

**WHAT IS OF FAITH AS TO
EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT? IN
REPLY TO DR. FARRAR'S CHALLENGE
IN HIS 'ETERNAL HOPE', 1879. THIRD
EDITION-SIXTH THOUSAND**

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IN HIS 'ETERNAL HOPE,' 1879.

BY THE

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ADVERTISEMENT TO THE THIRD EDITION.

THE following book, in as far as it is not supplementary to a Sermon (now of old date) on Everlasting Punishment, was concentrated on answering a book of unhappy popularity, Dr. Farrar's 'Eternal Hope.' It did not occur to me to be necessary to state anything as to my own personal belief upon any subject, which had not been ruled to be matter of faith. My one object was to remove, as far as I might be enabled, doubts or perplexities, which that book, I was told, was widely occasioning. It came to me from different quarters, that the young, among whom my lot had been cast as a teacher, were asking, 'What of Dr. Farrar's book?' People, living in the world, who read the book because it was talked about, but had not the information which would enable them to appreciate the arguments used, were asking, 'What of Dr. Farrar's book?' and inferring that, since no one had set himself expressly to answer it, it was unanswerable. It lay on drawing-room tables, as if the subject of the everlasting doom of those who reject God to the end, or of God's awful Attribute of Holiness, were to take their turns with any passing subject of the day. I had not then heard of some in London who expressly alleged that what Dr. Farrar said 'made sin more reasonable.'

Dr. Farrar's belief is happily better than that of his book. In his book unhappily he contented himself with stating that he was not an Universalist, while he did not

observe that all the arguments which he used were Universalist, extending even to what he intended to exclude from his consideration, the restoration of Satan. The book, until it is withdrawn, notwithstanding its author's declaration of his personal belief, must remain, as it is, an inconsistent, empassioned pleading for 'Universalism.' It must, as far as it has influence, teach the Universalism which its writer does not believe.

I wished then in the first instance to mitigate the repugnance of intellectual, thoughtful minds, who had been carried away to or encouraged in the disbelief of Hell, by an appeal to first principles of nature or of faith. To this end, I set down those twelve propositions as to man's free-will and the care of Almighty God to save us from losing Himself through its abuse, which Dr. Farrar says that 'with scarcely the smallest verbal alteration I could accept.'

But I see that, having no occasion to speak of myself, I have left room for two misapprehensions as to my own belief.

1. With regard to the number of the lost, I did not mean to lay down anything; but, following one opinion accepted by earnest, devout, Catholics, to insist upon our absolute ignorance about it. I leave all things blindly in His Hand Who became Man, to redeem us from Hell, and Who will come to be our Judge.

But while I have dwelt on our ignorance of what God may do for the soul even in the last hour of its trial, I think that *they* are least likely to be reached by His grace *then*, who have delayed their repentance in view of it. Apart from the possibility that there may be no deathbed, such persons would but too probably have been preparing their souls for final impenitence.

Among the six sins which were accounted of old to be forerunners of the sin against the Holy Ghost, three were,

‘presumption of God’s mercy;’ ‘obstancy in sin;’ and ‘impenitence.’ The only wish of those who wilfully delay repentance is too probably to escape the pain of repentance here and of hell hereafter.

I should think that those called ‘young Arabs’ or the victims of man’s passions and their own vanity, more likely to be visited by such overflow of the grace of God than our worldly educated rich.

But in dwelling upon these hopes I feel that I must take care not to lessen the sense of the awfulness of the Day of Judgement, which *they* felt, to whom ‘the four last things,’ Death, Judgement, Heaven, Hell, were subjects of daily meditation. We know that it will be a great reversal of the judgements formed here. Our Judge has said, “^b The last shall be first, and the first last;” “^c Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased.” He has pictured to us the great surprise, which many shall feel, when they find themselves shut out^d; that many shall suppose that they are His, to whom He shall say, “^e I never knew you: depart from Me, all ye workers of iniquity.” He has warned us that they must *strive*^f here who hope to enter in there, for that the *seeking* in that Day will be too late. He has pictured to us that one and all of those on the left hand will disclaim not having shewn mercy to Him^g their Judge. How many in our mammon-loving nation think of it? S. Chrysostom says that among so many tens of thousands in Constantinople, you would not find one hundred in the state of salvation^h, and he doubts whether so many. What would he think of our pleasure-loving, mammon-worshipping, poor-forgetting London? Looking on man’s side, Massil-

* The other three were, ‘despair of salvation;’ ‘impugning known truth;’ ‘envy at another’s grace.’ See the Greek devotions of Bp. Andrews; Litany at the end. Tracts for the Times no. 88. p. 80.

^b S. Matt. xx. 16.

^c S. Luke xiv. 11. ^d S. Matt. xxv. 11. S. Luke xiii. 25—27. ^e S. Matt. vii. 23.

^f S. Luke xiii. 24.

^g S. Matt. xxv. 44.

^h of σωζόμενοι S. Chrys. Hom. xxiv. on the Acts n. 4. p. 352.

lon, in the dissolute France which was ripening for the French Revolution, after counting among the lost those who did not will to be converted; those who would, but delayed; those who relapsed after every conversion; those who believed that they need no conversion; burst out into the terrible appeal, 'O God, where are Thine elect?' An eloquent French preacher in view of his Sermon, enumerating all which God has done and does for our salvation, burst out into the triumphant appeal, 'O Satan, where are thine elect?' On man's side there is such thick darkness: on God's side all so bright, glowing with His love, except the lightnings of His judgements, which flash through the clouds which hide Him, the temporal judgements annexed to sin as the earnest of the eternal, but often in God's mercy eliciting repentance which may avert them. See we to it, that while we are disputing about the nature of God's judgements, we do not incur them by losing out of sight how, by His mercy, we may escape them.

'If,' says Lacordaire¹, in conclusion of a conference in which he took the more hopeful side, 'if there were only the tenth of the human race, who fell into the snares of hell, would it not be enough to alarm us, and to set each of us, in S. Paul's words, *to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling?*'

'The fear of hell,' it has been often said, 'peoples heaven.' Then, by not preaching the peril of losing God for ever, we should have been the occasion that some should lose it, but that the Church so often in our Lessons repeated to us our Lord's words, and echoed them in the comprehensive Athanasian Creed; had pressed upon us, Lent by Lent, that 'it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God,' and 'the terrible voice of most just judgement, which shall be pronounced upon' impenitent sinners, 'when it

¹ Conference 71. end.

² Phil. ii. 12.

shall be said unto them, Go, ye cursed, into the everlasting fire, which is prepared for the devil and his angels;’ had taught us, at least, week by week to pray, ‘From Thy wrath and from everlasting damnation, Good Lord, deliver us; and in the sight of death, put into our mouths the piercing cry, ‘O holy and most merciful Saviour, deliver us not into the bitter pains of eternal death.’

Faber says, in his glowing way, ‘¹We cannot doubt but that hell has sent into heaven more than half as many souls as it contains itself.’ Such sayings would scare us, for not having preached it more, but that one hopes that God’s Holy Spirit has repeated our Lord’s words and the faith of the Church within to hearts, to whom we have not spoken His truth.

2. The ‘everlasting fire,’ is, from the very first, with very few notable exceptions, so uniformly spoken of by those who speak of future punishment at all, that I myself believe it literally, although those who do not receive it are free not to receive it. The Church, which has laid down eternity of punishment to be matter of Faith, has not laid down the material character of the punishment.

I would only now add, that for pious minds a simple argument² which I did not dwell upon at first, will, I think, overrule all the difficulties which may be raised to the doctrine. Even men who would say, ‘I would rather believe S. Matthew wrong than such a doctrine true,’ would be shocked at the thought, if, for the name of S. Matthew, there had to be substituted the Name of our Redeemer. And yet if we know anything at all, we know that the doctrine of Everlasting Punishment was taught by Him Who died to save us from it.

CHRIST CHURCH,
August, 1880.

¹ The Creator and the creature p. 314.

² It has been dwelt upon in pp. 46—48 ed. 2, and 3.

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