

**THE GULF BRIDGED; OR,
'THE
EVERLASTING GOSPEL'
IN THE WORLD TO COME**

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The gulf bridged; or, 'The everlasting gospel' in the world to come by Charles Craddock Underwood

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CHARLES CRADDOCK UNDERWOOD

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THE GULF BRIDGED;

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'THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL'

IN THE WORLD TO COME.

With a Note on the Creation of the Universe.

'Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed.'—LUKE xvi. 26.

'Christ died for the ungodly.'—ROM. v. 6.

'He will not always chide: neither will He keep His anger for ever.'—PSA. ciii. 9.

LONDON:
ELLIOT STOCK, 62, PATERNOSTER ROW.

1885.

PREFATORY NOTE.

It is a matter of common observation that souls burdened with sin pass daily into the unseen world; and it is difficult to see how anyone who accepts the Bible as the only standard of doctrine can doubt that they meet with a just punishment there.

Is that punishment endless? Will the condemned soul ever be cleansed from sin, and freed from further punishment? These are questions to which Bible students give very different answers. Some reply by quoting certain well-known texts, in which the eternity of punishment appears to be clearly laid down; others bring forward numerous passages which, as they allege, teach equally clearly that all men will be saved eventually.

These two conclusions are generally assumed to be irreconcilable; and whilst the Universalist denies the eternity of punishment, the Orthodox denies as strenuously that salvation can ever become universal. May not both be true? Cannot the everlasting sentence be arrested in the course of its execution? Is there not some key to reconcile the apparent contradiction?

The writer would give an affirmative answer to these questions, and show that everlasting punishment and universal salvation are to be found revealed side by side in the Word of God, and that each forms a perfectly congruous part of one symmetrical whole, the key to the apparent paradox being found in that everlasting Gospel which is 'the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.'

C. C. U.

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THE GULF BRIDGED.

I.

THE doctrine of endless punishment appears inconsistent with the character of God as revealed in the Scripture, and must therefore be rejected, unless it is supported by direct Scriptural testimony on the subject.

It can hardly be denied that opinions opposed to the doctrine of the eternity of punishment, as it is generally held, are daily becoming more common; whilst to every Christian the spread of such opinions, *so far as they are contrary to the Word of God*, must be a subject of deep regret. At the same time, it is evident that if the orthodox view on the subject differs substantially from

the doctrine taught by the Bible, an incalculable injury is being done to the cause of Christ throughout the world ; for no one who has become familiar, even to a small extent, with the thoughts of the times can doubt that this view exercises an inconceivably wide influence upon the minds of men, radically affecting their views as to the nature and character of God, and presents to many thoughtful minds the greatest religious difficulty of which they are conscious. The existence of evil at all is not easy to account for, but the existence of eternal objectless evil in the domain of the Almighty and All-good is impossible to understand.

Every true Christian is thus brought face to face with a solemn responsibility, first to know and then to make known the mind of the Spirit in relation to these solemn and eternal truths ; and those who, seeing the difficulty of the enigma presented to their minds, are content to let the matter drop without a patient and prayerful investigation of the Scriptural testimony on the subject ; or who, being convinced that the orthodox view is

unscriptural, 'fearing lest they should be cast out of the synagogue,' allow themselves to be deterred from testifying against it, must not reckon themselves amongst the followers either of Mr. Greatheart or Mr. Valiant-for-the-truth. God has given us Reason that we may understand the revelation which He has made to us in His Word, and though fully conscious that Reason must go hand in hand with Faith, and from the infinity of the subject be confined within the limits of Revelation, yet we may believe that in seeking to obtain a clearer insight into the character of Him 'Whom to know is life eternal,' and a fuller understanding of His ways, we ^{John xvii.} are not only performing a duty to which ³ God has called us, but have the promise of guidance in our search from Him Who has said, 'If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of Me,' and Who has promised ^{James i. 5.} 'to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask ^{Luke xi. 13.} Him.'

If the orthodox view as to the future state of the lost had no influence whatever upon the world outside, yet in observing its

influence within the Church and upon the conceptions of God entertained by some of its holiest members, we should, nevertheless be led to ask, whether a doctrine which can produce in *such* men such absolutely savage conceptions of the Deity, can be the doctrine taught by the Word of God. Take as an example the words of Richard Baxter (one of the holiest men of his time). What can be more radically inconsistent both with the letter and spirit of the Divine Revelation than the idea conveyed by the following extract from his celebrated 'Saints' Rest' (abridged edition, pp. 87-89), where, speaking of the punishment of the lost, he says :

'The exceeding greatness of such torments may appear by considering that these torments are the fruit of Divine vengeance—that *the Almighty takes pleasure in them*. The everlasting flames of Hell will not be thought too hot for the rebellious, and when they have burned through millions of ages *He will not repent Him* of the evil which has befallen them. Wrath is terrible, but *revenge is implacable*. When the great God shall say, "My