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REVIEW SECTION.

I.—PROBATION AFTER DEATH.

IS THERE ANY FOUNDATION FOR THE DOGMA IN REASON OR REVELATION?

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A DOGMA is not a doctrine. It has a secondary, not a primary authority. It is not an article of faith. In the shaping of the question upon which, with others, I have been asked to write, this distinction was doubtless regarded. Those who maintain the tenet of Probation after Death claim that it falls within the acknowledged limits of the Christian faith, is consonant with and tributary to the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel, and deducible from the absoluteness and universality of Christianity; but they do not maintain that it is an explicit divine teaching.

The word Probation has various senses which need to be discriminated. Since Bishop Butler's day it commonly designates a condition of moral trial, in which the future state of the subject of the trial is fully determined. Sometimes it signifies nothing more than preparatory moral discipline. In the early Puritan theology it was restricted to the Paradisiacal state. Mankind were put on trial in Adam. This theory is still held by many persons in its original strictness, and consistently they deny that men now are on probation. The extension of the word to Adam's descendants has come about through the growth of the conception of personality. Guilt is regarded as strictly personal. All of our race who attain in this life to conscious personality act as moral agents and under probationary conditions. This extended application of the word is by some associated with purely individualistic, and more or less Pelagian, conceptions of human freedom and human sinfulness. By others it is allied with a better philosophy of liberty, and with more Scriptural beliefs as to generic depravity and the universal need of spiritual regeneration.