

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_bib-sacra\\_01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php)

## ARTICLE IV.

RECENT THEORIES OF THE DIVINE FOREKNOWLEDGE.<sup>1</sup>

BY REV. WM. HENRY COBB, UXBRIDGE, MASS.

THE intellect of man is ever puzzled by the attempt to conceive of God as he is. It seems to be a necessity of our thinking that the attempt should be constantly renewed, and as constantly baffled. The wrecks of many a system of speculative philosophy warn us that we cannot by searching find out God. And so the Christian consciousness looks thankfully in at the window of Holy Scripture, the revelation which the Father himself has been pleased to give to his children. No doubt many truths concerning God can be ascertained and verified by those who wholly discard the Bible; but the normal order of intellectual growth in the knowledge of God is the establishment, first, of the existence of our Creator, then of his relation to us, then of the revelation of his mind and will. Next comes the searching out of its testimony respecting God; next, the further operation of reason, enlightened by this revelation, and directed upon both the works and the word of God; lastly, the rational development of the knowledge already gained into a connected system of thought. This process must remain imperfect (at least, under the limitations of our existence in this life); and yet the church in every age, studying intently what may be known of God, should transmit to the age which follows a clearer impression of the Divine image.

<sup>1</sup> Rothe, "Theologische Ethik," 2 Aufg. Wittenberg: Kölling, 1869. Dorner, "Lehre von der Unveränderlichkeit Gottes," in *Jahrbücher für deutsche Theologie*, 1856-58; also, "System der christlichen Glaubenslehre." Berlin: Herz, 1879-81. (English translation, "System of Christian Doctrine." Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1880-82). McCabe, "The Foreknowledge of God." Cincinnati: Hitchcock and Walden, 1878; also, "Divine Nescience." New York: Phillips and Hunt, 1881. Whedon, "The Freedom of the Will." New York: Carlton and Porter, 1864.

Our own age is a period of restless upheavals and bold innovations; while we rejoice, and should rejoice, in its freshness and vitality, there is danger that we drop out of conscious possession the solid achievements of the past. The doctrine of God, in particular, which has been slowly elaborated for many centuries, is assailed on every side, and as might be expected from the nature of our *Zeitgeist*, the attribute of immutability is either questioned or quite given up. A single relation of this doctrine — its connection with the divine foreknowledge — has suggested the following article.

Many able writers, besides those whose names appear in the foot-note, have contributed to the discussion; e.g. in Germany, Weisse, Martensen, Schleiermacher, and Julius Müller; but since each of those I have there mentioned represents a somewhat different phase of belief, and since, aside from these phases, no important modification of the commonly received doctrine is proposed, so far as I am aware, we may confine our attention to their positions.

By the phrase "recent theories" I would not be understood as asserting that the same views essentially have not been held in former times; but as the modern statement, in each case, seems to possess some measure of freshness and independence, the expression may be allowed to stand.

I shall endeavor (1) to give the opinions of the writers named, with illustrative citations from their works; (2) to examine these theories in the light of Scriptural declarations; (3) to inquire how far the traditional view of the divine foreknowledge appears to need revision.

#### I. STATEMENT OF OPINIONS.

Dr. Rothe's views are set forth in a masterly manner in his *Theologische Ethik*, i. pp. 212-234. If predestination were true, then, in his opinion, all human effort would be paralyzed, and prayer would be a childish mockery. But again, if God foreknew, and did not foreordain, all events with infallible certainty, in that case as well freedom would be a delusion; for an event infallibly foreknown is necessary.

To attempt an escape from this conclusion by saying that God foreknows free actions *as free* is simply, he tells us, to utter a contradiction in terms. There remains only, in the third place, the view which excludes the divine prescience of freedom, and this Rothe stoutly maintains. I translate from the book cited the following passages, which set forth the theory in the author's own words. The italics are his.

P. 225. "If God infallibly foreknows all actions of men, with apodeictic certainty, then they must *be absolutely certain* beforehand; but (since as partly arbitrary they do not depend altogether upon an inner necessity), they could be absolutely certain beforehand only through a divine *foreordination*, which would destroy the human, free self-determination, and besides, make God the author of sin. Whatever once stands fast objectively on God's part can no more be a matter for free decision in time on man's part; God's *absolute* foreknowledge of the actions of personal creatures *not yet perfected* is inevitably a foreordination of the same. Vainly is it sought to avert this conclusion by the formula 'God indeed foreknows the free actions of creatures expressly *as free.*' The formula contains in itself an assertion contradicting itself. For the free, *so far as it is still arbitrarily free* can (precisely as such) be *in no case whatever* foreknown absolutely and infallibly. It is altogether incapable of being the subject of a *proper*, i.e. of an unlimited, trustworthy foreknowledge, and hence too of the divine foreknowledge."

P. 229. "We conclude, therefore, that the future free actions of personal creatures, according to their very idea, cannot be the subject of any infallible foreknowledge at all. Hence, also, it detracts not in the least from the perfection of God if we deny to him an absolutely secure foreknowledge of the same. From the very necessity of the case, knowledge differs according to the degree of difference in its objects. By virtue of his omniscience God only knows that which is in itself a *possible* object of knowledge; just as his omnipotence also embraces not everything, but only what is possible according to the nature of things. As it is in itself

impossible to make what is done not done, and the like, just so it is in itself impossible to know what in the nature of things cannot be known."

Dr. Dorner has examined the subject before us in two main passages of his *Christliche Glaubenslehre* (Vol. i. pp. 319-323, 496-500), also in his essays on the immutability of God as above cited, especially in the *Jahrbücher* for 1858, pp. 601-605. His positions are easy to state, but hard to classify, as in seeking to avoid two opposite dangers he comes perilously near to inconsistency with himself; hence it becomes needful to examine many other passages which treat only incidentally of the point in question. The design of the essays in the *Jahrbücher* was to conserve the immutability of God; on the one hand against the prevalent Pantheism which subjects the absolute to the ceaseless flow of the world's development, on the other hand against a stolid Deism which elevates the Divine Being quite above the world in a Brahmanistic immobility, refusing to him any living intercourse with the world, and securing his unchangeableness only at the sacrifice of his love. Both these false tendencies Dorner finds represented in the modern Christian church; the first manifesting itself chiefly in the doctrine of the Kenosists, who conceive of God as divesting himself of his attributes when he became incarnate in Christ; thus, as Dorner holds, making him a mutable being. A learned polemic against this theory occupies the bulk of his first article in the series (1856). The other two are more largely taken up with expounding and refuting the false *transcendence* of the Deity, a doctrine surviving in the church of to-day as an inheritance from the scholasticism of the Middle Ages. In the course of this endeavor he finds occasion to oppose the commonly received doctrine of Omniscience. God's knowledge of all things is not, he claims, a bare, eternal act of his self-knowledge, but so far as it is a knowledge of real events it is constantly changing with the lapse of time, though these same events as possibilities were eternally present to the divine mind. God gains his knowledge of the free acts of creatures, not from himself,

but from them (*scientia libera*). But though the truth of this were granted with reference to events *when realized*, the question would return : Does God, knowing from eternity *all* possibilities of human conduct, distinguish eternally in his mind those which are *merely* possible from those which will surely take place? or, to state it more simply : Has God an eternal foreknowledge of all free acts? Dorner's answers to these questions are not so clear and consistent as to preclude a difference of opinion regarding his teaching; hence we shall return to this point, and examine it carefully, giving more extended extracts than it is necessary to make from the other authorities.

The two books of Dr. McCabe lead in general to the conclusions of Rothe, but have also a peculiarity of their own. Holding with Rothe that God cannot foreknow those acts which are strictly free, the author yet feels the pressure of the argument from prophecy which Edwards uses with so great force in Part II. § 11 of his Inquiry into the Freedom of the Will. Hence he presents the theory that the human will has two modes of action, being at times under the law of cause and effect, while at other times it is a law unto itself in pure contingency. The wills of all creatures are so in the hand of the Lord that he can constrain them, or leave them free, at pleasure. Whenever God predicts an event its futurity is infallibly certain; but this result is accomplished by such a measure of constraint upon the requisite human instruments as takes their wills for the time being out of the law of liberty, and brings them under the power of necessity. Prophecy is in this respect analogous to miracle, since it implies a counteraction of the ordinary processes of freedom. There is an analogy, too, between the voluntary and the physical powers; for just as every man has a definite measure of natural strength, so he has only a limited strength of will to resist temptation. God has a clear knowledge of that limit in the case of each individual, and when he has occasion to make use of an evil choice in the carrying out of his plans, he has only to tempt the chosen instrument

above what he is able to bear. By the opposite process, an infallibly holy choice can be secured. In either case, the subject of this divine constraint is removed for the time from the sphere of probation; neither his character nor his final destiny depends at all upon those particular choices, but is decided by other choices, made when he is left to his own liberty. It will be seen thus, that with reference to the discussion between Arminian and Calvinist as commonly carried on, Dr. McCabe advances half way to the Calvinistic view on one point at issue, but retreats further than the majority of Arminians on another point. That I may not seem to misstate this theory, I give it in Dr. McCabe's language.<sup>1</sup> I find nothing in the later book which seems to add to the argument. "Man is so constituted that his will can be brought under the law of cause and effect, by bringing overpowering influences to act upon his reason and his sensibilities. God, therefore, can use him as an instrument in his hands. He can make use of him as easily as he can make use of fire, water, light, air. . . . Hence, if God desired a certain providential work to be accomplished five hundred years hence, he could predict it with absolute certainty. All that would be necessary would be to influence the will of some one then living with the requisite intensity to secure a consenting volition; or, as in many cases, an unconscious instrument (Ezra v. 5: But the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews, that they [Tatnai and Shethar-Bozrai] could not cause them to cease till the matter came to Darius). The volitions of such an agent would be necessary, and foreseen because forefixed. They would not be free, but in violation of the law of liberty. Or, if God wished to punish his people, all that would be necessary would be to place some man under circumstances where influences would be too potent for his resistance, or where he would have no inclination to overcome them, or no repugnance to the special work assigned him. . . . Satan had ample reason for supposing that Peter was to be a chosen instrument in the spiritual move-

<sup>1</sup> Foreknowledge of God, pp. 39-41, 89-91, 442, 443.

ment which Jesus was then so thoughtfully and anxiously inaugurating. He therefore singled him out for special and varied temptations, resolving to do, as the Saviour had declared he would do—sift him as wheat. By the defection of Peter and Judas, and still more by the crucifixion of Jesus, he hoped to break the grand centre of the great religious movement then beginning to attract public attention. It was, as we have already suggested, to teach Peter lessons never to be forgotten, that Satanic influences were allowed to come in upon him like a flood, and that the Almighty Deliverer, who alone could raise up a standard against the foe, declined, up to a certain point, to interpose in behalf of his chosen apostle. Christ could foreknow and foretell the act of denial, because he knew that Peter's will would be so overborne by temptational influences, that it would move as it was moved upon, and thus act, though consentingly, under unconscious constraint. . . . It is preposterous to affirm that Peter's moral nature was as hard, as impervious to divine light, as indifferent to the wishes of the Redeemer, and as oblivious to all the high motives and objects of the gospel of salvation, as that act of betrayal, objectively considered, implies. If such was his real nature, he certainly was morally the most unfit instrument conceivable for apostleship and leadership in the holiest and grandest movement of the entire moral universe. We are driven, then, to suppose that his nature and moral condition were really better than the denial and profanity and duplicity would naturally indicate. And if his soul was less wicked and debased than his conduct suggests, then that denial of his Master must have been under such an undue amount of Satanic influence, under such mitigating circumstances, as essentially lessened the heinousness of its moral character in the eyes of him who sees all things as they really are. . . . We question absolute prescience, because we can but deny that an Infinite Being, all sufficient in himself and ineffably happy could rightfully create an individual soul with limited capacities, who he foreknows would choose to make itself sinful, de-



graded, and everlastingly wretched. Regard for that part of his own eternal happiness which springs from his parental relations, regard for the happiness of all holy beings in all worlds and cycles, regard for the character and welfare of his moral universe, regard for the shining attribute of benevolence, and regard for the poor foreknown culprit himself, all imperatively demand that the coming of such a one into existence should be prevented. Finally, we question prescience, because its assumption renders the great problem of the conflict between freedom and necessity incapable of solution. Against the doctrine of necessity consciousness protests with unmistakable vehemence. And if prescience be assumed, then reason protests against the doctrine of freedom. Nothing but the doctrine that prescience of future contingencies involves self-contradiction can ever save us from Supralapsarianism, and from the logic of the adverse thinkers now boldly and defiantly bearing down upon us. The acceptance of this doctrine makes all serene as cloudless skies, but its denial makes the admission of fatalism simply inevitable."

We come next to Dr. Whedon, whose able work on the Will represents the modern Arminian position on that subject. The object of the book being to vindicate the contingent Freedom of the Will, especially in reply to the elder Edwards, Part I. is devoted to a careful statement of the questions at issue; Part II. examines at length the necessitarian argument (as the author terms the reasoning of Edwards), Part III. gives the positive evidence for contingency. Part II. has three sections, presenting respectively the causational, the psychological, and the theological arguments. Under the last head, we have in the first chapter, "Foreknowledge and Predestination," in the second chapter, "Reconciliation of Free Agency and Foreknowledge."

The author claims that God's foreknowledge, being simply his knowledge of entire futurity, is identical with his knowledge as directed to the future, and belongs therefore to his essential attributes. Hence it is logically prior to all his acts, and so there can be no unconditional predestination. Again,

from the creation of the world to the end of all things, the totality of events will take place in one certain way, and in no other. This the author admits, and also the position that God may eternally foreknow this entire complex with infallible accuracy. But he finds therein no contradiction to freedom. The latter is a fact given in our own consciousness, warranting the inference that all history is as free from the dominion of necessity as though there were no sovereign arbiter of destinies; yet God may possess in the beginning this whole series as a fact in his knowledge, without its exerting the least interference with the spontaneous action of liberty. The reader of these two chapters might (I think, would naturally) infer that Dr. Whedon means to *assert* the divine foreknowledge, and to *refute* the doctrine of nescience, which he certainly does not favor, though he states it clearly.<sup>1</sup>

But in view of Dr. McCabe's positive assertion in his work on Nescience (p. 290), "The many-sided, penetrative Whedon writes me, 'I have never made any objections to your view,'" we must believe that the theory of the divine foreknowledge expounded in these chapters is simply a hypothesis, and that the next two chapters (refuting Edwards on this point, and showing predestination to be unnecessary) continue the same hypothetical treatment. Unless Dr. McCabe is mistaken, or Dr. Whedon's memory is at fault, we must hold, difficult as it is, that the latter only means, "If God foreknew the future, still there would be no collision between foreknowledge and freedom." However, the difference is wide between Drs. McCabe and Whedon; for the one maintains that divine nescience of future contingencies is a *necessity*, while Dr. Whedon shows at least as much as this that nescience is no more a necessary hypothesis than predestination.

<sup>1</sup> Compare Part i. p. 58. "To mere humanity there is no objective certainty in a free volitional future event. Perfect subjective certainty, corresponding to the pure objective, which among diverse possibilities *will be*, belongs to the divine prescience alone." Prof. Newhall, in a laudatory review of Whedon on the Will (Bib. Sac., July 1864, p. 662), remarks: "The author admits, as fully as the most rigid predestinarian, that God has entire and definite prescience of all human volitions, actual and possible."

P. 274. "Whether there be any foreknowledge or not, it is certain that there will be a one particular course of future events and no other. . . . If, by the absolute perfectness of God's omniscience, that one train of free events, put forth with full power otherwise, be embraced in his foreknowledge, it follows that God foreknows the free act, and that the foreknowledge and the freedom are compatible."

P. 277-280. "We have then before us the true, distinct conception of a free totality of free volitions; the infinite, universal, eternal system of free events, which, while they are each one able to be otherwise than *thus*, yet will freely be thus; and while they are able to be thus, and truly will and do be thus, are able to be otherwise than thus. Now of this free totality, thus clearly, we trust, conceived, our doctrine affirms that it exists in the anterior omniscience of God, and is the very future totality which God foreknows. . . . That the freeness of the act is not affected by the consideration of its being foreknown of God may appear from the fact that both may be viewed as independent, yet coinciding, facts. We can conceive of the freedom, first, abstractly from all foreknowledge or foreordination. There is, as before remarked, a large class of thinkers who deny foreknowledge, and contemplate the field of free events as spreading out, uncovered by any anterior prescience. Nay, an Atheist is fully able to conceive a world of free agents without any omnipotent, personal first cause. At any rate, it is fully possible for our mind first to posit a world of free agents, who put forth an illimitable totality of free volitions, in full power for other volitions instead. Such a totality may be viewed as being just as free as if no Deity existed to decree or foreknow them. And then, after the conception of this totality has been fully formed and amply contemplated, we are fully able to conceive, additionally, that a foreknowledge, existing incomprehensibly to us, may take just this totality into its comprehension, without producing the least change in its free nature. The foreknowledge has (unlike predestination) no causative influence upon the free event to change or destroy its freedom. It is

a free totality in the first stage of the above conception ; it is a free totality in the second stage. It is a free totality which is presupposed ; it is the same free totality which is foreknown. That is, there may conceivably be a foreknowledge of all the free acts of all free agents without at all affecting their freedom. God may thus foreknow all that the whole universe of free agents will do without any contradiction to their free agency."

## II. THE THEORIES COMPARED WITH SCRIPTURE.

Having thus presented the main views, on the divine foreknowledge, of the four authors selected, I proceed to inquire : Does Scripture throw any light on these various theories ? That the Bible, in numerous instances, professes to predict the future free choices of men, will be denied by no one. The fact is *prima facie* evidence against the opinion of the divine nescience ; it at least raises a difficulty which those who hold that position must meet.

Rothe replies that prophecy is, in the main, a prediction of probabilities, not of certainties. Apparently, he does not maintain the strict infallibility of Scripture.<sup>1</sup> The latter doctrine I am not at present concerned to defend ; but I take it for granted. Whatever is fairly established as the teaching of the divine word forms a test for human speculations. If the question lies between this theory of Rothe's and the divine inspiration of the Bible, the former must yield. And in truth, is not the election limited to one of these two things ? for the assumption will not bear examination that the predictions of the Scripture relate to merely probable occurrences. Jehovah, who is the Truth, stakes his Divinity upon the accomplishment of his truthful word. No god or man possesses his power to tell the event before it comes to pass (Isa. xli. 23, etc.). Thousands of contingencies intervened oftentimes between the prescience and the fulfilment ; the events foretold were in many cases extremely unlikely to occur on any estimate of probabilities ; but the word had

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Bib. Sac., April, 1878, pp. 247-255.

gone forth, and the word of our God shall stand forever. Repeatedly, the very announcement of the prediction is in absolute form, "I know," "I am sure," etc. For those, therefore, who hold to the infallible truth of the Bible, Rothe's theory can have no attraction.

McCabe, as we have seen, admits the divine foreknowledge of all predicted events, but denies their contingency. He needlessly (as I think) surrenders the freedom of the human will at this critical point. The concession to divine foreknowledge is greater than he seems to have realized. He postulates, for example, an efficient constraint from God's hand upon a single instrument five hundred years hence; but often the predicted event is itself dependent upon a multitude of contingent events, whereof if a single link should fail, the whole chain would be broken. Again, it is a gratuitous assumption that God ever exercises, or permits other powers to exercise such a constraint upon men as to suspend their liberty. Scripture does not prove this, but indicates the contrary. The passages adduced by McCabe are more naturally interpreted otherwise. Was Simon Peter under this supernatural compulsion? Why then did he repent so bitterly? Why did he not steadily return the Lord's look and exclaim, "Thou knowest I could not help it; the demon was too strong for me?" Whoever carefully considers the immense complexity of human choices involved in the totality of prophecy, will be apt to admit that if these free acts were foreknown by God, all others are. If in the exercise of their liberty (Acts xv. 17, 18) the residue of men and all the called among the Gentiles seek after the Lord, it is he who maketh these things known from the beginning of the world. Nothing opposes this conclusion save the theory before us; and so once more we hold fast to the Scripture and discard the theory.

When we pass to Whedon's view, we enter a different atmosphere. The argument of "The Freedom of the Will" is conducted independently of Scripture, and yet touches frequently upon Biblical facts and statements, and is pervaded

by a reverent faith in the truth of the word. The author is well-known, moreover, as one of the most diligent and judicious of American expounders of the Bible. It would be hazardous for any one to assert that Whedon's theory of the divine foreknowledge is, on the face of it, contrary to Holy Scripture. Indeed, random assertions of this nature have been quite too current on the part of both Calvinists and Arminians; it ought to be acknowledged frankly that a long line of patient expositors in each of these great bodies has developed, in either case, a system of Biblical theology which has a fair measure of consistency and comprehensiveness. It has become evident that the Bible was not written for the purpose of furnishing proof-texts to either party. If Calvinists insist upon the very nature of the redemption set forth in Scripture as indicating God's absolute election, Arminians have a right to insist on the very process of that redemption as indicating man's absolute freedom. If the more natural interpretation of 1 Pet. i. 3 and Rom. viii. 29 favors the doctrine of the latter, the more natural interpretation of John vi. 37 and Acts xiii. 48 favors that of the former. The special investigation of texts is aside from the purpose of this article; I only claim at present that the *prima facie* evidence drawn from the word of God is fatal to the theories of Rothe and McCabe, while it leaves undecided the contention between the view of Whedon and that of the Calvinistic theology.

In order to determine whether or not Dorner's view is accordant with the Bible we must try and clear up the uncertainty as to what that view really is. An American critic has asserted that on this point Dorner does not differ essentially from the later New England theologians. If Arminians are meant, this remark is consistent with *some* of Dorner's utterances; but New England Calvinists have ever had a distinct and clear-cut conviction that God foreknows with infallible certainty all things from all eternity. Dr. Dorner does not share this conviction, if we may judge by his published works. In view of the prominence given to his name in the present religious discussions of America, it is only fair to the

reader to put him in possession of the principal passages which bear on the subject. In the extracts from the Glaubenslehre, I follow the Edinburgh edition, in the main; the translation from the essays on Immutability is my own.

*Jahrb. f. d. Theol.* 1857, p. 469 note. "Socinianism resembles the Calvinistic view in this, that both say, the knowledge of the future is conceivable if God knows it through his own power which produces all things. But, according to the Socinians, since God wills the freedom of the creature, his foreknowledge also of the free actions not wrought by him is to be denied."

P. 470. "Free causalities must always, according to their operation, be conditional for the divine decree, otherwise this decree would have relation not at all to the concrete history of the world, to the development, guidance, government, and final destiny of individuals, but only *in abstracto* to this, that a free world should exist, together with the laws applicable to these individuals. Gerhard himself teaches otherwise, e.g. that *intuitus fidei ingreditur decretum electionis*. But if this is true, then the immutable *decretum divinum*, since conditioned by perceived *fides*, can no more be called a *simple*, or altogether co-eternal act of an eternal God, but it is composed of God's universal purpose of grace for Christ's sake, of his reference to the *conditio sine qua non* to be performed by the free causalities (although not meritorious), and finally of the concrete purpose of grace, the *electio* of the single, concrete, believing person."

*Jahrb.* 1858, pp. 593-594. "Must we not simply say in general, that although God eternally knows and wills what gradually comes forth in time, yet the effectual, really productive volition is in no way as eternal as the world-idea? Either the operative action of God for the production of anything new in the world must be denied, the real production of this new thing must be traced back only to the productive connection of nature, which God has created once for all complete and self-sufficient; or, on the other hand, if it be perceived that God has also an immediate, not merely a *deis-*

ical relation to the actual production of what is new, it must also be recognized that this effectual, properly creative conduct of God advances in time, in unity to be sure with the order of the divine decree, and conditions itself in its action through that which is already present in space and time."

P. 601-604. "In the foregoing it lies already established that a historical side belongs also to the divine *omniscience*. For if there are free powers in the world, there are free decisions of the creature, which have indeed their ground of possibility in God, but their ground of reality only in the free beings, not in God. But it follows from this, that through his self-perception God cannot know of these free acts as real, but only as possible. Accordingly, God cannot have a knowledge of the real world of free beings through 'the self-same simplest eternal act of his self-knowledge,' but only through an act of perception differing from this, however it may be proper to conceive of it. But with this it is also given that the divine decree, so far as it embraces not alone indefinitely the goal of the world, without fixing on definite persons, but in general embraces that which will become actual, cannot be a simple, but must be a composite, ay, so to speak, a mediated power. From himself God has only the knowledge of a willed free world, including of course the penetrating, all-embracing survey of all the possibilities of the exercise of freedom; the knowledge of the reality for which freedom will decide itself, comes to him from the world of free beings. But without this factor, the divine decree, which becomes reality, cannot have established itself; the knowledge of the free acts which will become actual weaves, so to speak, the woof produced by the creature into the divine decree. Even thus it is proper to speak of such a decree; for the creation of the free world is willed once for all, in the presence of all the possibilities given therewith, so that for God nothing unexpected, nothing new, can happen; and since God made the world with reference to all the possibilities, including those which actually come to pass, that is more than mere permission, it is acceptance, — but then, in correspondence with



what God knows as acts of freedom actually taking place, he also establishes the very thing which serves for the secure attainment of the world's goal. Thus there finds place an interchange between divine and human, and only thence results the divine decree.

And certainly this is not alone to be said upon the theory that God has no foreknowledge of the free, but only a view of it when it has become present, rather also upon that theory which posits a foreknowledge of the free. So much the less is it necessary to enter more closely here upon the difficult question, which of these two views deserves the preference. (Note. Cf. Vol. ii. Part iii. p. 470 f. The necessary, eternal stability of the divine goal of the world, which has for its contents not merely an economy, or a law in general, not merely the circumstantial, but precisely free persons, appears more favorable to the latter view, for which also holy Scripture speaks, especially in its prophecy. The former view cannot accept, with reference to persons, a pre-temporal decree, but one which determines itself only by degrees in the course of history. On the other hand, it is not to be denied, that we cannot form a *representation* to ourselves of the divine foreknowledge of the free as certain to occur, but only of every future free act as possible). But through what has been deduced, this will be manifest, that the divine decree may not with the old theologians be identified with the being of God through the medium of the divine will, but that in it there is certainly a factor which accrues to God from the world. By this we must not understand, indeed, that God is related *passively*, but *permissively* toward all possibilities, including those which will certainly occur; hence also God's knowledge of the free may not be likened with our empirical knowledge, which bears an originally passive character. Rather, the divine knowledge rests on the divine act which appoints the free possibilities, and precedes their actuality, at any rate as a permissive thought of the possibility which without God would not be possible. If there is to be a free creature, there must be in God, therefore, two kinds of

knowledge, one unconditioned, immediate, eternally produced from himself, and one conditioning itself through the free causalities. But through the latter, temporal history reflects itself back into the divine knowledge. . . . But now if it is to be said, God knows of the present as present, then the divine knowledge of what is actual progresses correspondingly with the reality itself. What was at first future, and known as such, moves into the present, and thence into the past; but the divine knowledge attends this in its course, it takes on a changing form in the divine knowledge itself, and this supposes a movement, an alteration, even in the cognitive activity of God himself. . . . God's knowledge is a knowledge conditioned by temporal history, intertwining and progressing with it. There enters into it, and becomes embraced by it something which was not in it before, namely, the knowledge of that which, from the possible and actual substance, in itself eternally known alike, is ever moving in from the future into the moment of the present, or thence into the past, in other words, what at each moment the present appropriates from the future, the past moreover from the present."

P. 643. "When once the songs of praise shall really resound (Rev. xix. 21) that will be an actually new song even for God, which has not sounded so for him, through the foreknowledge or the decree of God from eternity, as it sounds in the blessed feast of the world's perfection."

P. 648. "Through the incarnation as an actuality, there is a covenant of God established with the world, which before had no existence; and thus this new *reality* is a new thing also for God's knowledge of himself and of the world, although the decree to this effect was eternally in him."

As Dorner's later work — the *Glaubenslehre* — refers to the essays in the *Jahrbücher*, and takes essentially the same ground, our extracts may be briefer than would otherwise be necessary. Vol. i. (Edinburgh ed.), pp. 326–27. "The existence of free powers can only be secured for the knowledge of God by the self-intuition of God in his operation. On the

other hand, God's knowledge of actual free acts cannot proceed from his self-intuition alone. Free causalities would not exist, but only his actual will, if by mere self-intuition God knew not merely the possibility of their acts, but their realization also. The divine self-intuition thus comprehends, as far as the contents are concerned, everything if possibility be regarded, but not everything possible as actually realized. God does not see everything actual in himself, seeing that there are also things which are not the mere effects of his will. For all that, there must also be an intuitive knowledge in God of this free sphere, as well as of everything else that is realized, although that knowledge is by its very nature partly unthinkable by us."

Pp. 335-336. "One might now think, it is true; if there are actually free causes, that is saying that they must not merely be causes of the acts wrought by them, but also causes why they must be recognized as causalities which have wrought, or why they are even the solely adequate causes of their cognizability; so that the divine knowledge, although not passive, is yet the effect of their causality, conditioned by their having wrought. Although the effect may be simultaneous with the cause, and is not restricted to a later appearance in time, still it does not seem to be able to exist *prior* to the working of the cause. And the conclusion might thus be drawn that the cognizability of an act produced by creaturely freedom, and therefore the cognition of that act, cannot precede the free act of the creature. On this side we might thus be inclined to suppose a historically progressive knowledge even in the mind of God, so that God has no knowledge of the realization of the free act until the occurrence of that reality. But, on the other hand, the way in which God has a *scientia ascititia* is altogether hidden from us. Passages of Scripture like Matt. xi. 21; Ps. cxxxix. 16; Isa. xliii. 9, caution us against a hasty conclusion, the rather as at this point we cannot state anything more definitely as to the nature of the divine world-plan, which cannot in any case be uncertain as relates to its pur-

pose; hence a word further upon this question will remain to be said at a later point (§ 37)."

Vol. ii. pp. 60, 61. "Martensen, Rothe, and others fear that the notion of an eternal foreknowledge even of the future free sphere would rather transform the free into the necessary. For this reason, they suppose that the *ultimate aim*, the *realization* of a *kingdom of love*, indeed, stands immovably fixed; but as concerns the persons, who can only be incorporated into this kingdom by means of free agency beyond the reach of foresight, the divine world-plan is still indefinite, and its still empty framework is only gradually filled up through the free agency of individuals, the divine knowledge being thus supplemented step by step in time. But before deciding for the *denial* of the *divine foreknowledge* of the free, we shall have to ask ourselves whether this will not involve its own, perhaps even greater, difficulties. And first, we must weigh well the fact, that God's perfected kingdom embraces none but free personalities. If, then, divine foreknowledge of the free is to be absolutely denied, whereas the entire accomplishment of the divine counsel is still conditioned by freedom, there will be no certainty of even *one* individual being led by his spontaneous decision to the desired end. But where in this case is the fixed world-aim, which yet those teachers rightly desire to be unconditionally maintained? . . . . To this is to be added, that Holy Scripture does not favor the notion of an indefinite world-plan, particular persons and nothing else being, on the contrary, made objects of the divine operation, providence, and election. A *religious interest* is involved in the *world-plan*—not a colorless scheme, but concrete—showing no sign of weakness, but remaining eternally certain for God. We are then able to repose confidence in it, and God is seen to have created, not in a tentative way, but in the prospect of the certain accomplishment of his world-plan without injury to freedom. This view is specially countenanced by *prophecy*, as by Holy Scripture generally (Isa. xliii. 9; Ps. cxxxix. 16; Job xiv. 5; Matt. xi. 21; 1 John iii. 20; Heb. iv. 13). On the other

side, the impossibility of divine foreknowledge of the free, even if we are unable to conceive to ourselves its manner, is not adequately proved. . . . We therefore teach: God has not a world-plan that omits from the highest good the definite individuals, and includes as it were merely things in general, or his own acts, since these, rather, are partly conditioned by the free. By his intuitive knowledge is brought about also the divine incorporation into the world-plan of definite human individuals, who will form the organism, and this organism becomes a surely occurring matter-of-fact. But, of course, it cannot be said with our old theologians that the divine world-plan is a simple divine conception, deduced simply and solely from God.\* If freedom is to be retained, the world-plan can only be one of a mediated nature, made up of diverse elements, of which the portion not originating with God, nor determined by him, is yet foreseen by God for the purpose of being incorporated permissively into the divine world-plan."

Vol. iv. pp. 186-187. "Regeneration does not leave man's freedom as a vacillating power of choice, equally open to opposite possibilities, always and forever (*liberum arbitrium indifferentiae*). Such formal freedom is indeed a point of transition, but not the goal. The result of the moral process is real freedom. . . . According to all this, a union of the apparently clashing interests — of human freedom and stability of divine grace, and gracious election — is possible. We are able to leave the necessary place to freedom, and yet speak of a certainty as to the state of grace, through God, of an election of believers."

P. 381. "The succession of generations must follow one another long enough, the gaining of living members from them must continue long enough, for the organism to obtain all its essential members. It must not be inferred herefrom, either that all men will be incorporated as sanctified members in this organism, or that on the falling away of one class the organism must remain incomplete. For not to urge that God, if he had a foreknowledge of the free, may have also, in devising the idea of the organism, taken into account those

who will exclude themselves from it, through his infinite creative power he may allow the succession of generations to continue until the number which belongs to its entirety is filled. Hence, if any fall out, a compensation through the divine creative power must be supposed."

P. 422, n. 1. "It is more difficult to refute the objection [of Universalists], how it consists with the love of the God who eternally foresees even free actions, to create those, of whom he knew beforehand that they are created for eternal damnation. But whether the divine foreknowledge should be so viewed that it could become a motive for non-creation is more than questionable. The foreknowledge of definitive unbelief already presupposes the creation of those who become unbelieving. Cf. Vol. i. p. 500, and McCabe, *The Foreknowledge of God*, 1878. But the question remains: Is conservation for eternal torment conceivable?"

P. 424. "Human freedom, so long as it lasts, of course excludes also a categorical doctrinal affirmation that there certainly will be persons eternally condemned; for so long as freedom in any wise exists, so long the possibility of conversion is not yet absolutely shut out, be it even through judgment and condemnation to deep, long misery. But wherever this possibility should lead to reality, there also, self-evidently, the condemnation could no longer continue."

Pp. 427-428. "To assert doctrinally at present that some will certainly be annihilated would be a contradiction to freedom. . . . We shall have to content ourselves with this, that the final fate of individuals must remain hidden in mystery, as also whether all reach the blessed goal or not. . . . As regards Eschatology in general, so particularly in this point of doctrine, a knowledge of much in itself worth knowing is still wanting, which indeed we cannot have on account of human freedom."

In the light of these passages shall we say that Dorner affirms or denies the divine foreknowledge of all free acts, or that he leaves the question undetermined? There are sentences which partisans on either side might quote as

sustaining their respective views; but the careful and impartial reader of the whole will be apt to complain of the unsatisfactory nature of the evidence. For instance, in these passages the statement is made repeatedly, in opposition to Rothe, that God foresees free choices, and incorporates them permissively into the plan of the world. But is this an *infallible* foresight, embracing with entire certainty the minutest particulars, and including all *wicked* as well as holy choices? We wait for light as to this. Apart from Scripture, Dorner's argument for divine foreknowledge is simply that the goal of the world must be certain; hence all the members of the consummated organism must be foreknown. But he holds that the finally wicked (if there are any) exclude themselves from this organism. The righteous have a principle of holiness which they will never lose; the wills of the wicked are in pure contingency; it is impossible to affirm their final destiny.

I think that Dorner has never published anything opposed to the view that, in the case of those, if such there be, who will be found wicked at the day of judgment, this impossibility extends to God himself. On the contrary, his doctrine of freedom affirms that view by necessary implication; at least, I cannot interpret it otherwise. (See the extracts from Vol. iv. of the *Glaubenslehre*). If it is the nature of freedom, not alone the silence of revelation, which makes the final fate of individuals uncertain to us, must it not also be uncertain to God? The passage quoted from Vol. iv. p. 381 seems to teach that while a definite *number* of mankind may be embraced in the eternal plan of the world's goal, all the particular *individuals* may not be eternally foreknown. But the passage which seems most decidedly to indicate a leaning toward the doctrine of nescience, is the one I have quoted from p. 422, n. 1. It was this which led me (too hastily, I admit), to attribute that doctrine to Dorner in a former article. "The foreknowledge of definitive unbelief already presupposes (*setzt schon voraus*) the creation of those who become unbelieving." This sentence has been strangely quoted on the other side, as

though it read "already *precedes*" instead of *presupposes*. Taken in its context, the natural meaning of the sentence is this: "God cannot foreknow the final loss of a soul until that soul is created." The two references which follow strengthen this impression. For Dorner cites from his first volume, not the full discussion on pp. 498, 499, but "p. 500," which must refer to a sentence at the close of paragraph 5, as follows: "Further, the opinion of the divine foreknowledge will have to disclaim the implication that God's foreknowledge works so as to restrict the divine activity; that, for example, through foreknowing that the offer of salvation will be in vain in particular cases, God will refrain from making the offer." The other reference is, "Cf. McCabe, *The Foreknowledge of God*, 1878." This work came to Dorner's notice between the writing of the first and last volumes of the *Glaubenslehre*. As he cites no special passage, but refers to the book as a whole, one might suppose him to have come into accord with its view of foreknowledge. Can he mean, "Compare *on the other side* McCabe," etc? Apparently not, for McCabe states in his later book on *Nescience*, "Dr. Dorner wrote me that he agreed with most of my positions." Elsewhere in the same book McCabe refers to "the painful incertitude of the great and good man [Dorner] on this point," but quotes nothing subsequent to Vol. i. of the English translation of the *Glaubenslehre*. Perhaps the statement of agreement with "most of his positions" should be taken *cum grano salis*, and on the whole the fog enveloping the subject cannot be said to be dispelled as yet. Although, then, I went too far in asserting in the *Bibliotheca Sacra* for Oct. 1882, p. 755, "Dr. Dorner *distinctly* holds that God cannot foreknow the contingent except as contingent" — the fact being that the closing pages of his work are *indistinct* on this matter, and seem at variance with the full discussion in Vols. I. and II. (English ed.), — it is still true that a clear statement of Dr. Dorner's real belief is a desideratum, and that if we confine our attention to the problem of universal salvation (which was the point I had in mind, as the con-



text shows), Dorner must hold, to be consistent, that the problem is uncertain even for God. He also leaves it doubtful whether all men will not be found holy, even at the day of judgment.<sup>1</sup>

When we return to the question whether Dorner's theory accords with Scripture, the answer, I believe, must be in the negative. The proof that Scripture condemns both the uncertainties just mentioned does not fall within our present scope, but was presented in the previous article alluded to. But the Bible also opposes any hesitancy as to the divine foresight of freedom by teaching the full omniscience and prescience of God. Any one who examines the following passages will readily see that they might be multiplied many fold. They apply not only to Dorner's view, but to the whole subject.

#### *Scriptural Testimony respecting the Foreknowledge of God.*

1. *Certainty of God's foreknowledge.* — Gen. xv. 13; Ex. iii. 19; ix. 30; Isa. xlv. 23; Jer. xxxi. 35–37; Zeph. i. 9; Matt. xxiv. 35; Acts ii. 30; Tit. i. 2.

<sup>1</sup> What has been said may serve to detect the misstatements contained in two editorials of the *Independent* (Nov. 2 and Dec. 21, 1882; cf. the editorial notes of Feb. 15 and May 3, 1883), which relate to my former article. My communication to that Journal, published Dec. 7, was designed primarily to answer the correspondent who criticized another point in that article (Nov. 16), and secondarily to appeal the discussion on foreknowledge to a superior court. The single reference which I gave, as a sort of *caveat ad interim*, shows precisely what I affirmed it to show — not that Dorner held to the divine nescience of free acts, but that he did not regard the question as *fully settled*. Otherwise he would not have said: "if God had a foreknowledge of the free, he may have also taken into account," etc. I may add that the note on p. 602 of the *Jahrbücher* for 1858 (given in full above), which is quoted against me as "explicitly disavowing and discountenancing" the theory of nescience is plainly indecisive, as was stated by Rothe in his *Theol. Ethik*, i. 224 note, as follows: "Dorner, *Jahrb. f. d. T.*, iii. p. 602, does not decide as to the question whether God has a foreknowledge of the free; but he remarks: 'On the other hand, it is not to be denied that we cannot form a representation to ourselves of the divine foreknowledge of the free as certain to occur, but only of every future free act as possible.' But in truth there lies here an impossibility not only of representing the matter, but at the outset of thinking it." The reader who has followed the attacks of the *Independent* can now judge whether they were warranted by the slight error which occasioned them.

2. *Accuracy of God's foreknowledge.* — 1 Kings xiii. 2; Ps. xxii; Isa. xiii. 20-22; xlv. 1-6, 11; Jer. xxv. 11, 12; li. 30-32; Dan. ix. 24-27; xi.; Matt. xxiv. 2, 15-18; Luke xxii. 10

3. *Foreknowledge proves God's divinity.* — Deut. xviii. 18-22; 1 Kings xxii. 28; Isa. xli. 21-23; Jer. xlv. 26-30; Ezek. xii. 21-25; Dan. ii. 19-22, 47; Luke i. 20.

4. *God's foreknowledge not dependent on human freedom.* — Deut. xxxi. 20, 21; Ps. cxxxix. 2, l. c.; Isa. x. 5-15; Jer. i. 5; Ezek. xxxviii. 10-12; Zech. xii. 10; Mark xiv. 29, 30; Acts iii. 17, 18; iv. 27, 28; Rom. xi. 32-34; Eph. i. 4, 5.

5. *Certain triumph of God's plan of the world.* — Gen. xxii. 18; Ps. lxxii. 11; Isa. xlvi. 9, 10; Matt. xiii. 31-33; Rom. xi.; Eph. i. 9-11; iii. 11; Rev. xix.

6. *God's absolute omniscience.* — 1 Kings viii. 39; Job xi. 7-9; xxxvii. 16; Ps. cxxxix.; cxlvii. 5; Ezek. xi. 5; John xxi. 17; 1 Cor. iv. 5; 1 John i. 5; iii. 20.

7. *God's scientia media.*<sup>1</sup> — 1 Sam. xxiii. 12; 2 Kings xiii. 19; Jer. xxvi. 13-15; xxxviii. 17; Ezek. iii. 6; Matt. xi. 21; xxvi. 53; Luke xix. 42; 2 Thess. ii. 6, 7.

8. *God's foreknowledge of holy choices.* — Gen. xviii. 19; Isa. xlix. 5-7; liii. 12; lxxv. 1; Jer. xxix. 12-14; Ezek. xx. 43, 44; John x. 16; Acts xv. 17, 18 (text of Westcott and Hort); Rom. viii. 29; 1 Pet. i. 2.

9. *God's foreknowledge of sinful choices.* — Gen. xv. 16, l. c.; Deut. xxxi. 16; 2 Sam. xii. 11, 12; 2 Kings viii. 12; Ps. ii. 1, 2; Isa. xlvi. 8; liii. 7; Matt. xvi. 21; John vi. 71; xiii. 38; Acts ii. 22, 23; xx. 29, 30; 2 Thess. ii. 8.

The result of our Scriptural examination is to negative decidedly the theories of Rothe, Dorner, and McCabe. Its bearing on Whedon's theory will be examined under our next (and last) division.

### III. HOW FAR DOES THE TRADITIONAL VIEW OF THE DIVINE FOREKNOWLEDGE APPEAR TO NEED REVISION ?

This view can be stated very briefly; God has from eternity

<sup>1</sup> i. e. "A divine knowledge of what would have happened if something else had not, or conversely, of something which would not have happened if something else had."

an infallible, independent, and perfect knowledge of whatsoever will come to pass. As we are considering *foreknowledge* only, we need not complicate the question by entering the realm of the possible. All the phases of belief we are considering agree in holding the omniscience of God, and in deducing thence his eternal, infallible, and perfect knowledge of himself and of whatsoever comes under the law of necessity; also his absolute knowledge of all present realities, down to the innermost secrets of the heart. But all agree, moreover, in denying God's *independent* knowledge of the free acts of his creatures. We mean by this knowledge, that which he draws from himself alone; the old theology asserts that *all* God's knowledge is of this character, since before the creation he was the only existence, and since his knowledge being infinite admits of no growth. Rothe and McCabe, as we have seen, assert that God is altogether ignorant of the creature's choices before they are formed. Dorner and Whedon hold that if God foreknows free acts, he draws the knowledge from the agents, not from himself.

In criticizing the first edition of Rothe's *Theologische Ethik*, Julius Müller asked: "Does Rothe seriously maintain that the free choices of men are continually increasing the knowledge of God?" In the second edition, Rothe replies: "I cheerfully and unhesitatingly answer, Yes, certainly!" But a being so mutable, whose plan of government, however wise, must be daily and hourly modified on account of the projects and caprices of millions of his creatures, is not the being of infinite wisdom, and without the shadow of change, whom the Bible reveals. "There are many devices in a man's heart," says the wise man; "nevertheless, the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand."

The traditional theory is attacked on the opposite side by philosophical fatalism, which affirms, like the view just mentioned, that an event infallibly foreknown cannot be a free act. We need not turn aside to meet this objection, as we are not bringing into question the fact of freedom; but it was on account of this attack that the theory was set forth which derives

God's foreknowledge of creatural volitions from the creatures themselves. But how can this be when the creatures have no existence? The difficulty is admitted by both Dorner and Whedon. God cannot have a knowledge of free beings through his self-knowledge, says the former (*Jahrbücher*, 1858, p. 601; cf. p. 603, at the top), "but only through a different act of perception, *however this may be conceivable*." The difficulty is also frankly confessed in the note on p. 602. I have already quoted this passage, with Rothe's comment as to its unthinkableness. The confession is still more frank and full in a passage in the Glaubenslehre which I have not yet cited, Vol. ii. (Eng. ed.), p. 59. "If the formation of the concrete world-plan was from eternity definitive in its nature, we are compelled to maintain a foreknowledge even of the free, and therewith encounter one of the most difficult doctrinal questions. We have previously been unable to conceal from ourselves that the supposition of a divine foreknowledge of free actions, and therefore also of the definite persons who will attain the goal of perfection and blessedness, has its difficulties. The greatest of these, perhaps, is the following. It seems as if, supposing such eternal foreknowledge to exist, the free cause must have had a real effect even before its actual existence, namely this, to render itself perceptible to the divine knowledge, since this divine foreknowledge could not spring from God alone, unless God were the exclusive cause even of the free." Then follows the passage (pp. 60, 61) already given. Strange to say, Dorner leaves this difficulty, not to add impossibility, with no attempt at solution other than the mere terms "*intuitus*" and "intuitive knowledge" (pp. 59, 61). Whedon, however, attempts to mitigate the force of the objection, though not to clear up the mystery.

P. 274. "The real difficulty (which we distinctly profess to leave forever insoluble), as may soon more clearly appear, is to conceive *how God came by that foreknowledge*. But that is no greater difficulty than to conceive how God came by his omnipotence or self-existence. It will be a wise theologian who will tell us how God came by his attributes." Dr.

Whedon seems here to miss the point of the problem. When we inquire, "How can God draw his knowledge from an object not yet in existence, a zero?" we are not asking after a method, but suggesting a contradiction. The *how* resembles that in Matt. xii. 34, "How can ye, being evil, speak good things?"

Before the creation of the world, God infallibly knew the volition I am this moment exercising. Is it not absurd to say that he had *then* derived this certain knowledge from my act, which (in Whedon's view) had nothing whatever to make it certain till this moment? But Whedon would probably reply: The absurdity lies in the application of time-words like "then," "before," and "till" to eternal existence, which has no limits of time, being an ever-present *now*.

P. 290. "It is as if God were a person now present looking upon the free act as now alternatively *being performed*. That *now-being-performed* act reflects itself into the divine mind just as it comes into existence; and just according to its nature, free, and under condition that other act instead were in power and possible."

P. 291. "God's mind, according to the 'eternal now' is like this mirror, before which I may stand. Every movement of my head, hand, body, is reflected with perfect accuracy according as that movement is by me freely and alternatively made. The image in the mirror does not shape or constrain the movements of my choice, but accepts them in all their freedom, and represents them precisely as they are successively *becoming*. My free act causes the reproduction in the mirror, not the mirror a necessitated act."

P. 288. "If my present free alternative act send back, in the very process of being freely performed, its eternal image of itself into the depths of the divine omniscience, it sends it back, with no trembling line, a true image of itself — a free alternative act. It creates in the divine mind an eternal unchanging perception of itself as it is, a *free act*." Perhaps Dorner intends something similar in a passage which seems to refer primarily to God's present knowledge of realized

events (*Jahrbücher*, 1858, p. 603). "There must be in God two kinds of knowledge; one unconditioned, immediate, eternally produced from himself, and one conditioning itself through the free causalities. But through the latter, temporal history reflects itself back into the divine knowledge itself." I confess myself unable to perceive how the contradiction is a whit relieved by this device of the eternal now. One fatal objection, as I regard it, is that God's foreknowledge of a free choice exists at *successive points* of human history *previous* to the formation of the choice. So Scripture seems to represent it. When Peter declared in ardent affection, "Though all shall be offended, yet will not I," did our Lord know the contrary by any reflection from the subsequent denial? The choice to deny had no existence, and never had had. Nor was it conjectured as probable, but revealed as absolutely certain. "Verily I say to thee," said he who is the Verily, the faithful and true Witness, "that thou — to-day — this night — before the cock crow twice — wilt deny me thrice." But he spake exceeding vehemently, "If I must die with thee, I will not deny thee." If one were able, by the argument *ab ignorantia*, to carry Peter's free act of the next morning into a timeless eternity, still he could not bring it back again into an anterior time. The mind *recalcitrates* against such a process. How much simpler and more rational to say that Christ knew Peter himself, with an absolute knowledge of all his impulses; knew the holy motives which he would freely resist, and the temptation to which he would freely yield; ay, had known this before the disciple was born. It is accordant with Scripture to say that God *had* known men's future conduct before they came into existence (see Jer. i. 5, and especially Isa. xlvi. 8: "I *knew* that thou *wouldest* deal very treacherously, and wast called a transgressor from the womb"). The treachery of Judas, if not foretold in the Old Testament as Christ seems to teach, was at least declared at *successive points* before the betrayal. John vi. 71, οὗτος γὰρ ἔμελλεν παραδίδόναι αὐτόν. John xiii. 21, Ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι εἰς ἐξ ὑμῶν παραδώσει με.

Herod and Pontius Pilate with the Gentiles and the people of Israel were gathered together in Jerusalem, not to send a message into the infinite azure which knows no before nor after, but to do whatever God's hand and God's counsel fore-ordained to come to pass. The people who crossed the Jordan under Joshua were the most God-fearing generation of Jews whom the Bible describes; but God knew, *before* he brought them into the land, that their children would serve other gods; he knew "their imagination," which was not conceived as a matter of fact till all that generation were gathered to their fathers. (Cf. Deut. xxxi. 16-21 with Joshua xxiv. 81, Judg. ii. 7-10. Deut. xxxi. 21 is ambiguous, but if the A.V. is right in joining יָדָוּ with יָדָוּ the verse would seem decisive). A remarkable expression occurs in the prophecy against Gog, Ezek. xxxviii. 10. "Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, And it shall be in that day that things will come into thy heart, and thou wilt conceive an evil purpose." God saw the things, and saw the free sequence, *before* the thought was conceived. If God is dependent on us for his knowledge of our free acts, how can prophet and apostle unite in the exclamation, "Who hath been his counsellor?" The redeemed are not chosen because foreseen to be holy, but chosen before the foundation of the world that they should *be* holy.

But why multiply examples? for in this case, as in the case of final causes, the stress of the question is on the interpretation of any *single* fact adduced. Dr. Whedon himself does not declare absolutely in favor of the eternal now; at times he drops the conception, and speaks of eternity in the language of time; thus p. 284 (my italics), "The rightness of the knowledge must be seen to *eternally before the act*. The act is bound by no necessity to conform to, or be connected with, the knowledge. It is perfectly free to contradict the knowledge, and the knowledge must take care of itself."

P. 285. "By the *content* of a knowledge we mean the matter or matter of fact, as contained in the mind, which makes up the knowledge, and of which the knowledge consists. Now Edwards thinks that in the divine foreknowledge

there is an 'indissoluble' connection between the internal content and the external act, requiring the latter to conform to the former. But there is not. There is an 'indissolubleness' requiring the former to conform to the latter; but that is bound to *have been* taken care of *an eternity ago*, and the present free act has no concern with it, and is bound by no necessity to it."

I believe that the whole passage just quoted is literally true, and hence that there was something in existence "an eternity ago" which secured the certainty (not the necessity) of a given human act, to which the divine foreknowledge then—subsequently in the order of nature—conformed itself. That that something could have been the free act itself is as plain a contradiction to my mind as that a body can move both east and west at the same instant and in the same sense. What then can it have been? The question brings us to the inveterate dispute as to the logical priority of foreknowledge or decree.

In the *Bibliotheca Sacra* for April 1862, Dr. Whedon, in a valuable presentation of the distinctive doctrines of Methodism took the ground that foreknowledge being an essential *attribute* of God, and foreordination an *act*, the latter must be conceived as posterior to the former. To this statement the *Bibliotheca* replied (in the same Number) that knowledge is indeed an essential attribute of God, but not *foreknowledge*. The latter respects a future certainty, which can be made certain only by God's decree. We can conceive him as a perfect God without foreknowledge.

Dr. Whedon rejoined in his work on the Will, published in 1864, in part as follows (pp. 269, 270); "God cannot be conceived 'as perfect God' without a foreknowledge of all future possibilities and actualities. *Whatever* of the future is *certain*, reflects its certainty back into the essential, eternal omniscience of God. If omniscience be an attribute of God, the knowledge of all futurity is an attribute of God; and that is foreknowledge. If God had produced no future events, then he would have eternally foreknown the absence of all

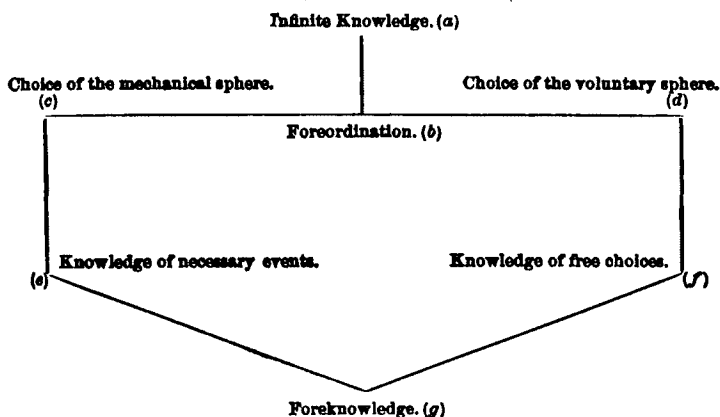


future events. It is not the knowledge of future events exclusively, but the knowledge of all futurity, all that the future does or does not contain, which constitutes foreknowledge. Foreknowledge is omniscience comprehending the future. Foreknowledge differs from knowledge just as much as a thing differs from itself. The knowledge of a future event or a future no-event is just as truly *knowledge* as the knowledge of the past or present. Omniscience includes all three. *Known* unto God are all his works from the beginning."

Doubtless this argument did not pass unchallenged; but as no reply has come to my notice, let us try and ascertain for ourselves which disputant is right. We transport ourselves in thought to the distant eternity when God existed alone, and admitting that his essential attributes *logically* precede his acts, we will overleap those acts, and endeavor to conceive of the divine mind in its essential knowledge, when the present order of creation was only one of many possible systems, among which God was to choose, when therefore God knew them all as possible, no one of them as actual; just as an architect may have a distinct vision of a dozen conceivable houses. But Dr. Whedon arrests us in this endeavor, and asserts that the divine omniscience must eternally conform to whatever is certain in the future. Granting that there is no *chronological* separation between the knowledge of possibilities and of realities, we still insist, with Whedon himself, that volition must logically come after perception. Is not God at liberty to create what he will? can we not even conceive of his essential attributes without postulating our own existence? Dr. Whedon will hardly maintain that we cannot, in view of a statement which he makes in the interest of human freedom. Pp. 279, 280. "An atheist is fully able to conceive a world of free agents without any omnipotent personal First Cause." So then we can conceive of man without God, but not of God without man! And not only so; for if foreknowledge be an *essential* divine attribute, then God could not be God without the certain existence of the meanest reptile that crawls on the ground. The existence of all

things as they are at present was *first* infallibly certain, and *then* — God deliberately chose the present world out of all possible worlds! That choice, at least, could not reflect itself back into the previous knowledge, for then the choice would be logically first, which is contrary to the supposition. The divine creative act was according to a divine thought into which no choice had entered, but which shaped infallibly the pattern to be followed. The advocates of this doctrine must beware lest, in freeing man from his chains, they wrap them around his Creator.

The traditional view of the matter posits (1) God's infinite knowledge of himself, and therein of all other possible and impossible existences; (2) His act of will, according to which all objects of his power come forth in their order; (3) His knowledge of these objects as certain to be realized. This gives the system of necessity. (4) His act of will, according to which certain beings are endowed with freedom, and surrounded with objects appealing to choice; (5) His knowledge of all future motives, and accordingly of all free choices as certain to be realized. This gives the system of liberty. Whether (2) and (3) are considered as prior to or as coordinate with (4) and (5) makes no difference to our classification, which may be represented as follows:



*a* leads to *b*, which branches into *c* and *d*; *c* leads to *e* and *d* to *f*;  
*e* and *f* combine to form *g*.

It is earnestly insisted on by Dr. Whedon and all Arminians that this scheme leaves no place for true freedom, but binds all things under the law of necessity. On the other hand, those who hold the traditional doctrine have always as earnestly repelled the charge. We have no use for this doctrine of necessity; in the full exercise of our liberty, we refuse to have it fastened upon us. We hold that as a matter of fact men always do (not must) choose this rather than that because they are persuaded so to do, and that since all these objects of persuasion in all their connections were infallibly foreknown by God, he infallibly foreknew the decisions of the will. We hold that God has created a system of free beings, able in every case to choose otherwise than as they do,—finite and fallible, it is true, and so often choosing wrong—but yet with *sense* enough to choose in every case as the thing *looks* to them; and that their *Maker* can always tell how it will look to them. We go as far as any Arminian in maintaining the power of alternate choice. Whedon's book is a most admirable polemic against the doctrine of necessity; and yet many will refuse to grant that Jonathan Edwards is properly classed with the fatalists, although his terminology alone might warrant that inference. It is not necessary to discuss here the perennial question whether Edwards does or does not hold to the true liberty of the will; his book, like the divine foreknowledge, "must take care of itself," and is quite as likely to do so. But I justify the representation of the above view as the traditional one, by going back another century still, into the golden age of English theology. Few books have had a wider and deeper influence upon systematic religious thought than Stephen Charnock's *Sermons on the Being and Attributes of God*.

I quote first certain passages which set forth the liberty of the will.<sup>1</sup> "Voluntary actions are purely contingents, and have nothing of necessity in them. All free actions that depend upon the will of man, whether to do or not to do, are of this nature, because they depend not upon a necessary cause, as

<sup>1</sup> Carter's edition. New York, 1854, Vol. i. p. 439.

burning doth upon the fire, moistening upon water, or as descent or falling down is necessary to a heavy body ; for those cannot in their own nature do otherwise ; but the other actions depend upon a free agent, able to turn to this or that point, and determine himself as he pleases."

P. 447. "The will cannot be compelled, for then it would cease to be the will ; God doth not root up the foundations of nature, or change the order of it, and make men unable to act like men, that is, as free agents." Dr. Whedon will accord (as do we) with Charnock's account of the *nature* of foreknowledge, pp. 448-450. "God's foreknowledge is not, simply considered, the cause of anything. It puts nothing into things, but only beholds them as present, and arising from their proper causes. . . . God foreknows things, because they will come to pass ; but things are not future because God knows them. Foreknowledge presupposeth the object which is foreknown ; a thing that is come to pass is the object of the divine knowledge, but not the cause of the act of divine knowledge ; and though the foreknowledge of God doth in eternity precede the actual presence of a thing which is foreseen as future, yet the future thing, in regard of its futurity, is as eternal as the foreknowledge of God. . . . Man did not sin because God foresaw him ; but God foresaw him to sin because man would sin. . . . God did not only foreknow our actions, but the manner of our actions. That is, he did not only know that we would do such actions, but that we would do them freely ; he foresaw that the will would freely determine itself to this or that. The knowledge of God takes not away the nature of things ; though God knows possible things, yet they remain in the nature of possibility ; and though God knows contingent things, yet they remain in the nature of contingencies ; and though God knows free agents, yet they remain in the nature of liberty. God did not foreknow the actions of man as necessary but as free ; so that liberty is rather established by this foreknowledge than removed. God did not foreknow that Adam had not a power to stand, or that any man hath not a power to omit such a

sinful action, but that he would not omit it." The next sentence must satisfy Whedon of Charnock's soundness in the Arminian faith, for it not only meets Fletcher's famous test question, but is precisely the "corollary" which Whedon himself states in various forms, pp. 272, 273, 286, etc. "Man hath a power," says Charnock, "to do otherwise than that which God foreknows he will do." This is contrary choice, if anything is. And these are the words of a Puritan divine, instructing a Presbyterian congregation. Thus far, then, we hold, distinctly and heartily, with the Arminians. From this point on, the divergence is rapid.

P. 449. "But how comes it [the future thing] to be knowable to God? It must be answered, either in the power of God, as a thing possible, or in the will of God, as a thing future; he first willed, and then knew what he willed."

P. 457. "Again, since knowledge is a perfection, if God's knowledge of the creatures depended upon the creatures, he would derive an excellency from them, they would derive no excellency from any idea in the divine mind; he would not be infinitely perfect in himself."

P. 459. "No reason can be given why God knows a thing to be, but because he infallibly wills it to be."

P. 411. "These two kinds of knowledge differ; that of vision is of things which God hath decreed to be, though they are not yet; that of intelligence is of things which never shall be, yet they may be, or are possible to be, if God pleases to will or order their being; one respects things that shall be, the other things that may be, and are not repugnant to the nature of God to be. The knowledge of vision follows the act of God's will, and supposeth an act of God's will before, decreeing things to be. (If we could suppose any first or second in God's decree, we might say, — God knew them as possible before he decreed them; he knew them as future, because he decreed them). For without the will of God decreeing a thing to come to pass, God cannot know that it will infallibly come to pass."

P. 460. "It was not necessary that this or that creature

should be, and therefore it was not necessary that God should know this or that creature with a knowledge of vision ; but after the will of God had determined the existence of this or that creature, his knowledge being then determined to this or that object, did necessarily continue unchangeable."

If any one chooses to say that Charnock was an Arminian on the will, but a Calvinist on the decrees, we will not dispute about names ; but whoever will read his discourses on " the immutability of God," and on " God's knowledge," will come under the sway of a clear, close, and devout thinker, whose thought is as fresh to-day as it was two hundred years ago, and whose vindication of the common doctrine of the divine foreknowledge is a fortress which stands fast, in the main, against every modern form of assault. I purposely say, in the main ; for there is one outwork of the fortress which I think must be abandoned ; in this respect the traditional view seems to need revision. I refer to the identification of both knowledge and will with the simple essence of God. This was a survival of the favorite scholastic concept of God as *actus purus*, in whom there is no real distinction of attributes, the latter existing only in the view of the creature, and revealing man's inability to think God as he is. This idea was almost universal in mediæval theology, also in that of the Reformation, and has been the prevailing one in recent times, largely through the influence of Schleiermacher. God's attributes, it is often said, are simply what *we* attribute to him. If they were objectively real, then distinction and consequent limitation would be introduced into the idea of God. But this is by no means clear ; it must be proved as well as asserted. God's self-revelation in the Bible makes a very different impression. Knowledge and will are kept so distinct, that while God knows all things, he does not will what he hates. Yet God is infinite, and God is one. If it be objected ; Scripture teaches that God is a Spirit, and spirit must be uncompounded — simple essence ; we reply, So is man a spirit. His bodily part has nothing to do with the distinctions of knowledge and will, which yet are real in him,

and unless we are to use words unmeaningly, are also real in God.

It is one of the great merits of Dorner's *Glaubenslehre* (as before of the essays on Immutability) that it controverts this abstract, metaphysical conception of God, which admits of no internal vitality in his infinite being — a tendency which culminated in the dictum of Scotus Erigena: “*Deus nescit se quid est, quia non est quid.*” Dorner maintains the real distinction, the objective validity, of God's attributes. But, singularly enough, a defect in his treatment of the divine foreknowledge arises just from not carrying out this distinction thoroughly.<sup>1</sup> I do not mean that he himself confuses knowledge and will, but that his objections against the traditional view of the divine foreknowledge (aside from those already considered), apply rather to the divine *will*, have no force against those who keep the two attributes distinct, and so do not justify his demand for a reconstruction of the doctrine, in order to place God in a living relation to the world. God lives, indeed, a historical life in the world, acting and reacting with it; but his *knowledge* of all this remains identically the same from eternity to eternity.

The *modus* of the connection between the divine foreknowledge and the free world is, from any point of view, a mystery. The five theories we have examined may be regarded as differing simply in the location of the mystery. That of Rothe endeavors to make all plain by reducing this connection to zero. But a greater mystery is thus presented; that the universal Creator should so bind himself as to be unable to form any distinct plan of government for the world he has created; but only the bare outline of a plan, varying its tenor every instant according to the millions of fickle choices among his creatures. “He must always be in counsel what he would do upon every change in men's minds.”

<sup>1</sup> See *Jahrbücher*, 1858, pp. 603–605, 648; cf. Dr. Simon's abstract of these essays in the *Bib. Sac.*, Jan. 1879, pp. 57, 58. See especially *Glaubenslehre* (Eng. ed.), Vol. i. pp. 330–32. The deeply interesting question which these extracts open — the relation of God's knowledge to time — I must leave at present with the few hints in the body of the article.

The same reasoning applies to McCabe's theory, but he gives us an additional mystery; that of the nature of the human will itself. What fellowship hath light with darkness, freedom with necessity? In uniting the two last under the name of will, McCabe attempts to join two incompatibles.

The mystery of Dorner's view (supposing him to hold to foreknowledge) is that which he himself so frankly states; that a free act should have its *sole* ground of reality in the finite agent, and yet be eternally foreknown with certainty by the Creator. Supposing him to deny foreknowledge, the mystery becomes that which he urges against Martensen and Rothe; that God should have from eternity a fixed plan for the consummation of the world, embracing free creatures, while yet there was no certainty that a single creature would realize that plan. Supposing him to leave the question undecided, the mystery is so great, in his view, as to baffle reconciliation.

The first of these three suppositions respecting Dorner applies also to Whedon's theory; but this gives us the further mystery of an eternal foreknowledge, comprehending every future event as certain, and logically excluding any choice on God's part among possible alternatives; an unfree Creator forming a free creature. The mystery in the traditional view is that a choice should be free, whose certainty is yet secured eternally beforehand; that an agent should exist with perfect liberty to shape his course among possible lines of conduct, yet sure to go according to a foreknown law.

It is my conviction that every one of these mysteries except the last, results when carried to its logical issues, in inconceivableness and contradiction. That this is not true of the last is witnessed, I hold, by the analogy of our every-day experience. All the vast and complicated business of life is carried on in implicit reliance on the law that free choices are practically certain beforehand; and that men who *may* go in any one of various ways will *choose* to go in a particular way. The uncertainties of this approximation result from imperfect data, not from an unsound principle; hence what is so



high a degree of certainty to the finite apprehension becomes absolute certainty to the infinite apprehension.

We conclude that the traditional view of the divine foreknowledge stands in need of no modification save the holding fast the distinction in God between knowledge and will; the former being fixed from eternity; the latter being gradually accomplished in time. He *will do* all his pleasure; he *doeth* these things which *were known* from of old.

---

## ARTICLE V.

### THE PRACTICAL BEARINGS OF OUR BELIEF CONCERNING THE RELATION OF DEATH TO PROBATION.

BY REV. G. FREDERICK WRIGHT, PROFESSOR IN OBERLIN COLLEGE.

THE creeds of Christendom have not, all of them, expressly stated the belief that human probation is limited by death. This belief, however, is usually assumed or implied in the articles which treat of original sin and of baptism. We append the clauses from the more important creeds which bear upon the subject.<sup>1</sup>

**The Westminster Confession of Faith** reads: "The souls of the righteous being then made perfect in holiness, are received into the highest heavens, where they behold the glory of God in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies. And the souls of the wicked are cast into hell, where they remain in torments and utter darkness, reserved to the judgment of the great day. Besides these two places for souls separated from their bodies, the Scripture acknowledgeth none."

A similar clause is found in the Larger Catechism. In the Shorter Catechism, however, the statement upon this point is not explicit (chap. 32).

**Nicene Creed.** — I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins.

**Athanasian Creed.** — 41. At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies. 42. And shall give an account of their own works.

**Augsburg Confession.** — Art. II. Of Original Sin they teach that, after Adam's fall, all men begotten after the common course of nature are

<sup>1</sup> For these quotations we are indebted to Schaff's *Creeds of Christendom*.

born with sin ; that is, without the fear of God, without trust in him, and with fleshly appetite ; and that disease, or original fault, is truly sin, condemning and bringing eternal death now also upon all that are not born again by baptism and the Holy Spirit.

Art. IX. Of Baptism they teach that it is necessary to salvation, and that by Baptism the grace of God is offered, and that children are to be baptized, who by Baptism, being offered to God, are received into God's favor.

**Luther's Small Catechism.** — II. What does Baptism give, or of what use is it ? It worketh forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and gives everlasting salvation to all who believe, as the word and promise of God declare.

III. How can water do such great things ? Without the word of God water is nothing but water, and no baptism ; but with the word of God it is a baptism, that is, a gracious water of life and a washing of regeneration in the Holy Ghost, as St. Paul says, Titus iii. 5-7.

**The Saxon Visitation Articles, 1592.** — Art. III. Of Holy Baptism. The Pure and True Doctrine of our Churches on the Article of Holy Baptism : 4. Baptism is the bath of regeneration, because in it we are born again, and sealed by the Spirit of adoption through grace, or gratuitously. 5. Unless a person be born again of water and Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. This is not intended, however, for cases of necessity.

The False and Erroneous Doctrine of the Calvinists on Holy Baptism : 1. That Baptism does not work nor confer regeneration, faith, the grace of God, and salvation, but only signifies and seals them. 2. That regeneration does not take place in and with Baptism, but afterwards, at a more advanced age, yea, with many not before old age. 3. That salvation doth not depend on Baptism, and therefore in cases of necessity should not be required in the church.

**The French Confession of Faith, 1559.** — X. We believe that all the posterity of Adam is in bondage to original sin, which is an hereditary evil, and not an imitation merely, as was declared by the Pelagians, whom we detest in their errors. And we consider that it is not necessary to inquire how sin was conveyed from one man to another, for what God had given Adam was not for him alone, but for all his posterity ; and thus in his person we have been deprived of all good things, and have fallen with him into a state of sin and misery.

**The Belgic Confession, A.D. 1561.** — Art. XXXVII. Then the books (that is to say, the consciences) shall be opened, and the dead judged according to what they shall have done in this world, whether it be good or evil. Nay, all men shall give an account of every idle word they have spoken, which the world only accounts amusement and jest ; and then the secrets and hypocrisy of men shall be disclosed and laid open before us.

**The Scotch Confession of Faith, A.D. 1560.** — Art. XVII. On the Immortalitie of the Soules : The elect departed are in peace and rest fra their labours . . . . . As contrariwise, the reprobate and unfaithful departed have anguish, torment, and pain, that cannot be expressed.

**The Irish Articles of Religion, 1615.** — Of the Fall of Man, Original Sin, and the State of Man before Justification : Man is deprived of original righteousness, and by nature is bent unto sin. And therefore, in every person born into the world, it deserves God's wrath and damnation. . . . . All sins are not equal, but some far more heinous than others ; yet the very least of its own nature mortal, and without God's mercy, maketh the offender liable unto everlasting damnation.

Of the State of the Souls of Men after they be departed out of this Life, together with the General Resurrection and the Last Judgment : After this life is ended the souls of God's children be presently received into heaven, there to enjoy unspeakable comforts ; the souls of the wicked are cast into hell, there to endure endless torments. At the end of this world the Lord Jesus shall come in the clouds with the glory of his Father ; at which time, by the almighty power of God, the living shall be changed and the dead shall be raised ; all shall appear both in body and soul before his judgment-seat, to receive according to that which they have done in their bodies, whether good or evil.

The following passage from Irenaeus is also worthy of quotation :

Contra Haereses, Lib. i. cap. 10, § 1. And that he *may execute righteous judgment over all* ; sending into eternal fire the spiritual powers of wickedness, and the angels who transgressed and apostatized, and the godless and unrighteous and lawless and blasphemous among men, and granting *life and immortality and eternal glory* to the righteous and holy, who have both kept the commandments and continued in his love, some from the beginning, some after their conversion.

From the omission of many of the creeds to state expressly that probation closes at death, some persons have been led to suppose that the belief of the church was not clearly defined upon this subject ; and several recent writers in newspapers and magazines have either openly maintained, or have written in such a way as to convey the impression, that the belief in a probation continued up to the judgment-day has been generally looked upon by the church with indifference or complacency. And it is, indeed, true that if we collect together in one magazine article an account of the individual Christian teachers who during the eighteen hun-

dred years of the existence of Christianity have expressed themselves in favor of restoration or of some sort of probation after death, the list seems formidable. Even Luther can be quoted as favoring a belief that some of the heathen will have the gospel extended to them after death. The fallacy of this procedure consists in giving undue prominence to eccentric views, which have not at any time penetrated the faith of the great mass of Christian believers. It can easily be shown that from the beginning until now the great majority of Christians have believed both in the everlasting awards of the judgment-day and in the fixity of the soul's condition between death and the judgment-day. This is as true of the church before the days of Augustine as since the Reformation. Origen's views were somewhat akin to those of Dr. Dorner, and like his were held in opposition to the acknowledged teaching of Scripture. Origen's views were considered in their day, and were rejected. Dr. Dorner has nothing new to offer upon the subject.

The reason that so many of the creeds have neglected definitely to exclude the idea of a probation continued after death to the judgment-day doubtless is, that there has been no serious occasion explicitly to affirm the general belief upon the subject. The belief that death ends probation has been so nearly universal in the church that there has been little occasion to affirm it. The creeds of Christendom have generally been formed to sustain important doctrines which have been extensively denied. The separate articles of the creeds have been framed to guard against living heresies. The doctrine now urged upon us that man's probation is extended beyond death as far as the general judgment-day, and no farther, has never been a living issue with the church — unless it may be said to be so now.

A sufficient proof of the foregoing statement concerning the common faith of the church respecting probation is to be found in the attitude of Christian believers with regard to prayers for the dead. Protestants never pray for the dead, either for those who are supposed to have died regenerate or

for those who are thought to be unregenerate at death ; while Catholics pray for those dead persons only who are supposed to have been regenerated before death.

This ominous omission by Protestants is a most instructive and impressive fact, and reveals more forcibly than any creed could do their belief that after death no relief can be obtained from the penalty of the law. For it is a fundamental belief of Protestant and Catholic alike that prayer is a positive power, and that by its exercise man moves the arm that moves the world. We pray for distant objects. Space is no bar to Christian faith. When oceans roll between us and our friends, it rather stimulates to prayer. The prayers of the pious mother follow the steps of her wayward son, through all scenes and into all climes, while he remains alive ; but, with an instinct that is well nigh universal, upon hearing of his death she commits his soul into the hands of a just and merciful Judge until the revelations of the last day.

Another infallible indication of the undercurrent of the belief of evangelical Protestants upon this subject is to be found in their peculiar solicitude for the conversion and sanctification of living men. This solicitude has given tone to evangelical preaching, and character and shape to evangelical activity, and has found expression in such popular hymns as :

- “Lo, on a narrow neck of land,  
 ’Twixt two unbounded seas, I stand  
 Secure! insensible!  
 A point of time, a moment’s space,  
 Removes me to yon heavenly place  
 Or shuts me up in hell.”
- “Life is the time to serve the Lord,  
 The time to ensure the great reward.”
- “While life prolongs its precious light  
 Mercy is found and peace is given.”
- “Now is the accepted time ;  
 Now is the day of grace.”

There is a very extensive misapprehension respecting the

Catholic doctrine of purgatory, and the practice of Catholics of praying for the dead. From much which has of late appeared in print, it would seem that the idea is prevalent that the Catholic doctrine of purgatory in some way softens their belief respecting eternal punishment. This, however, is by no means the case. The Catholic doctrine of purgatory has relation to the doctrine of justification, and not to the doctrine of eternal punishment. Purgatory is for the purification of the regenerate; and in the Catholic system the belief in purgatory is made necessary by their rejection of the doctrine of justification by faith. The Protestant doctrine that through faith sinners are justified freely by God's grace leaves no room for purgatory.

We are in danger of underestimating the influence of the orthodox belief concerning the relation of death to probation, because of the way it operates. It is affirmed by many that this doctrine is not preached as it was a half century ago; and we are pointed to the rapid growth of the church during this century, and to the recent increase of missionary zeal, as evidence that the maintenance of the ordinary belief on this point is of less practical importance than was supposed. This is, however, an unwarrantable inference. The doctrines of eternal punishment and of a limited period of probation belong to the permanent fortifications of Christianity, which were specially strengthened by discussions about the close of the last century. These doctrines are like the guns mounted on earth-works, rather than like the field-artillery. Their importance is not to be measured by the number of times they are fired off, but by the tremendous reserve power they possess and the respectful distance at which the fear of them keeps the enemy.

Silence is sometimes the most emphatic mode of utterance. There are probably few more impressive facts urging to present religious activity than that ominous omission of effort for the impenitent dead which everywhere characterizes the Christian church, and to which we have already referred. There can be no question that it operates in a powerful

manner both upon the impenitent to secure their attention religion, and upon the church to stimulate its missionary zeal. This belief of the church respecting the irreversible condition forms the back-ground upon which the promises of mercy are painted. There is little evidence that the church has changed its belief concerning the solemnity of death. How we can most effectually emphasize the solemnity of this event is a question of practical wisdom. A preacher may rarely be called upon to preach a distinctive sermon upon the subject of eternal punishment; yet the solemn thought that the feet of his impenitent hearers stand on slippery places, that their lives are extended by the mercy of God rather than by his justice, and that under divine appointment what are called the accidents of life may suddenly interpose to prevent all further effort in their behalf must give pungency to all his exhortations and tone to all his utterances from the pulpit.

It is frequently asserted that appeals to the fears of men are ineffectual to secure conversion, and that to rely upon fear as a motive is unworthy of a Christian ministry. It may, indeed, be true that fear alone is ineffectual to secure salvation, and that, when compared with some higher motives, fear may be called *relatively* unworthy. But it should be remembered that in this world the fears aroused by the doctrines of eternal punishment and limited probation never operate alone. In the Christian faith they are connected with the doctrines of grace, and point to a door of hope. In the evangelical faith the law is but the schoolmaster leading to Christ.

It is difficult to see why there should be such unwillingness on the part of some to admit fear among the motives urging to the acceptance of Christ. In the ordinary relations of life we do not count fear an unworthy motive for action. The fear of becoming a drunkard might well dissuade the moderate drinker from indulging in the social glass. The fear of floods may well prevent a man from building his house upon the sand. Unless the call of duty demand our presence, the

fear of contagion ought to be sufficient of itself to keep us away from a fever-stricken locality.

But the most important practical bearing of our belief upon the subject under consideration comes from its appeal to the fear we have concerning the fate of others. The solicitude which good men have for others depends upon the danger which is seen to be threatening them. This form of fear takes rank among the highest motives. It is perfectly fitting for us to abstain from the use of alcoholic beverages because we fear the personal consequences that may come from their use; nor should we be ashamed to own that the fear of eternal punishment is one of the motives keeping us from sin. But a wider motive to total abstinence arises from fear that others will be injured by our example. It is natural and fitting that this solicitude for others should be in proportion to the revealed danger to which they are exposed, and to the revealed value of the interests at stake.

It has been stated somewhere that our solicitude for the salvation of men sustains no relation to the question whether their probation be limited in time or not. It is said that our anxiety to fit out an expedition this year for the relief of an Arctic traveller would not be affected by the fact that we should have an equally good opportunity next year. This is certainly a misapprehension. Our object of a relief expedition in such a case is not to deliver the traveller from a single year's exposure, but to relieve him from a peril that is in danger of becoming final. If he is likely to escape, after a year or two, without our help, we are not called upon to feel so much solicitude for him.

The case of redeeming men from sin is, indeed, somewhat different; for the salvation of a sinner accomplishes two incalculable blessings — it saves a soul from death, and it hides a multitude of sins. Sin is an evil, first, because of the dishonor it brings upon God; and secondly, because of the ruin it brings to the sinner's own soul. In seeking the salvation of our fellow-men our zeal for God's law should indeed be constant; but it is augmented by our zeal to save



the soul from death. Eternal sin and suffering is a greater evil than temporal sin and suffering.

The interests which are at stake in maintaining the prevalent belief concerning the close of probation by death are amply illustrated by the experience of the Catholic church with the doctrine of purgatory. Those who maintain that it is a matter of indifference what we believe upon theological points will do well to take warning from this experience. No one can deny that the Catholic doctrine of purgatory has a most powerful influence upon the activities of the Catholic church. The devout Catholic is moved to the performance of a great variety of supposed religious duties by his belief that his deceased friends are enduring purgatorial pain in the other world, and can be aided by his efforts. He prays for their deliverance; he makes pilgrimages for their benefit; and bestows costly offerings upon the church, the service of whose priesthood he would enlist in their behalf.

Another illustration of the overshadowing influence exerted by a belief that the condition of the dead is not fixed, but is subject to amelioration through the prayers and activities of the living, may be found in the Mormon church, whose most solemn religious rite is that of baptizing for the dead. The Mormons hold that baptism is essential to salvation, but that our ancestors who died without baptism may have credited to their account the baptism of some of their descendants or friends who shall take pains to examine their record and be baptized in their behalf. It is largely for the ceremonies accompanying such baptisms that Mormon temples are built. And so always does a firm belief clothe itself in a form of visible activity.

There can be little doubt that the peculiar solicitude for the conversion and sanctification of men while living which has characterized the evangelical Protestant churches is in large measure the product of the deep-seated belief that the probation of all men ends with death. If Protestants have not had this doctrine in their creeds, they certainly have had it in their hearts. It has been assimilated in their faith, and

the belief has stimulated in the church a missionary zeal akin to that which led our Lord himself to become flesh and dwell among us.

In entering upon his work for the redemption of mankind, our Lord recognized the limitations both of time and space. He waited until the fulness of time before he came. He manifested himself in Judaea, and made an offering once for all. It is this manifestation in time and space that gives to Christianity its theistic character, and separates it by a sharp line from pantheistic speculations.

In creating man under the limitations of time and space, and in adapting his mind to the influence of moral motives, the Creator has limited himself in his mode of governing the race. Prophets and apostles are not sent to every continent and to every age, but at sundry times and in divers places holy men are raised up to make known the divine will. Miraculous gifts have not been bestowed indiscriminately upon every age and upon all classes of persons, but have been confined to a few epochs of history and to a small class of individuals. The supernatural in Christianity has not been permitted to overshadow the natural. The heavenly treasure has been committed to earthen vessels. The truth which the Son of Man brought down to the earth is compared by him to seed which is sown broadcast over the fields. The harvest that is to spring from this seed depends upon the ground into which it falls.

Christianity is a historical religion, and depends for its growth upon a variety of co-ordinate forces. There is, first, the pervading presence of the Holy Spirit and the constant operation of divine providence. But these have respect to the word already revealed. The Holy Spirit operates in connection with the truth. We do not think of praying that Christ should be crucified again in China, or that the Apocalypse of John should be revealed afresh to some hermit in India; but we pray that the Christ already crucified may be preached to the millions of China, and that the revelation already made to the apostle may be carried by human instru-

mentalities to the teeming populations of India. Thus all recognize the fact that to a large extent the spread of the gospel is bound up in the natural course of events. This means that not only sinners are on probation, but *the church is on probation*. The heavenly oracles are, from generation to generation, committed to a living church, upon which is laid the divine commission that they to the extent of their ability and the means at their command preach Christ to all nations, and hold him up to the gaze of the generation following them.

The point is, that the motives of the gospel are operating upon other conditions than those provided by the moral character of any particular class of individuals which is to be affected. These motives operate under conditions of time and space. The human reason is unable to solve the problem presented. It cannot tell why God introduced the gospel under the limitations which we know to exist. Nor is the human reason competent of itself to determine what are the limitations of God's grace in the world to come. Upon such a subject the practical belief of mankind is to be guided by the positive revelation which the Creator has made.

The question of a future probation, therefore, must be transferred from the realm of natural theology to the realm of revealed theology, and is to be determined by principles of interpretation as applied to the sacred records. Hence one of the most important aspects of the subject in hand relates to the extent of the authority we are willing to give to the Bible. Now, there certainly is a strong array of scriptural passages which seem to teach, either positively or by plain implication, that there is no radical change of condition for man after he leaves this world.<sup>1</sup> According to 2 Cor. v. 10, we are all to "be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad." No one familiar with the Greek would

<sup>1</sup> See the writer's little volume, *The Relation of Death to Probation*, Cong. Pub. Soc. 1882.

think of questioning the correctness of this translation.<sup>1</sup> Neither can the universality of the statement be affected by any supposed special application to the case in hand; for it is a general truth which the writer uses to enforce the special application. The apostle appeals to the fact that our final judgment is to be upon the basis of what we have done in this life. If one has been faithful in the body, he is sure, notwithstanding the freedom of the will, on departing to be with the Lord. If he is unfaithful, his condemnation is equally sure.

When, also, we turn to those passages which describe the awards of the judgment-day, we find that largely they are for deeds which could be done only in the body. In Rev. xxii. 15 the ground upon which numbers are left outside of the New Jerusalem is not that they have had Christ formally presented to them and have rejected him; but they are left out on the ground of having committed definite, earthly sins. "Without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie." In Matt. xxv. the rejection of Christ, on the ground of which the wicked are consigned to eternal punishment after the judgment-day, is such as could only take place while they were living in the body.

Again, the story of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke xvi. 19-31) teaches as plainly as it is possible to teach in language, that after death offers of mercy are not extended to the wicked. The attempt to explain this story away on the ground that it is an allegory relating to the rejection of the Jews<sup>2</sup> is too far-fetched to demand serious attention; and if

<sup>1</sup> Κομισθηται ἕκαστος τὰ διὰ τοῦ σώματος cannot mean, as Dr. Emerson supposes, "receive the things in the body" (Doctrine of Probation Examined, p. 42). Διδ introduces the instrumental genitive and the position of the neuter article makes a noun out of that which is the result of this instrumentality. Mr. Emerson's words might be retained with a change of order and both preserve the Greek idiom and express the meaning in uncouth English, making the passage read, "We must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ, that each one may receive the in the body things according to what he hath done."

<sup>2</sup> See Emerson, as above, p. 61.

that were the explanation, it does not touch the point in question, since an irreversible condition into which a nation was to come could not well be symbolized by the condition of a man which was not also irreversible. We are led to the unknown through the known. It is even the more impressive if the fixity of man's condition after death is, in the Saviour's time, accepted as so certain, that he makes it the standard of comparison.

Again, throughout the Book of Romans it is both affirmed and implied that men are brought under condemnation, not only for violating a written law, for rejecting an offer of mercy, but for disregarding the law of nature. The apostle Paul repeatedly affirms that the heathen are without excuse; that when they knew God they refused to glorify him as God, and were unthankful. The apostle everywhere takes a very high view of man's native moral endowments. He does not dwell upon the *misfortunes* of the heathen, but upon their sins. They have a knowledge of God, but they have refused to regard it or retain it. In the apostle's view it is not necessary that men should have Christ distinctly revealed in order to the commission of sin. Their sin against the light of nature is sufficient ground for their eternal condemnation. The true doctrine of election does not so much emphasize the *misfortune* of those to whom the gospel is not preached as it magnifies the unspeakably *good fortune* of those to whom the glad tidings come in their clearest form.

Heb. ix. 27, "It is appointed to men once to die, and after this cometh judgment," is all the more forcible for the incidental and parenthetical manner in which the idea is introduced. The comparison is between our death, which can only occur once, and the single offering of Christ. But so full is the mind of the sacred writer with the thought of that which makes death unspeakably solemn that he introduces it even at the risk of interrupting the comparison.

Neither can the thought that death is, in divine providence, a most solemn crisis, be eliminated from John viii. 21. 24. "He said therefore again unto them, I go away, and ye shall

seek me, and ye shall die in your sins; whither I go, ye cannot come." "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins; for except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." Death is represented as the finality. Christ was of the other world, in which the saints are to be like him, for they shall see him as he is. But their death in unbelief would shut them off from coming where he was. There is no force to the warning unless death be a boundary line to their present privilege.

At this point we may profitably consider a favorite phrase used by those who believe that probation may be continued after death. Probation, they say, should be defined in the sphere of character. This phrase seems to imply that probation is not to be closed until a sinner has reached a certain definite degree of obstinacy, which in some way secures, in the natural course of things, a permanent choice of evil by the will. According to Dorner, the good must "be placed before the eyes in its full clearness and truth, not simply as the voice . . . . but in its brightest and most attractive form, as the personal love, in order that the decision for or against it may receive decisive importance." And again, "so long as the gospel, which must come to all before the judgment, has not come inwardly near man, there has been given him neither definite condemnation nor its opposite; but he is still, as it were, in a provisional condition." He cannot be ripe for the judgment until Christ has been presented and definitely rejected.

A fatal objection to this mode of presenting the case is, that it does not sufficiently emphasize the gracious character of the gospel, nor properly recognize the contingency that the gifts of grace are regulated by divine wisdom in view of higher interests than those of the individual sinner. For the solution of such a problem, we have no axiomatic principles to aid us. God is love, and will do all he wisely can to save the human race. But God's wisdom is partially revealed in the creation and moral constitution of the human race.

It is a serious mistake to depreciate the guilt of sins com-

mitted under the light of nature, and to underestimate the seriousness of the consequences connected with the first sin against God which a moral agent commits. Caesar's crime against Rome was all involved in the single act of crossing the Rubicon. Unless grace can intervene, the first formal act in the sinner's rebellion against God plunges him into a permanent state of alienation. So far as those who have once made a sinful choice are left to themselves, they remain in sin. They do not come to the light except through the over persuasion of divine love. For all we know to the contrary, every man has a day of grace in this life. Sentence against sin is not speedily executed. Paul appealed with powerful effect to the evidence which even the heathen had of the goodness of God. The gospel is merely a supplement of that light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. It is neither a principle of reason nor of Scripture that the gifts of grace should fall with equal measure upon all. It appears certain that in the system which God has created, a wise regard for the highest good of being permits the recognition of times and seasons, and demands the concentration of influences for the conversion of some individuals and families and nations, and perhaps of worlds, that is far in excess of what is done for others. Influences are not concentrated upon many persons as they were upon Paul. If such conversions were too frequent, all would come to expect the same, and lower motives would lose their force.

The provisions of the gospel are *supernatural*; they are made known to us by *special* revelation. If bounties of grace are offered, it ill becomes the needy recipients to find fault because the offers are not indefinitely extended, to suit their convenience. The gift and the conditions of the gift go together. When unmerited favors are offered for present acceptance, we have no business to infer the indefinite continuance of the offer. Because God has made special provision for extending mercy to sinners repenting in this life, it does not follow that similar terms can be extended after death.

There is nothing either in the nature of the subject or in the analogy of faith, compelling us to give the Scripture which teaches that man's probation ends with death anything but its plain and manifest significance. We are not disposed to deny the importance of the principle that the meaning of language is modified by the known nature of the subject of discourse. If, for example, a man says, "Bring me the book," he means, bring it by some physical agency, because that is the only agency that can move a material object. If the judge says, "Bring the prisoner to the bar," his command involves the use of the motives that ordinarily control the movements of a prisoner. If a father says to a son, "Bring your friend to dinner," the use of physical force, or of appeals to the fears of the friend, are excluded from our thoughts by the known relations of the parties. This may illustrate the subtle manner in which words are warped by the context, and take their impress in part from the nature of the subject to which they are applied.

In interpreting the proof-texts of Scripture which most clearly set forth the fact that the fate of men for all eternity is determined by what they do here, we by no means overlook the principle just illustrated. Upon this subject as upon others, the context and the nature of the case are important elements in the interpretation. But the mass of Christian believers do not read the context as, for example, Dr. Dorner does. Rightly enough perhaps he insists that our interpretation of a particular passage is a compound of two elements, — one of which he calls "Scripture," and the other, "faith." These two elements have always been present in biblical interpretation. We call them by various names. Sometimes we distinguish them as the letter and the spirit. What Dorner calls "faith," however, is more widely known as the "analogy of faith." The interpreter always asks, How does this particular passage fall in with the general scope of the writer, or with the general trend of Scripture doctrine? and, How does it conform to the analogy of faith?

It should be observed, however, that the value of this



second element in our problem of interpretation depends largely upon *whose* faith it is which enters in us as a factor. We should inquire if the faith which is to determine the meaning of a particular passage is that of a single man or of the great mass of believers, or, at least, of those who have been most active in building up the kingdom of Christ. Now, it cannot be denied that the doctrines of eternal punishment and of a limited probation have always been integral parts of the faith of the Christian church. The great mass of believers who have passed from death unto life, who have embraced Christ and devoted themselves to his work, and have been under the influence of his spirit if any one has been, instinctively recognize that there is a correlation between the doctrines of eternal punishment and limited probation and those of the atonement and of the work of the Holy Spirit. With surprising unanimity these ideas have entered into the framework of every influential and successful system of Christian theology.

Even Dorner admits<sup>1</sup> that the doctrine "that some are damned rests on *preponderant* exegetical grounds"; but adds that "that gives no dogmatic proposition, because this must also be derived from the principle of faith." That is what evangelical Christians in general would say. They would, however, justly object to having Dr. Dorner, or any other single theologian substitute the idiosyncrasies of his interpretation for the common doctrines of evangelical faith,—doctrines which can almost be said to have been accepted everywhere, always, and by everybody, as cardinal elements of the gospel.

In general, devout Christian believers have taken a low estimate of their ability to criticise the ways of God in his dealing with men. They have not dared dogmatically to affirm that this state of probation is so poorly planned that God's goodness and wisdom cannot be manifest without extending the offers of mercy beyond the grave. Those who have reflected most upon the limitations of human knowledge

<sup>1</sup> See Christian Theology, sec. 154, par. 5.

hesitate to affirm that God *cannot* so adjust the awards of the eternal state to the privileges enjoyed in this life that no injustice shall be done to any, and no stain shall rest upon his own eternal goodness; nor do they feel compelled to affirm that the riches of God's grace may not be shown in the salvation of infants and idiots without their undergoing the hazard of an earthly trial. The limited extent to which God interferes with the natural course of evil in this world makes the thoughtful Christian cautious in his speculations as to how far divine interference will go in the world to come. In his ignorance upon that mysterious subject, man does well to adhere pretty closely to the letter of the law, and not attempt to be wise above what is written. The nature of the subject is a truly valuable aid in interpreting the language applied to it, when we know something about the subject. But when we know so little about a subject as we do about the wisest means of limiting the spread of sin and evil in the universe, it becomes us to keep our theories in abeyance.

It is hardly probable that those who are endeavoring to unsettle the common faith of evangelical Christians upon the subject of future probation are aware of the responsibility assumed. A little reflection would show that in the end the activities of Christian believers will conform to their belief. It is not a characteristic of religious faith to remain dead. It will produce works. It will clothe itself in outward forms of activity. These statements need little proof. We know that even minor variations in doctrine give indelible character to the various denominations of Protestantism. In the tenacity with which these peculiarities adhere to the several branches of the Christian church, we have demonstrated before our eyes how serious a matter it is to either add to or subtract from the common body of evangelical belief.

The effect of a change of base in our religious belief is not at once observable; and, in particular persons, the change in the outward conduct natural to a change in belief is often long delayed by counteracting influences of a special

character. The momentum of earlier habits, a special sensitiveness of organization, or the inability to see the logical bearing of truth, often restrain, for a whole lifetime, the natural operation of a religious dogma. But the great masses of the Christian public are logical enough to see the bearing of the cardinal doctrines of Christianity. When they have been led to believe that their prayers could help the regenerate dead, they have prayed for the regenerate dead. When they have been made to believe that the recovery of Jerusalem from the Moslems was a Christian duty, they have poured out their blood like water to attain that end. In proportion as Christians have been made to feel that they are co-workers with God, and that on account of their unbelief God will be restrained from doing many of his mighty works, and from doing much that he otherwise could do to increase the opportunities of those who are in the darkness of sin, will the church be active in all missionary and evangelistic efforts. And, as surely as cause and effect are joined together, the belief that the offers of the gospel are being presented to the impenitent dead will be followed, in due time, by prayers for them; and we shall have not only an American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, but agencies of a thousand kinds to burden our hearts, and enlist our prayers and sympathy for the dead who neglected their opportunities while living; and we shall have our interest in the living blunted to a corresponding degree. That exegesis which, from 1 Tim. ii. 4, "God our Saviour, who willeth that all men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth,"<sup>1</sup> draws the inference that Christian grace is designed for *human beings*, and not for inhabitants of earth, will not be slow to draw a similar conclusion from the first verse of that chapter, which reads, "I exhort therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings, be made for all men."

Nor shall we help the matter by affirming that we do not have any positive belief that there will be a probation after

<sup>1</sup> Dorner, *Future State*, chap. iii. sec. 153, iii. par. 2.

death, but only an *absence* of any positive conviction. Not to believe that Christ meant to close the door against the doctrine of future probation, is to set aside most important and very plain portions of sacred Scripture; is to set up our sentiment rather than the inspired word as the test of what is most Christlike in the Christian system; and is to leave wide open the door which the sacred writers tried to close.

We do not present these considerations as in themselves decisive proofs that probation ends with death; but the profound and far-reaching consequences of abandoning this time-honored doctrine of evangelical Christianity should make us cautious about admitting those principles of interpretation that would lead us to eliminate this doctrine. Nor can any considerate mind well rest in a spirit of agnosticism upon this point. We are not in complete ignorance as to the limits of probation. The dullest mind cannot deny that there are words of warning upon this subject whose meaning it is not easy to explain away. The most self-confident interpreter of the nature of things must admit that he cannot explain why God has admitted moral evil into the universe; nor can the wisest philosopher tell the limits which God has set to its prevalence. No new light has dawned respecting these problems since the New Testament was written. The great advancement of physical science, the immense development of material civilization, the multiplication of books and newspapers, do not help us to explain the mystery of sin and of that scheme which was laid in heaven for man's redemption. Those dark places in the divine plan of salvation which were not illuminated by the beams which radiate from the Sun of Righteousness, have not yet been illuminated by any of the processes of modern invention. That upon which the sun shines and leaves in darkness, is not likely to be made bright even by the electric sparks of the brightest geniuses of the nineteenth century.