

**A VISION OF THE FUTURE.  
A SERIES OF PAPERS ON  
CANON FARRAR'S  
"ETERNAL HOPE"**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649429868

A Vision of the Future. A Series of Papers on Canon Farrar's "Eternal Hope" by Various

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**VARIOUS**

**A VISION OF THE FUTURE.  
A SERIES OF PAPERS ON  
CANON FARRAR'S  
"ETERNAL HOPE"**



A VISION  
OF  
THE FUTURE.

A SERIES OF PAPERS ON

CANON FARRAR'S "ETERNAL HOPE."

*Edw. A. Hayes* BY *Rev. H. Allon*  
REV. PROFESSOR PLUMPTRE, D.D., REV. H. ALLON, D.D.,  
REV. H. RIGG, D.D., REV. S. COX, REV. CANON  
BIRKS, REV. PROFESSOR GRACEY.

---

DETROIT:  
ROSE-BELFORD PUBLISHING COMPANY.

MDCCLXXVIII.

# A VISION OF THE FUTURE.

---

REV. E. H. PLUMPTRE.

I DO not feel called on to review a book with which my own name has, through the kind feeling of the author, been very closely connected, nor to restate the views which I have expressed in the volume itself as to the great question of which he treats. I purpose accordingly confining myself in the present paper to some of the collateral issues which are involved in it, and shall be content if, by such side-lights as I am able to throw on them, I can help those who are, each of them, seekers after truth and eager to "vindicate the ways of God to man," if not to *formula concordia*,—I do not profess to believe in the possibility of a "short and easy" *Theodicea*,—yet at least to a tolerant understanding.

I. It will be felt, I imagine, that the most telling argument on the side of the popular belief that there is no room for an extension after death of the long-suffering of God, which we acknowledge as leading men, during this life, to repentance through the discipline of suffering,—that then all punishment, however equitable, must be simply retributive and not reformatory,—is found in the

thought that in so doing you weaken the assurance of the penitent and the righteous that their trials are over when they sleep the sleep of death. As Keble has put it, in words which embody a widely spread conviction,

“But with the sinner’s fear their hope departs,  
Fast linked as Thy great Name to Thee, O Lord.”

*(Christian Year; Second Sunday in Lent.)*

As bearing on this question, I purpose laying before the readers of this paper some private letters which passed between myself and a Roman Catholic priest, to whom I was led to send the sermon on the “Spirits in Prison,” which I preached at St. Paul’s, and published in 1871. It will be admitted, I think, that the objection is stated by him with a force and subtlety to which my own style of thought and writing can make but distant approaches, and that, if my answers carry conviction with them to any thoughtful mind, as I venture to hope they may do, it is rather through their intrinsic force than through any skill in the advocate.

Omitting portions of the letter which are strictly personal, my friend begins thus:—

I.

“MY DEAR SIS,—You will wish me, I think, to say how your sermon has struck me, and therefore, at the risk of being officious, I will venture to do so. It seems to me that you do not deny eternal punishment; but you aim at withdrawing from so awful a doom vast multitudes who have popularly been considered to fall under it, and to substitute for it in their case a purgatorial punishment, ex-

tending (as in the case of the antediluvians) through long ages ; at the same time avoiding the word 'purgatory' on account of its associations.

"There is nothing, I think, in this view, incompatible with the faith of Catholics.

"What we cannot accept (any more than the mass of Protestants and of divines of the ancient church) is one of your incidental statements, that man's probation for his eternal destiny, as well as his purification, continues after this life.

"Nor does this doctrine seem necessary for your main point ; for Catholics are able to hold purgatory without accepting it, merely by holding that there are innumerable degrees of grace and sanctity among the saved ; and that those who go to purgatory, however many, die one and all with the presence of God's grace and the earnest of eternal life, however invisible to man, already in their hearts, —an assumption not greater than yours, for it is quite as great an assumption to believe, as you do, in the *future happiness* of those who die and make no sign, as to believe, as I may do, in the present *faith and repentance* of those who die and make no sign.

"And further still, I almost think that you yourself hold as well as we this connection of grace with glory ; for you say the 'Spirits in Prison' 'had not hardened themselves in the one irremediable antagonism to good which has never forgiveness' (p. 20) ; 'had not hardened themselves against his righteousness and love, and therefore were not shut out utterly from hope' (p. 7).

"Excuse the freedom of these remarks, and believe me to be,

"Yours very truly,

"July 26, 1871."

" . . . . "

I have not kept a copy of the whole of my answer to this letter, but I dwelt in it, as I have done in my letter to Dr. Farrar, on the fact that for a large number of human souls, whom the great mass of Christians recognize



as heirs of immortality, there has been absolutely no possibility of any action that could test or develop character:—

“As yet I am compelled to believe that where there has been no adequate probation, or none at all, there must be some extension of the possibility of development or change beyond the limits of this present life. Take the case of unbaptized children. Shall we close the gates of Paradise against them, and satisfy ourselves with the *levissima damnatio*, which gained for Augustine the repute of the *durus pater infantum*? And if we are forced in such a case to admit the law of progress, is it not legitimate to infer that it extends beyond them to those whose state is more or less analogous?”

ii.

“Aug. 1, 1871.

“MY DEAR SIR,—Thank you for your very kind answer to my letter. My apology for writing to you again lies in the importance of the question which is opened in your sermon.

“Let me ask, then, will it be possible to extend the period of probation of any man beyond this life without extending it to all? and is not this a cruel prospect for all of those who are trying to live a good life with the hope of having done with sin and spiritual peril once for all, as the gain of dying? Also, is it not a suggestion cruel to all of us who lose dear and virtuous friends, if we cannot rest in the security that they are beyond harm and reverse?”

“And next, the barrier being once broken down between our present state and our future, are we not at once forced on to the further conclusion, to which the present day so much inclines already, that our future state is only a continuation (that is, so long as the soul endures), of the same sort of world as that in which we are now, to the disavowal of that series of catastrophes (resurrection, general judgment, heaven and hell) which in physical matters is so contrary

to the ideas of some of the most eminent physical philosophers of the day, who refer everything to the action of gradually operating laws? But if supernatural agency has no place in the future world, who will believe that it exists, or has existed, in this? And so Christianity ceases to be a direct Divine revelation.

"I know you will pardon my pertinacity for the motive which causes it.

" Very truly yours,

" . . . . ."

III.

" Aug. 5, 1871.

" MY DEAR . . . . ,—You urge as against the hypothesis that there may be, on the other side of the grave, a trial time of some kind for those who have had no adequate probation, or none at all here, that if there is a probation for any it must extend to all, and that this is 'cruel' to those who have rejoiced for others, and who find hope for themselves in the thought that death frees them from all the conflict and the danger which they have had to encounter during life. The logical force of this objection is, I apprehend, this, that it is improbable, whatever seeming evidence or counter-probabilities there may be on the other side, that a theory involving such 'cruelty' as its consequence can be a true one.

"I will be bold to ask (1) whether, on the assumption that this consequence were involved in the view which I have maintained, the balance of 'cruelty' would be altogether on its side. If it were given to one of the blest to elect between having the possession of eternal life in fee on the one hand, or accepting it on the other, as the saints of God accept His favour now, with the feeling that nothing but their own sin can separate them from it, but that they need to watch and pray lest sin should separate them, with the condition attached to the latter alternative, that those who have failed to attain holiness here should not be shut out from hope, and to the former that the door should be closed on them for ever, which choice would be most in the spirit of St. Paul (Rom. ix. 3),

most after the mind of Christ (Gal. iii. 13)? Would not the decision 'Let me be safe, safe for ever, and let them perish,' seem to us as a concentrated egoism raised to its highest power? Would not the word 'cruel' rise to our lips as applicable to the temper that could make such a choice? And if this be so,—if the natural instincts which fill us with a glow of admiration as we hear of some heroic self-sacrifice, wrought by one who loves his neighbour better than himself, echo that judgment,—then may we not ask whether the charge of 'cruelty' can legitimately lie against a theory because it involves as a *possible* consequence that which we admire rather than what we loathe, is the law of God's dealing with the spirits of the righteous?

"2. But I question whether the inference is a necessary one. It assumes that there can be no probation but under conditions identical with those under which we now live, the presence of temptations from without and from within to which all men are equally exposed. But that assumption is surely arbitrary. In the range of God's kingdom there may well be conditions other than those which we now experience (such, for example, as the manner in which punishment is accepted), which may yet test whether the will is loyal, loving, obedient, or self-centred and rebellious. And if we were to reason from the analogy of our own experience, and the law of tendencies which is already partially developed, would it not seem natural to infer that, as we see here, in the  $\xi\zeta$  as distinct from the  $\epsilon\pi\epsilon\gamma\epsilon\lambda\alpha$ , an ever increasing fixity of character, so that with many a falling-away from grace is a moral impossibility, so, when death brings them nearer to the presence of God, that fixity may become absolutely irreversible, with no more fear of change than is felt by the spirit around the throne? And if, after the law of our nature, the habit reproduces itself in the energy, may we not, must we not, think of that character which has been formed on earth by labours of love as well as by prayer and praise, as neither sleeping nor otiose while it waits for the Resurrection, but finding there also, in that other world, some scope for a like action.