

**THE UNSAFE ANCHOR; OR,
"ETERNAL HOPE" A FALSE HOPE,
BEING STRICTURES ON CANON
FARRAR'S WESTMINSTER ABBEY
SERMONS**

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The Unsafe Anchor; Or, "Eternal Hope" a False Hope, Being Strictures on Canon Farrar's Westminster Abbey Sermons by C. F. Childe

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C. F. CHILDE

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BEING

STRICTURES ON CANON FARRAR'S WESTMINSTER ABBEY
SERMONS.

BY

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PREFACE.



THE following pages are not submitted to the reader as a formal treatise upon the subject of Eternal Punishment. Neither are they presented as a complete answer to every argument advanced, or to every interpretation hazarded, in Canon Farrar's "Eternal Hope."

They are just what they profess to be,—a simple review of that work. They were originally prepared as an ordinary paper to be read at an ordinary clerical meeting, without the remotest idea of any wider publicity.

I was subsequently led to believe, that, in the absence of any more elaborate disquisition, even this simple contribution might, with God's blessing, serve a temporary purpose, and prove useful to some few at least, who were "shaken in mind and troubled" by the

daring assaults of our day upon Bible truth. I accordingly sent it to the publisher, with no other alteration than the division into chapters. During its passage, however, through the press, various additions suggested themselves, which, together with the notes, have swelled the original paper into a small volume. This circumstance may help to account for some of the more obvious defects in its construction.

In the course of a long ministerial experience, I have never engaged in any task which has proved so distressing or so irksome. I have never read a work, by an Anglican divine, of which the theology was so shallow, the reasoning so inconclusive, or the criticism so unsatisfactory. Most certainly, I never encountered one, the style of which was so offensively arrogant, or so passionately dogmatical.

In the minds of sober and discerning readers, this alone would go far to create revulsion and excite disgust.

Should the exceeding popularity of the work be objected as an evidence that the public at large are at once more discerning and more candid in their estimate, I answer that popularity is no criterion of truth, neither is it always a proof of merit. In this case it is easily accounted for.

In the first place, too many readers *wish* the doctrine of the ~~non~~-eternity of future punishment to be disproved. They therefore hail with eagerness any contribution towards that result; especially from a writer whose position, talents, and reputation, may seem to afford a plausible excuse for rejecting it.

Then, again, it must be admitted that the author is master of a certain kind of rhetoric, which, though more florid than chaste, more spasmodic than refined, has great charms for ardent temperaments.

There is a measure of dash and daring in his style, a tone of fearless frankness and independence, a contempt for the conventional and the antiquated, a shew of abounding charity and liberality, and, not least, a horror of Puritanical narrowness and rigidity,—all of which are wonderfully taking with the same class of readers.

It will be observed that I have made frequent reference to Bishop Butler.

I was the rather led to do this because he is strangely, though I doubt not undesignedly, misrepresented by Canon Farrar, and no less strangely by his friend and sympathizer, Professor Plumptre. The former observes:—

"Those who uphold the possibility, for many at any rate, of a gradual amelioration beyond the grave, are constantly confronted with the name, the authority, the arguments of Bishop Butler." . . . But into the question of "endless torments" Butler does not enter at all.*

In confirmation of this assertion he quotes, in a footnote, the following passage:—

"All which can be positively asserted to be matter of mere revelation with regard to this doctrine seems to be that the great distinction between the righteous and the wicked shall be made at the end of this world; that each shall then receive according to his deserts."^b

On this he complacently observes, "There is not a word about endlessness here."

Professor Plumptre remarks to the same effect:—

"He" (Butler) "carefully avoids pronouncing on the nature of the future punishments of evil."^c

Judging from these extracts, it would be natural for

* Pp. xlv., xlv. ^b "Analogy," Part I., c. ii., note. ^c P. 187.

I would observe, in passing, that the accomplished Professor's elaborate letter,—though designed, as he says, to "clear the teaching of Butler from prevalent misconception,"—is itself founded on an entire misconception of that author's argument.

the uninformed reader to suppose that Butler had nowhere given the least intimation of his views respecting future punishment, beyond the bare mention of its existence; and further, that, in his judgment, Scripture had revealed nothing save the time when it would be awarded.

But what are the facts of the case?

Having shown, at some length, the closeness of the correspondence which analogy suggests between natural and future punishments, he adds:—

“Lastly, civil government being natural, the punishments of it are so too: and some of these punishments are *capital*; as the effects of a dissolute course of pleasure are often *mortal*, so that many natural punishments are *final* to him who incurs them.”^d

To this the Bishop subjoins a note, designed to obviate the charge that he has been introducing a doctrine of *revealed* religion into a discussion about the truths of *natural* religion. It is as follows:—

“The general consideration of a future state of punishment most evidently belongs to the subject of *natural* religion. But if any of these reflections should

^d “Analogy,” Part I., c. ii.