, which by no means denotes everywhere an endless period." We read on the previous page, "The strongest passage on this side is the saying respecting the betrayer, 'It were better for that man if he had never been born.'" As the author makes no attempt to break the force of this, it remains, presumedly, in its original strength. The proper inquiry about *αἰών* and *αἰώνιος* would be, What do they *naturally* denote in the cases in question? but Dr. Dorner cites only Heb. ix. 26, and a dozen passages from the Septuagint, adding, "that *αἰών* corresponds to *αἰών* is shown by the Septuagint and the New Testament." *Αἰώνιος* is discreetly passed over, or rather, both are treated as a single word. Here is a most superficial and one-sided handling of this subject, as any one may see who will take the trouble to consult Passow, Liddell and Scott, Sophocles, Grimm, or any other good lexicon. It is preposterous to convert Christ's direct assertions of the endlessness of punishment into an argument on the other side. The sentence cannot expire by limitation, for in its terms it is unlimited. Those who assert the contrary should raise no objection to retaining our English phrases "everlasting punishment" and "endless punishment," inasmuch as they may denote a limited duration, like "endless genealogies" or "everlasting hills." But the Christian consciousness is not so easily deceived. The trumpet of revelation gives no uncertain sound, but declares in plain terms that there will be some condemned to everlasting punishment in the great day of decision.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I would refer here to the classic treatise of Dr. Jonathan Edwards: "The



## PROBATION BETWEEN DEATH AND THE JUDGMENT.

If there be any hope that those who die in impenitence will be finally saved, it must relate to this intermediate period. Unless our previous positions can be disproved, we enter upon this branch of the inquiry with a strong presumption in the negative. This mortal life is evidently designed and admirably adapted for a state of probation; if any man says that there will be a further one, he must give a reason for the hope that is in him. It is in vain to urge the universal benevolence of God, or the universal scope of the gospel, or the dignity of the human constitution; for if, in consistency with all these, God may sentence some of his creatures to utter destruction, then *a fortiori* he may limit the day of grace to this life. The most which any one can hope to prove is, that some men do not have a sufficient probation here, and therefore will have one hereafter. An alternative form of the doctrine is, that some men have *no* probation here, and therefore will have one hereafter. Neither of these alleged facts is granted. We hold, on the contrary, that all men have in this life a probation, and a sufficient probation; indeed, that mankind as a whole have in this life the best possible probation.

## CAN THERE BE NO CONDEMNATION WITHOUT A CLEAR KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST?

Dr. Dorner contends earnestly for an open door of hope in the intermediate state. Page 412, "The gospel will be brought decisively home to all who did not in this world come to definitive decision, and all who do not shut themselves thereto will be saved." It is hard to see who is excepted here, in view of the uncertainty attending human freedom. If a definitive decision against Christ is reached to-day, it may be reconsidered to-morrow, and so after death, and so after judgment of all men strictly examined," which is little quoted now-a-days, but which no one who desires light on this matter can afford to neglect. Among recent books, Prof. Wright on "The Relation of Death to Probation," is worthy of especial mention. See also two admirable papers in the Bib. Sac. by Prof. F. H. Foster (April 1878), and Prof. Ezra Gould (April 1880).

ment, and so on forever. Page 424, "So long as freedom exists, the possibility of conversion is not excluded. But wherever this possibility should issue in reality, there self-evidently the condemnation could no longer continue." It is *self-evident*, then, whatever Scripture may have said, that the door remains open forever. Accordingly, endless punishment cannot be fully maintained, he thinks, unless the complete loss of freedom for conversion — absolute hardening — is also taught. "Whereupon, the new question arises, whether these are still men, and not rather persons that have been men, but have really degenerated into a lower class of beings." But we do not deny to the lost the possession of freedom. On the contrary, the very *differentia* which raises man above the lower creation is this power to choose with absolute strength either God or the devil. Again, what is meant by a *definitive* decision? Is it not true in all moral questions that not to decide is to decide? Is it not the teaching of both reason and the Bible that to put off the consideration of the gospel is as fatal as a decided rejection? If this is not true, we may as well stop preaching; for all our hearers have to do to insure a future probation is to keep on acting the part of Felix, floating in the current of the world, and never coming to a definitive decision — with the promise that the gospel will be brought decisively home to them in the future world. But how are matters helped by this adjournment? Dr. Dorner has surely too great respect for human liberty to tell us that men will be *forced* to decide either for or against Christ in the next world. However decisively the gospel is brought home to them, it is they, not the gospel, who are to decide; or if they prefer, they may still put off the decision. They gain eternal hope by hope eternally deferred. The author's meaning may possibly be, that those who have had no knowledge of the gospel here will have it brought before their minds hereafter. If so, the language admirably conceals the thought. We cannot help asking whether a probation after death, if granted to the wicked, would be probably successful. What, according to Dr.

Dorner, are the actual conditions of that existence? The outlook is gloomy enough in his own description.

Page 412, "As to those who die unbelievers, or not yet believers, to them also the ground of their souls is laid bare, and therefore their impurity, their discord with and alienation from God. This must become conscious discord in themselves. If they were subject to evil inclinations and passions, they will busy themselves with the corresponding objects, and yet find no appeasement of their longing, and will be given over, so to speak, to their thoughts and desires as tormentors." Let these words be well weighed; for they teach us that the wicked who have died are already suffering the torments of hell. Fire and brimstone are not half so terrible as the giving over of a soul to the torments of conscience. And this is to be the fate not only of unbelievers, but also of those not yet believers, who (p. 410) cannot justly be "condemned for not seeing and knowing Christ, which was not their fault." The tender mercies of this theory are cruel. Since all experience shows that sin grows by what it feeds upon, we cannot avoid the inference that the souls of the wicked beyond the grave become gradually hardened instead of softened, and that even if salvation were offered to them, it would be offered in vain. But there is no sufficient evidence that such an offer will ever be made. True, it is the constant assumption of the book before us that all men must be brought to the definite knowledge of the gospel; upon this its chief argument for probation in the intermediate state depends.

Page 409, "The absoluteness of Christianity demands that no one be judged before Christianity has been made accessible and brought home to him. But this is not the case in this life with millions of human beings. Nay, even within the church there are periods and circles where the gospel does not really approach men as that which it is. Moreover, those dying in childhood have not been able to decide personally for Christianity." Many who may be otherwise attracted to this theory will draw back when they perceive its practical consequences. Instead of providing for the immediate salva-

tion of that half of the race who die in childhood, it obliges them to take the doubtful risks of a future probation, and that, too, without help from the presence of the holy (p. 411). Again, it demands in each case a distinct choice with a clear knowledge of the gospel. But this is flatly contradicted by Scripture. As many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law. When we are told (p. 405) "according to Holy Scripture the gospel must be preached to all," there is a curious fallacy in the use of the word *must*. It is the church of Christ on whom the necessity is laid to preach the gospel to every creature; the very earnestness and emphasis with which the Bible presents this duty is one of the strongest evidences that the work must be done while the church is in the world. But the statement must not pass unquestioned, that those who die without knowledge of the gospel have not had a full and fair probation. Whenever a being can be found who is destitute of a conscience, he cannot properly be called a man, but must belong to a lower class of beings, that have no moral responsibility, and hence incur no condemnation. But in the very possession of conscience there is given a moral probation; and in the universal fact that men sin against their consciences, knowing better than they do, appears a universal condemnation. When they knew God they glorified him not as God. (See Professor Shedd's discourse from this text in *Sermons to the Natural Man*, p. 98 ff.) All men, then, are sinful, and their sin deserves punishment. If God delivers them from it, it is an unmerited favor; for they have had a full and fair probation.

#### CONFUSED IDEAS OF LAW AND GOSPEL.

The book before us evidently confounds two things which the Bible is careful to keep distinct. It is the *law* which condemns men; the gospel is brought in through God's abounding grace to make a way of escape. It is not the fault of God, but of the church, if the remedy is not published wherever the disease has spread; and it may have been essential to restrict that proclamation to this life, in order to secure the

wisest and best probation to the church on the one hand and the world on the other. Dr. Dorner says (p. 423), "It must be considered that *the* sin which leads to condemnation can never be the sin resulting from innate sinfulness alone, or to speak generally, from the influence of the race, the common spirit, example, or temptation by error. Rather, the sin rendering the individual absolutely bad can only be the personal guilt of rejecting Christ."

As this is applied to all who may be finally lost, it is not necessary to pause on the phrase "absolutely bad." The proposition is, that the only sin for which any will be condemned eternally is the personal rejection of Christ, without influence from the example or temptation of others. We have a right to ask for proof of this, but none is offered. The position results, naturally, from the author's theory of the divine forgiveness (pp. 224-229), according to which God is not only reconciled to the world through Christ, but has actually pardoned the sins of every individual. At the conversion of a sinner, no change takes place in God's attitude toward him, but the sinner himself becomes conscious of the forgiveness which was already made perfect in the atonement of Christ. But this involves the contradiction that sin can be forgiven before it is committed, and the absurdity that the Divine Being looks with full complacency upon the greatest criminals in the midst of their impenitence.

The idea that deliberate rejection of Christ is the only fatal sin is entirely unscriptural. It confuses, I repeat, the work of the law with that of the gospel, and so runs counter to both warp and woof of God's great plan of salvation. "Do this, and live." "The soul that sinneth it shall die." "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." This idea is opposed to reason as well as revelation. We read (p. 181), "It is indispensable that there be a free, conscious decision for or against Christianity; for without this no definitive settlement of the worth and destiny of the individual were possible." But if this be so, those who dislike Christianity would certainly avoid such

a decision. On Dr. Dorner's theory of the will, God cannot force their liberty. The truth is, it is impossible to avoid some decision (though not necessarily a deliberate and conscious one), because the essence of such a decision is involved in the character formed here.

#### CHRISTIANS NOT SINLESS TILL THE JUDGMENT.

Kindred with this teaching as to the wicked in the intermediate state, is our author's view of the condition of the righteous. What he adds to the prospects of the former on the commonly received view, he subtracts from the prospects of the latter.

The righteous are not freed from sin when they die; not until the final judgment. He believes the church has recoiled too far from the Catholic doctrine of purgatory; there is, to be sure, no punishment or penance for the children of God, but yet a long and gradual purification. Page 378, "Believers leave the earth without being saints." Pages 408, 409, "If believers are conceived as holy directly after death, sanctification would be effected by the separation from the body; the seat therefore of evil must be found in the body, and sanctification would be realized through a mere suffering, namely, of death, in a physical process, instead of through the will."

*Post hoc, ergo propter hoc* is an old fallacy. In holding the sinlessness of departed believers, we do not suppose that the physical process of death has anything to do with it. Why should their wills choose to sin, when they are removed from all the ungodly, from all temptation by the world, the flesh, and the devil, and brought into the immediate presence of their Lord? But, Dr. Dorner replies, they cannot see God; not until they are pure in heart. Without holiness no man can see the Lord (p. 404). And yet holiness, even in this life, is constantly ascribed to believers. Their common designation in the Epistles is the "saints," the holy. No others can see the Lord. The beatitude upon the pure in heart includes all who call on the Lord out of a pure heart (2 Tim.

ii. 22. Cf. 1 Tim. i. 5, 6). Even so Paul is now absent from the body and present with the Lord ; not because he is *Saint Paul*, for the dying thief, without hinderance from his past crimes, was at once with Christ in Paradise.

If it be true that there is no sinlessness till the day of judgment, it is a sad gospel for a multitude of God's children, who are struggling through this earthly pilgrimage, weary and heavy-laden with the body of this death, but comforting their hearts with the promise that it is but a little while. "To-day thou shalt be with me in Paradise" would promise no Paradise for them if it were to be stained with sin.

There be three who will not receive this word ; yea, four will reject it utterly : the dying believer ; and the mother whose son has departed in the faith ; and the Christian hero, in the thick of the fight with sin ; and the aged saint, who waits for the coming of his Lord.

At times, Dr. Dorner describes the state of the righteous between death and the resurrection in such a way as to give sufficient room for spiritual progress, without assuming the necessity of sin (see pages 411, 412, especially the following) : "The withdrawal into self has for the pious a purifying and educative effect. It serves to obliterate all stains," etc. These words probably mean that the stains will be gradually obliterated, and entirely disappear before the day of judgment. But even in that case it is Dr. Dorner's view (curiously enough), and not our own, which confounds the ethical and the spiritual process. His philosophy of the will leads him to think of sin as a substance inherent in the soul, not to be effaced without long washing. But the soul is at least metaphysically pure — a simple unit ; and when it chooses God with all its strength it is morally pure. What should prevent that choice, as a constant habit, in the spirit-world ; the will co-operating with divine grace, just as in regeneration (p. 183) ? We hold as strongly as any to a spiritual growth throughout the intermediate life. But is vice essential to growth in virtue ? This may be good Hegelianism, but is not good sense.

On page 378 Dr. Dorner quotes from the Larger Catechism, "We are altogether pure and holy only at the resurrection," and from the Formula of Concord, "Sin cleaves to the soul." Let us take, then, the case of Adam, who must have had an imperfect spiritual development at the time of his death. On the theory we are criticizing, he will have had no one knows how many thousands of years to efface his sin before the coming of Christ to judgment. He cannot be pure and holy before. Now, from the millions of Christians who are taken away in the last years of earthly history, let us select one whose capacity and moral state correspond in every respect as nearly as may be to those of Adam at his death. This man, by the action of his own will (p. 409), will also have effaced his stains when the day of judgment comes. Hence a cause operating for a year or two produces the same effect which an equal cause, operating upon an equal object, can only produce in many thousands of years. It cannot be said that the same difficulty results from the doctrine of progress *without* sin, for while we hold that "the souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory," we regard each as a sphere of light, capable of indefinite and unequal expansion. Star differeth from star in glory.

### THREE FAULTS OF THE OLD ESCHATOLOGY.

On page 382 Dr. Dorner names three defects in the prevailing eschatology of the church: 1. "It supposes no such intermediate state between this life and the consummation as to prevent decision being come to upon all, upon their definitive worth and destiny, with the conclusion of the present life." But if this be a defect, Scripture seems to share it, as we shall see. 2. "If death decides everything, this forestalls the final judgment in reference to the lot both of the wicked and believers; for even the importance of the resurrection is threatened, if blessedness follows immediately on death without limitation." But we hold to unalloyed, not unlimited blessedness, immediately after death, and we all agree that the resurrection brings a vast enlargement to



the bliss of the redeemed. The final judgment is not forestalled, for its great significance lies in its *theodicy*, the vindication of God's ways before the assembled universe, by an unfolding of the course of history. Dr. Dorner's theory, on the contrary, *nullifies* the final judgment; it is not final at all.

3. "It is suspicious that the interest for holiness is secondary to the interest for blessedness, which is shown in the fact that the old dogmatists make complete freedom from imperfection and sin ensue for the justified, without further ado, with the laying aside of the body." This is a curious piece of reasoning; "it is suspicious" indeed; one suspects a mis-translation; but the general sense is correctly given, as may be seen from a comparison with the original. Now if any one thinks more of happiness than holiness, whether he be an old dogmatist or a young one, he is certainly a suspicious character. But this perverted estimate is shown, we are told, by holding that the departed dead are at once *completely free from all imperfection and sin*. If the old dogmatists had promised perfect happiness to the righteous while they were yet stained with sin, Dr. Dorner's indictment would stand; as it is, it must be quashed, for it distinctly charges that the prisoners are *not* guilty. He probably intended to say that perfect holiness is impossible immediately after death; if so, we have another illustration of the use of language to conceal thought. But if this be the meaning the proposition is not granted for a moment. As Dr. Dorner holds stoutly to the supernatural, we might defend against his objections the position of Philippi (see pp. 404, 406, 409), that, at death, an act of God cleanses the believer from all sin. But the more radical reply is preferable, that Christians as such need not sin, and will not choose to sin, except under the influence of instigations which will find no place after death. What our author says of the lost (p. 423) we say of the saved, that when brought personally face to face with Christ, their wills are free from innate sinfulness, the influence of the race, the common spirit, example, and temptation by error. No good reason, then, can be given for doubting the sinless perseverance of the saints.

## TEXTS SUPPOSED TO FAVOR PROBATION IN THE INTERMEDIATE STATE.

Page 410, "If Tyre and Sidon, had they seen what the Jews saw, would have repented in sackcloth and ashes, they would have been saved; which therefore implies that, if the time of grace expired for them at death, they would be condemned for not seeing and knowing Christ, which was not their fault." We deny this implication, but let us first admit it for the sake of the argument, and see whither it will lead us. According to this, the men of Tyre and Sidon, since they had a disposition which *would* have repented under powerful motives, will have those motives presented between death and the judgment. They will repent then, as Christ said they would, and be found among the saved at the last day. But this would falsify the awful warning of our Lord, "It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you." Christ applies the same argument in this connection to Sodom. Will any one say the Sodomites were condemned for not seeing the miracles? They were condemned for their gross wickedness, for which all humanity has held them in just abhorrence; and when Jesus said it would be more tolerable for Sodom in the day of judgment than for Capernaum, he excluded the thought that their sentence may be reversed. Let the reader recur to Dr. Dörner's own picture of the wicked in the intermediate state, and then imagine (if the very fancy be not blasphemous) that the King will say to the men of Sodom in the great day of decision, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." *Why* God gives some people greater advantages and clearer light than others is a mystery we cannot fathom; but the fact is beyond question; contrast, for example, the accessibility of the Bible in the nineteenth and in the first fifteen centuries. No reasonable being will complain because all the world are not permitted to behold such wonderful miracles as were vouchsafed to Capernaum. On the whole,

the passage before us (Matt. xi. 21-24), far from proving future probation, proves the contrary.

We read again (p. 409), "Jesus seeks the lost; there are lost ones to seek even in the kingdom of the dead." But so is the devil there, and so are the fallen angels; Jesus does not seek them. The argument is the fallacy of undistributed middle. Its weakness is still better seen when we quote the text in full, "For the Son of man *came* to seek and to save that which was lost." He came to this world, and thereby revealed the vast spiritual significance of the earthly life which he assumed. If he could have saved men in another world, why should he have descended to the shame and anguish of Calvary?

Another "proof-text" is Matt. xii. 32, where Jesus declares of the sin against the Holy Spirit, "it shall not be forgiven, neither in this world nor in that which is to come"; whence the conclusion is drawn that all other sins may be forgiven there. But the plain reader's impression from this verse, that Christ meant simply an emphatic *never*, is not derived from any assumed "Hebraism," but from the familiar language of everyday life. Compare, by all means, the parallels in Mark and Luke. Professor Wright says on the passage in Matthew (pp. 28, 29), "The startling element in this threat is that it indicates that there is sin which cannot be forgiven *even in this world*. Probation may practically close before death!"

To continue the list of objections: "Christian grace is designed for human beings, not for inhabitants of earth." The texts cited are 1 Tim. ii. 4-6 and 1 John ii. 2. According to these, God willeth that all men should be saved, and Christ gave himself for all. The grace of God is indeed universal in its design, and we learn from other Scriptures that it is an important part of *our* probation to carry it to all men. If we are unfaithful in this, we shall hear the solemn word, "*He* shall die in his sins; but his blood will I require at *thy* hand."

Another passage adduced is Mark xvi. 16, on which the remark is made, "It is not said, He that hears not shall be

condemned, but he that believes not." The reader is invited to substitute *hear* for *believe*, and see if it makes any difference to this text, when read in its context. Compare Luke x. 16. Dr. Dorner himself says (p. 167), "The call coming to all does not come apart from the objective means of grace." He cannot consistently say that the means of grace are enjoyed by the impenitent in Hades, for in order to prove that these cannot tempt the righteous dead he alludes to the "great gulf fixed," Luke xvi. 26 (see p. 411). But this text proves nothing, unless it works both ways. The case of the youth at Nain, which is cited on page 409, no more indicates a future probation for others than an earthly resurrection. When the author asks, in this connection, "How can the *place* alone decide as to moral worth or capacity for redemption?" he is best answered in the words of the Autocrat of the Breakfast-table, "Imagine all the infants in Boston and Timbuctoo to change places."

1 Pet. iii. 19, 20 (in connection with iv. 6), is dwelt upon at length, as it has always been the chief prop of the theory we are considering. The best scholars are still divided over the question whether this preaching took place in the days of Noah or after the death of Christ. Dr. Dorner (p. 128) mentions three who favor the latter view, and three others, at least equally well known, who oppose it. But many who admit that Christ went and preached to departed spirits deny altogether the inference that any rule can be drawn from this obscure exception. For instance, Dr. Frank, one of the three whom our author adduces on his side, calls it "foolish to suppose that the preaching of Christ in the under-world included the intention of redeeming those spirits, and the eventual realization of that intention." To infer from this text a further probation for the dead of our time is to reason from a supposed analogy, not (as Dr. Dorner claims, p. 405) from express scriptural statement. Elsewhere he remarks (p. 130), "The ceasing of this preaching is neither recorded, nor reasonably to be supposed." But this quite mistakes the *onus probandi*. It is not yet agreed that Christ ever

preached in Hades. If he did, the fact stands absolutely alone in Scripture, and its *repetition* is neither recorded nor reasonably to be supposed.

My own opinion is that this formidable bulwark of future probation, 1 Pet. iii. 19, etc., can be most easily taken by occupying a position in the rear which commands it. In 2 Pet. ii. 9 we find an important statement which forms the conclusion of an important argument. The statement is, "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment unto the day of judgment." The plain implication is that the unrighteous, *as a whole*, are kept under punishment throughout the intermediate state. It cannot be said that only great sinners are intended, for these are mentioned immediately after, as a part of the whole. But equally to our purpose is the argument of which verse 9 forms the conclusion. How do we know that God will keep the wicked under punishment? Because he *has* done it. We know of no way of judging of the future but by the past. Three historical instances are cited: the fallen angels, the antediluvians, the Sodomites. Let us confine our attention to one of these, for the sake of clearness. "If God spared not the old world, in the days of Noah, the Lord knoweth how to keep the unrighteous under punishment unto the day of judgment." Yet these are the same characters whose repentance and salvation this same Peter is thought to have revealed. What kind of argument would the following be? "If God brought a flood upon the ungodly (although, as I said in my first Epistle, they afterwards hearkened to Christ and were saved), the Lord knoweth how to keep the ungodly under punishment unto the day of judgment."

So far as I am aware, the advocates of future probation allege no stronger biblical proofs than those which have just been examined; the reader may judge, then, upon how sandy a basis the whole structure is built. It is true, Dr. Dorner refrains from disturbing the pious shade of Onesiphorus, doubtless thinking it conceivable that the good man was

absent in the wars, or elsewhere, instead of deceased, at the time when Paul sent greetings to his family.

But when we inquire how our author replies to passages of Scripture which seem to oppose a future probation, we are surprised to find a silence all but complete. A *system* of Christian doctrine should be an orderly grouping of parts into a whole; but on the present topic an entire side is missing. 2 Cor. v. 10 is dismissed with a bare allusion, as though it were wholly irrelevant. Heb. ix. 27 is treated as indicating (by the absence of the article) some other than the final judgment, in face of the context, which points plainly to the second advent, and thus refers to a judgment then according to the character at death. And this is absolutely all! Such a course is conspicuously unfair. We are better able, in consequence, to answer the question raised at the outset, whether the word of God is to be our final arbiter in this matter. It seems probable now that Dr. Dorner would not abandon his theory, even were the Bible proved to be against him.

This inference is strengthened by a comparison of his statements with those of another eminent theologian. I have ventured to put a few literal quotations from each in the form of a conversation (or *Symposium*, to accommodate still further the phrase of the period).

The fairness of the closing extract from Dorner may be questioned, as he supposes himself to be arguing there *against* Universalism. But he opposes only the doctrinal certainty of this faith; the sole escape he finds from the same conclusion is that one must deliberately reject Christ, in order to be condemned. He regards it as doubtful whether any do this. He asks just before, "Is conservation for eternal torment conceivable?" and attempts no answer. Universalism will smile at this attack, and Orthodoxy will exclaim, "*Non tali auxilio, nec defensoribus istis.*"

#### A SYMPOSIUM.

*Dorner.* "It is not said, He who hears not shall be condemned, but he who believes not." — *Paul.* "How shall they

believe in him of whom they have not heard ? and how shall they hear without a preacher ? ”

*Dorner.* “ The ancient church supposed Christ’s preaching in the intermediate state to be continued by the apostles.” —

*Paul.* “ As many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law.”

*Dorner.* “ This would imply, what is altogether objectionable, that a real eternal dualism pertains to the Christian goal of the world.” — *Paul.* “ What saith the scripture ? ”

*Dorner.* “ The exegetical grounds for the statement that some will be forever lost are indeed *preponderant*; but we have therewith no doctrinal proposition, because the latter must also be derived from the principle of faith.” — *Paul.* “ Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for doctrine.”

*Dorner.* “ Modern theology has eagerly welcomed that article of the Creed which asserts the descent into Hades, and that because it testifies that even those not laid hold of by Christ’s historic manifestation in their earthly life, still must and may be brought into relation to him, in order to be able to accept or reject him.” — *Paul.* “ They are without excuse; because that, knowing God, they glorified him not as God. And even as they refused to have God in their knowledge, God gave them up unto a reprobate mind.”

*Dorner.* “ It might indeed be said, If the condemnation of some is God’s holy and righteous will, a resignation is fitting, in which no other wish is felt than one in harmony with God’s will. But this answer is insufficient, because mere resignation would not comport with the perfecting of personality.” — *Paul.* “ Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God ? ”

It is not the design of this Article to enlarge upon the direct proofs that probation is limited to this life ; in fact, a discussion of them in a review of this “ System ” would be open to the charge of irrelevance. But it may be well for the reader, and also for Dr. Dorner in a future edition, to examine thoroughly such passages of Scripture as the following :

Matt. xi. 21-24 (see p. 768); 2 Pet. ii. 9 (see p. 770); Luke xvi. 19-31 (observe especially that Dives' brethren are shut up to their earthly probation); Mark viii. 38; Prov. xiv. 32; Matt. xx. 1-16 (if each has a real probation, he should not complain that others have more); Matt. xxiv. 50 (probation may close suddenly); John viii. 21; 2 Cor. vi. 2; cf. John ix. 4 (the night is death, see vs. 5; the great work we are sent here to do is to prepare for eternity; no man can work when the night comes); Heb. ix. 27 (cf. vs. 28); Rom. i. and ii., especially ii. 12, 16; Matt. xxv. 33-45; cf. 2 Cor. v. 10. According to the last text cited, we are judged for deeds done in the body; according to the previous one, the deeds judged are those which could be done only in the body. The King's language of welcome would therefore be inappropriate, if any had repented in the intermediate state; and equally so his language of condemnation, if any were sentenced for sins committed during thousands of years after their life in the body. Particular texts like these confirm, and are confirmed by, the general principle derived from all the precepts, exhortations, and warnings of Scripture, which take it for granted that our mortal life is the time of probation, and drop no hint of any other. The popular consciousness has no difficulty in interpreting the earnest message of God's word, Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

A still further confirmation, at which we can only glance, in closing, is gained from an analysis of the elements which constitute our present probation. Many of these elements are wholly wanting beyond the grave; for example, the innocent state of infancy; the restraints of parental authority, whereby even the wicked act out an unconscious providence toward their children; the effects of right and wrong conduct upon the body; the inspiring lessons of nature; and the mingled light and shade of our earthly condition. Hence, to infer the fruitlessness of an added probation in the spirit world for those who leave this world in obduracy is simply to reason from the greater to the less.