The New Testament Idea of Hell

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THE

NEW TESTAMENT IDEA

OF

HELL.

BY

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PREFACE.

THIS little book is written for readers of the English Scriptures, and not for those having access to the wide range of theological discussions found in the ponderous works on Systematic Divinity, which crowd the libraries of the learned. It therefore avoids, as far as possible, the use of foreign words and elaborate criticisms, keeping an eye to the needs of ordinary inquirers and seeking to lead them to the knowledge of the meaning and use of the original terms translated Hell in the New Testament.

No pretension is made to having discovered any meaning in those words, or any fact in regard to their origin, history, or use not previously known, and not well established in the minds of all who have given particular attention to the subject. The
reader will find, however, that the Scriptures containing them are classified a little differently, and that the terms are so applied as to bring their specific differences into greater prominence and into right relations. This is one of the chief features of the work, and if this aim is realized the result will be accepted as a sufficient reason for its publication. It will enable the reader of moderate culture to study the subject intelligently, knowing in every instance whether the passage in hand relates to Hades, Tartarus, or Gehenna, an advantage not to be lightly esteemed.

Some will be disappointed in finding so little said directly upon those knotty questions which arise in connection with the subject of future punishment, and it may not be satisfactory to be told that such discussions have been purposely omitted, in order to keep attention to those points which relate to the fact itself, and which are necessarily preliminary to the consideration of the nature and duration of punishment, and of the
methods adopted for the vindication of the divine proceeding which inflicts the penalty of eternal death upon the impenitent. But the course pursued accords with the writer's best judgment, and will be appreciated when the scope and design of the volume are taken into the account. One fault with many writers on this subject is, that they too readily plunge into the mysteries which baffle the keenest intellect and the stoutest heart.

The first thing necessary is to clear the subject of embarrassments, by ascertaining as nearly as possible what the Scriptures teach. In many instances this will remove the most serious difficulties from the mind, for the reason that those difficulties arise from misconceptions of the truth, or from wrong impressions in regard to it. The next thing of importance is to study carefully what is proposed for our acceptance in lieu of that which we find in the Scriptures. Just here many miss their footing. They listen to broad assertions, and reject unpalatable truth be-
cause it is unpalatable, without looking whither they are drifting or where they are to land. Human life is a fact, sin is a fact, the approach of death is a fact, and entrance into the unseen world is a fact. The Scriptures tell us what is there to be expected. Men object. They quibble; but they do not change the facts, nor bring us clearer light, or point us to firmer ground.

In this little book Hades is treated as a fact. The word itself is of little consequence. The fact exists. It is a world unseen, but real, and it would have existed and filled its office, if the name had been different, or if no name had ever been given to it. The Mississippi River poured its waters along the same channel for ages before the word Mississippi was known, and it would have continued as deep and wide if no name had been applied to it. So with the invisible world. It does not depend on its name for existence or character. In the course of human events, and perchance of human follies, it so hap-