

ENDLESS PUNISHMENT.¹

WE here group together two books which advocate the Restorationist theory of Origen. The first has as its *nucleus* the five sermons in Westminster Abbey, in the end of the year 1877, in which the author was understood to preach Universalism. But as presented in an American dress by the Messrs. Dutton, they are preceded by a long controversial preface, intermingled with many notes, and followed by five *Excursus* attempting to sustain its doctrine.

The doctrine of the endless future punishment of the impenitent is one so awful and solemn that it is with painful reluctance the Christian sees it made a subject of controversy. The *odivum theologicum* must be malignantly developed indeed, to make one forget that in proving the truth he may be only sealing his individual doom, and is assuredly doing it, unless he attain some degree of the Christ-like spirit of love. It is presumed that there is not a right-minded man in any church who would not hail with delight the assurance that every creature of God will be finally holy and happy, provided only it could be given with certainty, and in a way consistent with the honor of God. If there are men who are glad to have the fact the other way for the gratification of their own malice or indignation, we have never met them, and we gladly relinquish them to Canon Farrar's eloquent invective. But we submit that he may be doing great injustice by confounding with this harsh temper an honest zeal for the integrity of Scripture exposition, which they fear he is violating; and a benevolent apprehension lest souls may be ruined by a cry of "peace, when there is no peace." We can conceive that good men may be actuated by these motives in opposing our author, and yet feel all the solemn and yearning compassion for lost souls which

¹ This treatise appeared in the *Southern Presbyterian Review*, July, 1879, reviewing, 1. *Eternal Hope*. By Canon Farrar. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. 1878. 2. *The Death of Death*. By an Orthodox Layman. Richmond, Va.: Randolph & English. 1878.

he professes. And here is the answer to the charge he hurls constantly of the malignant harshness of the orthodox, that the worthiest and most deeply convinced men of that opinion have ever been the most self-devoted and affectionate laborers for the rescue of their fellow-men from the horrible fate which they believe awaits the disobedient. They have demonstrated their philanthropy by toils, sacrifices, and blood, much more valuable than the rhetoric of such as Canon Farrar.

His professed arguments against the orthodox view are many; his real ones are two. One is, that common Christians act so little like men who live among a race rapidly perishing with an everlasting destruction. This argument is, alas, just, not as against God's truth, but as against us; and it ought to fill us with wholesome shame and to stimulate us to remove the pretext by the love and faithfulness of our toil for souls. His other argument is purely sentimental: that his sensibilities reject an idea so ghastly as the endless perdition of creatures; he cannot admit a thing so awful. The awfulness cannot be exaggerated; but it is forgotten that perhaps, if *sin* appeared to his mind as abominable as it does to God, and if he appreciated the rights of God's holiness and majesty as a creature ought, he would see that the doctrine is as just as awful, and therefore likely to be realized under such a Ruler. Thus he might be taught to transfer his abhorrence *from Calvinism to sin*, as the proper object of the unspeakable awe and revulsion.

If the reader expects from so scholarly a source something new and better than the staple arguments of ordinary Universalists, he will be mistaken. He gives us only the old exegesis, in the main, so often refuted, and the old, erroneous ground-view of God's moral government, as utilitarian. In this brief review no attempt will be made to refute his points in detail; only the salient peculiarities of the book can be briefly noticed. We cannot honestly withhold the judgment that this book is foolish, uncandid, and mischievous. Its attempts at argument are weak and self-contradictory, its misrepresentations are patent, and its tendencies are to lull impenitent men into a false security, by the delusive prospect of repentance after death. For instance, the orthodox doctrine is uniformly painted as including the everlasting damnation of a majority of the human family, immensely larger than the number of the saved. If Canon Farrar knew

enough to entitle him to preach on this subject, he ought to have known that all the orthodox believe just the opposite. Although at some evil time or place the reprobate may outnumber the saved, they hold that by virtue of the redemption of the infants dying in infancy (nearly half the race) and of the teeming millennial generations, the major part of the race will ultimately be gathered into heaven, so that mercy shall boast itself against judgment.

He uniformly asserts that we hold all this immensity of penal woe embraced within the immortality of a lost soul as earned exclusively by the sins of his short life on earth. Surely Canon Farrar must know, that while we do not concur in his evident light estimate of sin, and while we do not think that man can commit a little sin against an infinite God, the orthodox always assign an everlasting series of sins as the just ground of endless punishments. If he does not know our express dissent from the papal dogma, that beyond death the soul cannot merit, his ignorance is without excuse. His scarcely veiled preference for the papal theology over the reformed theology of his own church suggests that probably he may hold some such error. But we do not. Hence, if the sinner persists in sinning everlastingly, justice may punish endlessly.

He represents the orthodox as teaching the odious idea that the saints will find an important element of their bliss in gloating over the despair and torments of those once their fellow-sinners. Among his proofs are citations from Thomas Aquinas, who says that the happiness of the saints will be enhanced by the law of contrast; and from Jonathan Edwards, teaching that the knowledge of the nature of the torments from which divine grace has delivered them will enhance the gratitude of the redeemed. Ought not an honest mind to have seen the difference of these statements from his charge? Canon Farrar, let us suppose, has been saved from a shipwreck, in which a part of his comrades have perished. But can he not apprehend how adoring gratitude and joy for his own rescue would be increased by comparing himself, reclining safe and warm before the genial fire, with the battered corpses tossing amidst the sea-weed, while yet his whole soul might be melted with pity for them?

He preaches a sermon to refute the notion, falsely imputed to us, that the redeemed will be the small minority. It is from the

text, Luke xiii. 23, 24: "Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate." Will the reader believe that he closes his sermon without alluding to the next words of our Lord? "For many shall seek to enter in, *and shall not be able.*" Had he permitted the last words to be heard, they would have refuted his Universalism; teaching the solemn truth of Prov. i. 28, that mercy may be defied until at last the selfish and unholy cry of remorse may be forever too late.

He labors in two places at least to prove that the Anglican Church designedly recognizes his doctrine, in that she did, A. D. 1562, remove from her Articles the forty-second, which rejected restorationism. Yet he knows that this indirect plea is fatally refuted by these facts, that the Litany expressly teaches the people to pray for deliverance from "thy wrath and *everlasting damnation*;" that the Prayer Book, in the Visitation of Prisoners, and also of Those Under Sentence of Death, most expressly teaches the orthodox view, and that the "Irish Articles of Religion," adopted by the Episcopal Church of Ireland, A. D. 1615, and approved by the government, Sec. 101, declares "that the souls of the wicked are cast into hell, *there to endure endless torments.*"

On page 78 he claims, with a taste at least very questionable, the right and qualification to tell us, *ex cathedra*, what *αἰώνιος* means: "the word in its first sense simply means *age-long*." Yet every lexicon in our reach concurs in saying that its probable root is *ἀεί*—ever, and gives as the first meaning of *αἰώνιος*, "time long past and indefinite," and as the second, "of endless duration."

Canon Farrar feels much outraged at being called a "Universalist." He declares more than once that he does not deny the actual endless punishment of some sinners who remain obstinately rebellious. In other places he acknowledges that he does not know what he believes touching the duration of hell. Only, he is a firm believer in future punishments, to be (possibly or probably) ended by the repentance of the offenders; in the case of how many, who die impenitent, he does not know. The sum of his theology seems to be here, that he will not believe in any more future punishment than he can help, because he does not like to believe it. Would not the common good sense of men

decide that one whose own belief was in this fluctuating state should not attempt to teach others, lest if perchance the future should turn his doubts into certainty, he might find that he had misled his fellow-sinners to their ruin? Many of his violent dogmatisms are offensive when thus connected with his avowed uncertainty. Thus, among many admissions, page 84: "I cannot preach the certainty of Universalism." Yet he tells us of wicked men who declared that the doctrine of an endless hell, instead of restraining their sins, inflamed their indignation and sense of injustice against (the Calvinist's) God. With this feeling he evidently sympathizes. The language certainly bears the appearance of taking part with these sinners against the representation of God given in the doctrine. Now, as he has confessed that there may be men sinful enough to be endlessly punished, would it not have been best to refrain from thus taking the culprit's side against justice, lest he should even be found to fight against God? He admits that a man may be bad enough to receive endless punishment. Yet in other places he denounces the horrors of the doctrine as intolerable to the loving mind. Here, again, let it be supposed that the all-wise may see that all who die impenitent are bad enough to be justly punished forever. Can the author safely claim such an acquaintance with the evil of sin as to pronounce that supposition impossible? But should it turn out the true one, where will his argument be? He declares that the doctrine of punishment is wholly hardening and depraving in this world. Yet his hope of the salvation of multitudes after they go to a (temporary) hell, is founded solely on the expectation that they will be so sanctified and softened by the punishment as to embrace the Christ there whom they wilfully reject here! His main argument is, that he cannot believe God's infinite placability can be limited by a few years and a separation of the soul from an animal body; so that if the sinner in hell repents, God will surely stay his punitive hand. But he is careful not to advert to the vital question: *Will any such repent?* Thus his Pelagian leaning is betrayed. Again, his whole theory of punishment is utilitarian; he cannot conceive of penalty as inflicted for any other end than the reformation of the sufferer; and for penalty inflicted to satisfy justice, his softest word is "arbitrary." It is evident that he knows too little of the "systematic theology" which he despises, to be aware of the fatal

contradictions and absurdities into which his theory leads him. The fact of the evil angels' condemnation to endless punishment is, too evidently, fatal to his whole argument. This needs no explanation for Presbyterian readers. It is sad to see the evasion. He informs us quietly near the close, that he made up his mind not to complicate the inquiry into human destiny with that about the fallen angels. Had he done so, his whole structure would have tumbled into ruins.

The most prominent feature of Canon Farrar's attempted argument is, that he ascribes the belief in endless punishment to the seeming force of a few texts. But he would have us found doctrines, not on particular texts, but on "broad, unifying *principles* of Scripture," (page 74). On the next page he cries: "I protest at once and finally against this ignorant tyranny of insulated texts," etc. Proof-texts seem to be his especial bane (except such as he shall be allowed to interpret for us in his own fashion). The naughty orthodox prove too many things by them which he does not like. They have even refuted by them his darling abolitionism! Now, while we all admit that a proof-text is only valid in the sense the Holy Spirit meant it to bear, and that in finding that sense we ought to give much weight to "the analogy of the faith," yet we see in this outcry an injustice to the orthodox, and an absurdity. It was the author's duty to tell his hearers that the orthodox never have considered their doctrine of endless punishments as based only on a few "texts;" they always claim that they find themselves constrained, with reluctant awe and fear, to recognize it as based on the "unifying principles" of the whole Bible, as taught in many forms and implied in many of the other admitted doctrines. And again, as the general is made up of particulars we cannot conceive whence we are to draw those "unifying principles" except from the collecting and grouping of particular texts. If the author rejects each stone individually as a "text," of course he can reject any arch built of stones, no matter how firm.

In fine, his theology is not only against the texts, but it impinges upon God's attributes, the fundamental principles of theology, and the facts of Bible history. It overlooks God's sovereignty and majesty, the true nature of sin, the true nature of guilt and penalty, the true condition of man as dead in sin and wholly disabled for any spiritual good accompanying salva-

tion. It builds on the "benevolence theory," and makes man's welfare, instead of God's glory, the ultimate end.

The second work named, although anonymous, bears designed internal marks of being written by an Episcopalian. While its theory differs but little from Canon Farrar's, its author assures us that it is wholly independent of him. The exact position which the writer wishes to occupy is not clear. For when charged by an objector with a denial of "eternal punishments," he disclaims this construction, and says that he only held that "a hopeless punishment is nowhere taught" in Scripture. This would seem to give the following position: that on the one hand no sinner's doom condemns him inexorably at death or the judgment day to everlasting woe, and whenever a sinner in hell repents from his impenitence and prays for reconciliation, he will receive it; yet, on the other hand, it is still always possible, and even likely, that some will suffer everlastingly because they will in fact for ever postpone repentance. This is the only sense we can attach to punishment *everlasting* and yet *not hopeless*. Yet the author afterwards declares that his "theory embraces in the harmony of the universe *every* creature of God, whether he be a human being or a fallen angel." He belongs, therefore, to that class of restorationists to which Origen is generally referred. While regarding his argument as inconclusive, we must concede to him a pious and reverent spirit. Every trait of his book bespeaks the good man, the devout Christian, and the gentleman. In every respect save the erroneous logic, in true eloquence, temper, and vigor of thought, he stands in favorable contrast with his clerical comrade in Westminster Abbey. We conclude, with the *Charleston News and Courier*, that, "although the argument burns with the fervor of impassioned feeling, it never ceases to be argument; while it rises at times to lofty eloquence, it never suggests, as does Dr. Farrar's, the suspicion of rhetorical display."

Our review must again, for lack of space, omit all detailed examination of particular expositions and arguments. We limit ourselves, at this time, to the notice of one feature. This is the evident affinity between the Restorationist scheme and Semi-Pelagianism. We find both these advocates attempting to give their doctrine respectability by quoting the names of Greek Fathers who advocated or at least tolerated it. Prominent among

these are Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Theodore of Mopsuestia. Well, these are the very men whose theology was most infected by the arrogant views of Neo-Platonism touching the powers of human nature, and who were swayed by that pagan philosophy to deny or depreciate total depravity; and accurate readers of church history know that Theodore, the true father of Nestorianism, expressly adopted the view of Pelagius and Celestius, then becoming current among the Greeks, and conformed to it his conception of the hypostatic union. Our author reveals the logical tie again in a startling manner. He informs us that his scheme is expressly the sequel and application of Dr. Bledsoe's "Theodicy," which he lauds in the main to the skies. He dissents from him, in that Dr. Bledsoe was a firm assertor of everlasting punishments.

Now the readers of this Review remember that this theodicy of God's permission of sin is, that he cannot necessitate with absolute certainty the continuance in holiness of any rational creature, because such necessity would destroy his free-agency. Hence, he claims for God that he may plead he has done all for every lost spirit, human or angelic, which even omnipotence could do, compatibly with its nature as a rational free agent. Because free agency consists in the contingency and self-determination of the will.

This theory the author adopts with all his soul. On it he builds his hope of universal restorationism. While his lack of acquaintance with theological science prevents his use of its accurate nomenclature, his scheme, stated in that nomenclature, is the following: No sinner ever loses his ability of will to true faith and repentance, even amidst the obduracy and long-confirmed habits of hell. It is a part of his rational and moral *essentia*. Since death does not change this *essentia*, the "faculty of repentance," as he sometimes calls it, cannot be terminated by death. Indeed, no sinner can ever lose it, for in doing so he would lose his essential identity, and so his responsibility. Now, then, reject the horrible doctrines of "election and reprobation," claim Christ's sacrifice to be universal in design, dispense with the necessity of an effectual call, and suppose the gospel offer of reconciliation in Christ to be held forth for ever, and our author reaches his conclusion, that whenever the souls in hell repent, as sooner or later all will, they will be pardoned out of it. Thus, page 87,

he denies that sin is naturally and certainly self-propagating; hence he holds there is no ground for saying that sinners after death will never repent.

This unscriptural view of human nature is evidently the cornerstone of his system. But if the Bible doctrine is true, that man is "dead in trespasses and sins," that "no man can come to Christ except the Father draw him," then all the author's suppositions may be granted, without reaching his conclusion. He is sure, from his conviction of God's placability and fatherhood, which are immutable, that the day can never come, to all eternity, when the worst sinner who repents will be refused pardon in Christ. But will any who die impenitent ever truly repent? None truly repent here except they be moved by efficacious grace; their original sin will not be less there. The "faculty of repentance" is not natural to man's *essentia* here; he cannot lose what he did not possess; it is a gift of special grace. Hence the very hinge of the whole debate is in the question *whether Christ will give* effectual calling to the condemned in the state of punishment. On that question the Scriptures say at least nothing affirmative. Would it not then be better for us all to be silent where we have no authority to speak, and to avoid the risk of encouraging sinners to procrastinate repentance by a hope of amendment after death which they will find illusory.

The travesty which is given of the doctrine of predestination shows that the amiable author only knows it in the caricatures of its enemies. If he will study it in the statements of its recognized advocates, he will find in it none of the abhorrent features he imagines.

The author overthrows the "Theodicy" of his own teacher, Dr. Bledsoe, in a most instructive manner. He argues that if men can and do abuse their free agency, in spite of God's strongest moral restraints, so as to make everlasting shipwreck of their being, then Dr. Bledsoe's defence of God is worthless. For, although his omnipotence be not able to necessitate their holiness consistently with their free-will, his omniscience must have foreseen the utter shipwreck. So that the frightful question recurs as to the origin of evil. Why did not God *refrain from creating* these reprobate souls? Thus the author demolishes Dr. Bledsoe's "Theodicy." But now, he argues, let his scheme be added, that God's omniscience foresees no souls finally reprobate,

that all penal evil is remedial to the sufferers, and that God will make hell itself a means of grace to all the lost, and he has a true theodicy. Alas that this also should be demolished as quickly as the other! If God's end in the creation of the universe is beatistic, as his whole argument assumes, then why did not God also *refrain from creating* all such souls as he foresaw would require these frightful means for their final restoration, and stock his worlds with only such souls as would follow holiness and happiness, like the elect angels, without being driven into them by this fiery scourge? Surely the author will not attack God's omnipotence by denying that he was able to do the latter. Then we should have had a universe containing all the good which he supposed will be finally presented by the existing one, *minus* all the woes of earth and hell. These, including the penal miseries of those who die impenitent, which the author thinks may continue for multitudes of the more stubborn, through countless, though not literally infinite, years, make up a frightful aggregate. Why did God choose a universe with such an addition of crime and woe when he had the option of one without it? The author is as far from a theodicy as Dr. Bledsoe.

The speculations of both these writers are obnoxious to this just charge, that in assuming an *a priori* ground of improbability against endless punishments, they go beyond the depth of the created reason. They tell us that when the everlasting penalty is properly estimated, it is found so enormous that they cannot be convinced that God is capable of inflicting it. Are they certain that they know how enormous an evil sin is in God's omniscient judgment? Does not the greater crime justify the heavier penalty, according to all jurisprudence? Before this question, it becomes us to lay our faces in the dust. But such writers would exclaim, if sin is indeed such a thing as to necessitate this fearful treatment by a "God of love," and if so many of our race are actually exposed to it, then should all men take wholly another view of this world and of life than that taken by the most serious believer. Then we ought to regard our smiling world as little less dreadful than a charnel house of souls. Then every sane man ought to be, as to his own rescue, "agonizing to enter into the strait gate!" Every good man ought to be toiling to pluck his neighbors as "brands from the burning," like men

around a burning dwelling which still includes a helpless family. There should not be one hour in this world for frivolous amusement or occupation; and all should be condemned as frivolous save such as bore, directly or indirectly, on the rescue of souls. The man not stony-hearted ought to "say to laughter, it is mad; and mirth, what doeth it"? on such a stage as this earth, where such a tragedy is enacting. Every just and humane mind ought to feel that it was little short of treason to human misery to expend on the pomps or luxuries of life one dollar of the money which might send a Bible or an evangelist to ignorant souls.

Well, if it should be even so? If it be so, the world is insane (Eccles. ix. 3) and the church is shockingly below its proper standard of duty. But is this an impossible supposition? Unless these writers are justified in saying so, they are not justified in leaping to the conclusion that the orthodox doctrine cannot be true because it is so awful. One thing appears evident: there has been *one Man* on earth who did appear to frame his whole life and nerve his energies in accordance with this solemn and dreadful view of human destiny. He seemed to live, and strive, and preach, and die, just as a good man should who really believed the sinner's ruin to be everlasting. And this was the *one Man* who knew the truth by experience, because he came from the other world and returned to it.