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I.

ETERNAL RETRIBUTION.

THE question of the future and eternal destiny of man will not rest from discussion. One does not wonder at this. The thought that a single man, still more that multitudes of men, because of their deeds in this short life, should be lost eternally, is one which is so awful to contemplate, that it is not strange that not merely rationalistic expositors of Scripture, but also not a few truly devout and spiritual men, have ever protested that it is impossible that this should be the real teaching of Scripture. Accordingly, such have eagerly laid hold of every word here and there which might of itself seem to warrant a larger hope, and have earnestly sought to show that the passages which, to the ordinary reader, seem to declare the doctrine of the eternal doom of many are susceptible of a different interpretation.

By those who contend for the belief in the final universal restoration of all rational beings to holiness and happiness, it is assumed that this is a necessary logical corollary from our affirmation of the infinite perfection of God. For it is insisted that if we believe in a God who is infinite in knowledge and wisdom, power, love and righteousness, then we must logically admit that it is impossible that He should have allowed any creature to come into being, by whom He foreknew that the gift of life would be so abused as to issue in endless sin and misery. Whatever force there may be in this presumption considered in itself, it will be observed, in the first place, that it wholly overlooks the powerful counter-presumption which is furnished by the fact of the uniformly hardening power of habit. For character, to all appearance, tends to fixedness

only that Christ shall be known, not that the whole story concerning Him shall be known. "To have faith in Christ is one thing; to have a sound opinion about the authorship of a book is another thing altogether. . . . It is by faith in Christ that men are saved, not by a belief that Matthew wrote the first gospel" (p. 36). Wherever enough is known of Christ to enable men to look to Him for salvation there is salvation, and its fruits in the heart, and the assurance by which the Spirit witnesses that our trust is not in vain, nor Him in whom we have trusted a delusion. The saving Word of God is the preached Christ. The relation of this preached Word to the written Word, which is not only its norm but its source, Dr. Dale does not discuss; we may be permitted to refer the reader to the *Presbyterian Review* for July, 1889, p. 504 *sq.* The recognition of the limitation of the testimony of the Spirit to the essential rather than to the formal Word is not permitted by Dr. Dale to obscure the necessity of vindicating the trustworthiness of the Scriptures: "But though faith in the Lord Jesus may remain firm, while the historical trustworthiness of the only story that has come down to us of His earthly ministry is regarded as uncertain, Christian life and thought suffer a loss which cannot be measured" (p. 83). Accordingly, the last and largest section of the book is devoted to an admirable *résumé*, chiefly founded on Dr. Lightfoot's examination of *Supernatural Religion*, of the historical evidence of the trustworthiness of the gospels. Thus the argument is justly rounded. For the third reason, why men continue to believe in this age of attack on the Scriptures, is that the attack is unsuccessful. It is the manifold, twisted cord of the external, the internal and the subjective evidences, sealed by the testimony of the Spirit, that measures the strength of the Christian position. We feel that we cannot commend Dr. Dale's book more highly than it deserves.—*Discussions by Robert L. Dabney, D.D., LL.D.*, Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University of Texas, and for many years Professor of Theology in Union Theological Seminary in Virginia. Edited by C. R. Vaughan, D.D., Pastor of the Presbyterian Church of New Providence, Va. Vol. i: *Theological and Evangelical*. 8vo, pp. xix, 728. (Richmond, Va.: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1890.) Our Southern brethren are well advised to honor their great men by collected editions of their minor works. Dr. Dabney's occasional writings are, moreover, of permanent value and worthy of the substantial form in which they are now republishing. We call attention to them here only provisionally, and reserve an extended review until the issue is more complete. A word or two only on the editing. In a sense, this has been complete; especially valuable will be the full Index appended to the volume. In a sense it has been too complete; the laudatory "Biographical Sketch" that is prefixed must be as distasteful to Dr. Dabney himself as it is out of place in a body of collected writings published before the author has completed that valuable work for God and truth which we all hope he will be spared yet many years to continue. In still another sense, it is incomplete. We need to be told where and when each of the papers first saw the light, in order to estimate them aright; and surely some principle of arrangement might have been adopted which would avoid the appearance of confusion which the present order (or disorder) gives. Dr. Dabney's strong and acute criticisms and arguments will furnish us a text for some later remarks.—*Calvinism Contrary to God's Word and Man's Moral Nature*. By D. Fisk Harris. 12mo, pp. 419. (Harmar, Ohio: The Author, 1890.) It is refreshing in these days of mixed faiths to read an author who is an Arminian and knows it. Mr. Harris' method is the fair one of first developing the tenets of Calvinism by quotations from accredited Calvinistic authors and then seeking to controvert them; though the result would have been more satisfactory if the authors selected were in all cases more broadly repre-

sentative, and if the logical analyses were more perfect. The *gravamen* of the charge that is brought against Calvinism is that it makes God's omnipotence the governing principle of the divine procedure (p. 75), a charge certainly not capable of being made against Mr. Harris, who does not hesitate to limit God's omnipotence (p. 278) in the interests of free-will. The flaw of the book, which vitiates too much of its argumentation, is its fondness for "undistributed middles." Thus, when arguing as to the sincerity of God's free offer of salvation it confuses the senses of "desire" and "intention" under the one word "will" (p. 67 *sq.*), though it does not seem so difficult to understand that one may sincerely desire what he cannot get his consent to produce. So it confuses the universal offer of the gospel with an offer to the non-elect as such (p. 73), though Chalmers had just before been quoted (p. 66) to the effect that the offer is made to no class, but to men as such. So, too, it confuses "decree" with "efficiency," as if God did not need "to execute his decrees" (p. 92); "good opportunities" are taken at once in an objective and a subjective sense to oppose the doctrine of inability (p. 193); inability is allowed to vibrate between a physical and a moral sense (p. 195); "shall not" is undistributed between a future and a prohibitive sense (p. 203); "foresight" is played on (p. 223) without distinguishing foresight of possible and actual; and the like. Now and then an insufficient acquaintance with theological nomenclature and opinion comes out; *e. g.*, no Calvinist ever taught that the non-elect are condemned irrespective of their wicked deeds or character (p. 205); Gill is far from "peculiar" in distinguishing between "preterition" and "predamnation" (p. 215); Dick is wholly misunderstood (pp. 217, 218), so that the comments miss the point; and the whole section beginning on page 217 is based on the gross misapprehension that sublapsarians and supralapsarians differ as to the sovereignty of preterition, this being one of the points on which they expressly agree. The intention of the book is thus much better than its performance. It is interesting to observe that appeal has to be made to so-called false Jewish views of God in the Bible, to escape the Scriptural proof of the Calvinistic position (pp. 228, 229).—*Calvinism and Evangelical Arminianism*. Compared as to Election, Reprobation, Justification and Related Doctrines. By John L. Girardeau, Professor of Systematic Theology in Columbia Theological Seminary, South Carolina. 12mo, pp. viii, 574. (Columbia, S. C.: W. J. Duffie; New York: The Baker & Taylor Co., 1890.) The antidote comes with the bane. Although it is too little to say of Dr. Girardeau's massive and complete argument that we have in it a thorough refutation beforehand of Mr. Harris' attack on Calvinism just mentioned. Every line in this book gives proof not only of the practiced controversialist, but also of the sound thinker and the trained theologian. The Arminian case, on the points discussed, is presented with fairness and examined with candor. The Calvinistic position is moderately stated and vindicated from Scripture and reason so solidly that it would seem to us impossible to read the book without conviction. In these days, when men seem to be confused as to election and reprobation, and even good Calvinists appear almost ready to yield the distinguishing doctrine of their system to Arminianism or semi-Arminianism, it would be a blessing if all could be persuaded to read this delightfully consecutive book with diligence and care. The only serious fault we can find with it is that the several sections of the argument are not always sufficiently distinguished from one another to the eye; so that the reading is rendered sometimes unnecessarily hard.—*Christus Mediator*. By Charles Elliott, D.D., Professor of Hebrew in Lafayette College. 12mo, pp. 145. (New York: A. C. Armstrong & Son, 1891.) Dr. Elliott's leisure moments gather honey; he has given us here a pleasant little book breathing the very spirit