

THE INDICTMENT OF ETERNAL TORMENT

THE SELF-NEGATION OF A MONSTROUS DOCTRINE

TRIED, JUDGED AND CONDEMNED OUT OF ITS
OWN MOUTH BY THE ARGUMENTS AND ADMISSIONS
OF ITS STAUCHEST ADVOCATED

By E. D. SLOUGH

Evangelist

Church of Christ in Terra Haute, Indiana

1914

F. L. Rown, Publisher
Cincinnati

This book was put on the web by
William Robert West.

<http://www.robertwr.com/index.html> Chapter one of "Resurrection or Immortality"
<http://www.robertwr.com/resurrection.pdf> All eleven chapters of "Resurrection or
Immortality"

<http://www.robertwr.com/OppositionToHell.html> A growing opposition to Hell in the
church of Christ.

<http://www.robertwr.com/rapture.html> A book on Premillennialism.

GENERAL INDEX

- Chapter 1: Language
- Chapter 2: Natural Immortality
- Chapter 3: Scriptural Immortality
- Chapter 4: Death
- Chapter 5: The Resurrection
- Chapter 6: Paradise
- Chapter 7: Punishment—Judgment—Justice
- Chapter 8: Destruction
- Chapter 9: The Rich Man And Lazarus
- Chapter 10: Review of Campbell
- Chapter 11: Review of Nichols and Denny
- Chapter 12: Chain of Absurdities
- Appendix by William Robert West, WHAT ABOUT ENOCH AND ELIJAH?

A NEW FOREWORD

By William Robert West

E. D. Slough was the preacher at the church of Christ; Terre Haute, Indiana in 1914 when, “The Indictment Of Eternal Torment, The Self-negation Of A Monstrous Doctrine” was printed. It has long been out of print and used copies are hard to find. It is now in public domain and can be printed by anyone.

His book is ever bit as good as “The Fire That Consumes” by Edward Fudge, but it did not receive much circulation. Brother Fudge believes there is a Hell and all the lost will be in it, but believes it will be a short Hell that will end with the death of those that has been in Hell for a while, and they will be tormented by God for as long as they are in Hell.

The fate of those not in Christ according to:

- According to Slough
 - Death – Resurrection – Judgment – Second death
- According to Fudge
 - Death – Resurrection – Judgment – Hell – Second death

During the Judgment there most likely will be fear and regret when the lost see what they have lost by not being a Christian. Fudge then adds a place between the Judgment and the second death that is not in the Bible, names it “Hell” and says God will torment the lost, some with more torment, some with less torment before the second death.

For the most part this book is excellent.

INTRODUCTION

In the year 1415 the corruptions of Rome were unbearable. She was mistress of the land. None could stay her hand. Unbelief meant the dungeon. Protest meant the stake. A man stood up with courage and shouted into the ears of Rome **“abomination”**? That little word made Rome angry and she shouted back **“heretic.”** But she stopped **not** there. She summoned him to appear in the council and answer charges of heresy, demanding him to recant. He submitted this proposition—**“Disprove my arguments and I recant.”** Said Rome, **“We’ll disprove them with the torch.”** And they burned him forthwith. And John Huss was silent. We repudiate that deed. The whole church despises it with horror. The whole Protestant world revolts at the thought of intolerance. Nor do I believe there is a brother in the Church of Christ but that abhors it. Yet, we are liable to manifest that spirit with words, though we would go no farther.

During the dark ages, when superstition and tyranny reigned over the better judgments of men, dominating every civil right of liberty, and subduing ever aspiration to advance intellectually, the gospel light was in chaotic blackness, handicapped by an intolerant mob of ungodly and profane rulers, whose highest ambition was to reduce humanity to a condition of absolute serfdom and ignorance, that they might eternally fleece them of their gold and their blood, that they themselves might revel in beastly sensuality and luxury. So that age is a historical reality, the blackest, the most inhuman, the most vile, and intolerant that ever disgraced the ledger of events. And a memorial to all coming ages of the fruits of ungodliness.

Under such a series of profligacy, licentiousness, idolatry, ignorance, and superstition, nothing could result but the very condition that did result. And the very horror of it all, it all occurred under the garb of religion. In that sacred name, which has been a thousand times desecrated, dungeons have been prepared, fires have been kindled for martyrs, and every device genius could contrive was made the tool of usurpation and diabolical power to suppress the liberty of thought, that the mind of men might be effectually bound in the fetters of espionage to serve the god of greed, and the Lucifer’s called priests and rulers. And even a mind with a tendency to reason for itself was persecuted and intimidated from every source by the instruments of brute degenerates,

and has accomplished just what these men anticipated—**A plane where the few do the thinking for the many.**

Eventually, this resulted in a revolution, costing the blood of countless hosts of men and women and children, and because of the confusion of main, it broke up into numerous factions and parties, each confined and circumscribed by the same principles which had dominated their rights under the galling yoke that had just thrown off. And with them also, a departure from set rules and fixed principles, was another denunciation, and so sensitive to those creeds where those parties that they would shrink back from one of their member who would have the audacity or courage to question their truths as they would from a leper or an infectious disease. Sheltered thus under religious zeal, the hearts of men become congealed and settled into a condition of mimics, rejecting all ideas not in harmony with that of their own teacher.

An inquisition of chains and torches is not less preferable than the perpetual subjection to doctrines, which palsy the mind; and against which men dare not lift a voice lest they be decried as heretics, and a menace to the cause of Christ. This age of the world, prolific with the religious “isms” of men, eager to separate themselves in the livery of sect, and follow a favorite crowd under which they were reared, **is the true menace to the cause and progress of truth.**

Thus far I have spoken in a general way. But there is a particular way to which I wish to call your attention. For so long as men close their eyes to possible light, they cannot see. Out of this mass of Egyptian darkness light is slowly evolving. I can see the breaking of the dawn, and the reflected rays of light shooting over the hills! But with this twentieth century civilization, we (the Church of Christ) dare not say we have reached the summit of knowledge, the pinnacle of perfection. To do so would be an expression of egotism, for all who have scanned the word of God will be constrained to say with Paul, “Oh, the depths of the riches both of wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable his judgments and his ways past finding out.”

Men of renown and scholarship have for ages sought for proof on the pages of nature’s book, for the immortality of the souls of all men. My aim will be to show they have all alike failed. Truth is modest in the presence of great men. Speculation is the field of their exploration. No wonder these profound thinkers are baffled to astonishment as they wrestle with the deep things of God, building as they do great structures

upon the passing phantoms of the brain. The popular feeling that somehow by irrevocable fate, or unchangeable law, once in being always in being. The delusion which tells of inborn principle in man both immortal in indestructible, that as we depart here instantaneously awake in a new world with new power and realizations, and upon which fabrication has been built eternal torment, purgatory, and a host of other doctrines, have been sounded out from out pulpits, periodicals, funeral sermons and fireside talks. It has permeated every village and hamlet; it is worldwide in its scope, and its defense.

We charge our neighbors with crooked reasoning. They can justly retort, thou are the man, for we are no less bound up with early training than those whom we criticize. We dare not raise the voice against the tenets of faith more than they, without expecting in return a volley denunciation and contempt. Picturing the future of the unsaved with all the horror that words can employ, an eternity of woe and misery, and everlasting existence of torture. **And the very illustrations used to prove it are a positive denial of it.** And yet I presume not one of them has noticed it, because they use the same proofs over and over.

Often have my friends exhorted me to be cautious in the agitation of convictions contrary to the established teaching of the Church; that it would be in opposition to all the scholarship of the world; that I would be practically alone, and bring the scorn of the religious world upon me. Yet those same friends would give a word painting of eternal torment that would make Hopkins turn over in his grave and give a sigh of relief. Henceforth let the logically remove the serious objections against their peculiar tent, with the word of God, rather than by scholastic writers. Thought it be an error, they would not call a long nurtured theory in question in fear of combating scholarship. Verily, scholarship will not tear down its own building. Shall we muzzle out inherited right of free thinking and free speaking and bow to the mandates of theological speculations? Shall we decide that investigation of disputed points of the Bible ought to be suppressed to honor the scholarship back of them? There is no delusion in the name of religion preached among men that has no scholarship back of it. Then why oppose error at all? **Though I should get no hearing, I prefer to be alone in the truth, than with the multitude in error.** But I am not alone. Thousands are in sympathy with these arguments, many of them representing the highest channels of learning. But, on the other hand, thousand of great learned men have lived in error all their lives, and never able to come to the knowledge of

the truth. While many of the weak and lowly have found the truth and laid hold of it. If all ages of the world many things have been withheld from the wise and prudent, and revealed unto babes. Learning too often leads to speculation, rather than an earnest search for the truth. For that reason truth in the hands of an intellectual dwarf has often been a source of much annoyance to the mighty.

Some place great weight on the number of people believing in this theory. No weaker argument could be brought forth. Numbers prove nothing to be true. They only prove popularity. Not a dogma taught in the world without finding its friends. Many of the most absurd tenets are advocated by millions. Mahometanism with 176,834,000, Confucianism with 256,000,000, Hindooism with 190,000,000, Buddhism with 147,900,000, Polytheism with 117,681,000, Catholicism with 230,800,000—what a strong argument this would be if there was any proof in numbers. What a weak argument Protestantism with 90,000,000, could bring against it, and the Church of Christ but in insignificant number even of those. These statistics are taken from the New National Encyclopedia, Vol. 1, page 2175.

An argument founded on the basic principles of a proposition, principles, which are self-evident, the ultimate conclusion, if we reason soundly, will be the truth.

“If we would act like sincere searchers for truth, we should survey every argument with a careful and unbiased mind, whether it agree with our former opinion or no. We should give every reasoning its full force, and weigh it in our sedate judgment...The best way to try the arguments brought against our own opinions is to sit down and endeavor to give a solid answer one by one to every argument brought by the author to support his doctrine. And in this attempt, if we find there are some arguments, which we are not able to answer fully to our own minds, we should then begin to bethink ourselves, whether we have not hitherto been in a mistake, and whether the defender of the contrary sentiments may not be in the right. Such a method as this will forbid us to pronounce at once against those doctrines, and those writers, which are contrary to our sentiments. And we shall endeavor to find solid arguments to refute their position before we establish ourselves in a contrary position...In the composure of men remember, it is not their reason but your own that is given you to guide you when you come to the years of discretion. Never apply yourselves to read any author with a determination beforehand either for him or against him, or with a settled resolution to believe or to disbelieve, to conform or oppose whatsoever he says. But always with a design to lay your mind open to truth and to embrace it wherever you find it, as well as to reject falsehood, though it appear under ever so fair a disguise”—Watts on the Mind, pp 248-51-74.

I care not for the contempt this will bring forth I ask only that this be subjected to the most vigorous test by an honest heart. If you are right

you will see my error; if I am right you will see your own error, so after all some good may be accomplished. The line drawn deep, broad and distinct, and on every page we will know just where we stand. The Bible cannot agree with "Tom and Dick" if "Tom and Dick" do not agree with one another. But "Tom and Dick's" faith should not have any intrinsic weight on the subject. We protest against their policies. **They have confused the public mind by grinding out of their theological burrs, new meanings into common words.** They have thrown false colors over the scriptures. They have inherited in a large measure their faith, and in this way religious heredity has muzzled the powers of their reason. So why let Tom and Dick forever close our eyes and seal our mouths, dictating to us a religious teaching? On its very face it is an obvious farce and an extravagant burlesque on the great architect of the universe.

The issue before us in this work is that unfounded theory of "natural immortality, or the deathless nature of the soul," which if ever established must include the dog and the bear. Let that dogma be confirmed and the whole structure of eternal torment must stand forever unscathed. Fundamental to the entire doctrine is this theory. If it stand, the conclusion is inevitable. **If it falls, the whole fabric built upon it crushes into atoms.**

Reader, if you will kindly indulge me the time, I will build a wall against that error, towards which the powers of scholasticism will blow their mighty blasts in vain. And the theory of eternal torment, growing of necessity out of the notion that the spirit of man is indestructible, will be shown to be the grossest error that ever cast a shadow over the fair universe of God. An error that has been pounded and "propounded" into the hearts of men and women, both in and out of the church, from the days of Socrates, 500 years before Christ, down to the twentieth century. You dare not deny that **Socrates and Plato, his pupil, are the originators and perpetrators of this doctrine.** And it is further seen by men as apparently confirmed by the parables and metaphors of revelation.

Some one may ask what does it matter if we do believe it? **It matters much.** Let me point you to some of its mischief. **What caused Universalism to rise up and deny the future retribution?** That very doctrine of natural immortality. How did it cause it? This way—they believed the spirit of man indestructible. They saw a furnace of fire in scripture opening its jaws to receive countless hosts. They know the fire

could only torture such a spirit. They saw no release from it: they saw in the distant eternity the writhing millions of humanity no nearer the end of their suffering than when they entered. They thought "**horror!**" Such would make God a tyrant, more terrible than a thousand inquisitions of the dark ages. They cried "absurdity." They cried right, too. So they devised a crude escape. They figured it all away, and agreed to take all men into heaven irrespective of moral qualification. All punishment became to them reformatory, and, ultimately, the last man would depart for glory.

From whence came the soul-benumbing ingredients of Calvin's Eternal Election of much of the human race to everlasting misery in a lake of fire, regardless of moral attire, choice or conduct" Came it not from the gangrenes of putrescent mental sore? Came it not from a scattering mind, incapacitated to gather, associate and concentrate evidence? With him, the deathless nature of the soul was a profound reality—it was unquestionable—to doubt was to exhibit weakness. He saw God revealed in scripture with powers sweeping all infinity. He saw some intimations of an election, a pre-election, a foreknowledge, and following this lead he unconsciously forced to the grossest absurdity the mind of man can entertain. Lay your premises in error, and draw your conclusions in harmony, and you have a falsehood masquerading in your brain in the guise of the angel of truth.

What caused induced the rise of "spiritualism?" That dark, deceitful pretense of talking with the dead. Any one may talk to the dead, but the dead answers not. These people also were repulsed by the doctrine of endless misery, and immediately rejected the Bible, but held tenaciously to the eternal perpetuity of the spirit of man, and invented a diabolical fare for its chart of unseen activity. Notwithstanding the Divine denunciations against it as the work of devilish agencies.

Upon what is "Purgatory" and Saint Worship" founded? Are not its entire fortifications resting upon that one delicate thread? These delusive and pernicious evils of Catholicism, destined to drag man and women, boys and girls down to an irredeemable fate, under the "spell" that a failure here means but a little longer term of purification in the fires of Purgatory.

Again, from that theory, legions of infidels and atheist have been created: besides, thousands more have wandered off into every form and bypath of delusion. Denying the conclusions and consequences to which the theory leads, man have given wings to scores

of false notions withdrawing from it entirely, or making some sour of apology for God as did Thompson in the "Theism," "that it belongs to the necessities of existence and cannot therefore be otherwise."

The objector may reply, "Well, because men corrupt and misunderstand truth is no proof against it." I grant it: but when you strive to teach thinking people a doctrine against which their whole nature rebels as utterly horrible and unbelievable, not all of them will receive it; some will if you quote scripture, even though it be the very opposite of human ideas of justice. But this class has been made to believe the first absurdity of natural immortality, or the indestructible nature of the soul, and then when led to the Bible. Build its teachings upon their convictions, the saw the conclusion would be absurdity so gross that their conception of God was shivered to pieces, and rather than destroy all their sense of propriety by accepting the meaning of a lake of fire, filled with humanity for eternal duration, they at once either rejected the whole Bible or literally butchered its teaching with the knife of ignorance.

Let these people be assured that man is a created being, and that the Author can both create and destroy. Let them learn that there is a real destruction, terrific in its import, literal in its results—that **the choice is between life and death, not between life and everlasting misery in something equal to a lake of fire**—and you will have hushed their mouths forever. You ask, how? Simple enough. They see and know of the laws of all nations bringing men before the tribunal of justice and demanding his life because it been rightfully forfeited. When their Creator demands their life, to satisfy their abominations, and they have nothing where with to pay but their life, they must still abide by the sense of justice they approved for others.

This book courts no man's friendship that is not friend to the most rigid search for truth. It is not impoverished by limits of freedom. It will cross the path of error fearlessly. Some will say hard thing about it—that is already anticipated.

Luke 16:23 is used as a proof text by the clergy to prove that at death the spirit departs at once to some indefinable place of joy or sorry—punishment if wicked—and remain in that state of torment as the parable reveals it, till the day of resurrection, and then comes forth to be "judged" and sentenced to everlasting misery. Now that is the way they preach it, and there is no disputing it, either; but while they are preaching it that way the Apostle Peter is declaring that the "unjust" are

“reserved” unto the day of judgment to be punished. Now, their theory, as they preach it, is based on the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, while Peter’s testimony is of the simplest and most obvious clearness. Peter may be wrong—and he is, if they are right. 2 Cor. 5:1, 8, is used in conjunction with the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus to prove an immediate entrance into heaven at death, or into a state of happiness that cannot be distinguished from the descriptions they give of heaven, and in which Paul evidently teaches the presence of the Lord occurs in the “new house” from heaven (or immortality), while Paul declares in 1 Cor. 15:54 that this “immortal body” will not be put on till the resurrection of the dead, at the last day.

THE INDICTMENT OF ETERNAL TORMENT

CHAPTER 1

Language

“The **immortality** of the soul is a fundamental article of the Christian system.”—Dictionary, edition 1848, Noah Webster.

“I have a firm conviction that our soul is an existence of indestructible nature, whose working is from eternity to eternity.”—Goethe.

“The spirit of man goes to God who give it. This is proof of the immortal principle in man, and of an eternal existence”—E. G. Denny, December 28, 1911.

“The wicked go away into everlasting torment. It shall never, never end. If after enduring it all for twice ten thousand times ten thousand years, they might have a deliverance, or as least an abatement, it were less terrible.”--Wm. Davidson, sermon on the judgment.

“Human language is inadequate to represent fully the dreadful realities of the lost”—Johnson. “People’s New Testament, with Notes.”

Out of your own mouth shall I judge you (Luke 19:22). And the world shall judge you. On the borderline between the known and the unknown, it the playground where shadows and imaginations meet; where fancies and visions flit across the mind; and where doctrines of man are spawn. A doctrine is nothing if not founded the basic principles of truth. If it is assumed it is worthless, and if the arguments adduced in defense of a proposition turn out to be chaff—the cheapest sort of failure—it is plausible inference that the position is groundless, and under ordinary circumstances would warrant reprobation.

Doctrines founded on assumed premises and “**ifs**” is not the proper employment of language, but the abuse of it, and a further abuse of the common confidence of humanity. It is this fact that suggested the paramount importance of this chapter under the above caption.

Is it reasonable to suppose that, with a language to choose from

so prolific in terms that would have conveyed the meaning sought, they would deliberately pass them and select words whose meaning must all be reversed in the plain teaching of the Bible in order to understand God? Is it reasonable that, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we would be handed a scheme of redemption carrying an invisible in indefinite meaning in teaching us, the opposite of what the same words teach us in our common exchange of conversation? Yet that such a change has come over the words life, death, immortality, punishment, consume, devour, etc., in their transition from the Dictionary to the Bible, is a fact patent on the face of theological definitions in contradistinction to the universally accepted meanings of said words.

Modern theologians try to get out of the terms that were used by explaining that we are not to take the words in their common meaning, and right here is foundation of the greatest abuse and exploitation of human language on this mundane sphere. **When we drop the common meaning of a word what have we left? It is nothing but the license of unlimited liberty to attach to it whatsoever strikes our fancy.** Thus the sounds we hear are a thousand uncertainties.

Paul said: "And even things without life giving sound—except they give a distinction in the sounds—how shall it be known what is piped or harped? So likewise you, except you utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? For you shall speak into the air." (1 cor. 14:7,9.)

What do the people know about a destruction that does not destroy? Could they describe it? Or about a consumption that does not consume? Could they tell? Or a death that does not kill? Can it be defended? No. Even the preachers who proclaim it in season and out cannot tell.

"It is not until we have ascertained that the 'literal' meaning of a term will serve that we have any liberty to annex a metaphorical meaning to it at all."—*Eclectic Review*, August, 1845, p. 155.

Were that rule honored and adhered to as it should be, more than half the theology of the world would be swept down in a moment in one great cataclysm. But the clergy and scholars have adopted the figurative meaning exclusively on life and death, and all accessory words, except in the parables and symbols and metaphors, where there use is evidently ambiguous as can be judged by the nature of the subject, and its essentially dark and obscure sayings, and the literal sense of the word is

pressed with intrepid zeal and persistence, or so much and so far as the theory at stake requires. And because they do this, they regard the doctrine established sufficiently to bring all others into disfavor.

I frankly confess such a course is the very opposite of the one pursued here. And I shall take the “rules”—good ones—laid down by our champions in debate and superiors in the pulpit and show they have dishonored and disgraced the very guide set forth to light the way, and only feigned to follow it.

That charge may seem severe, but none too severe if true. It will be shown to be true beyond the remotest doubt that could arise. And will point out wherein they oppose each other’s sides of their necessary rules, and oppose each other’s conclusion, which places them in a hopeless state of confusion, making it impossible for them to teach the people the truth. For whether the people see it or not, the teachers are contradictory of the choice and validity of a fixed rule of interpretation.

I here introduce a rule laid down by Clark Braden in his discussion with Hughey, and which Braden assures us is in accord with all authorities on the subject. Fix it in your mind and you shall see ere long that not only preachers and speakers and writers, but the man Braden himself, literally mocked it. And it is this phase, which makes the plight a thousand fold more difficult.

“It is a well known rule in interpretation, **that words must be taken in their primary and commonly accepted meaning, unless we are compelled by the context to give other meaning...so says Blackstone, Hedge, Whately, and all writers on such matters...we want definitions, primary and ordinary, not possible meaning or secondary meanings**”—*Braden-Hughey Debate*, pp. 30, 31, 146.

Nothing is the matter with that rule. It is a splendid one. It will be readily accepted by most Bible students, and accounted a necessity by all authorities.

As a prelude to numerous instances to be cited, we will examine one word as a brief test case.

According to references at the beginning of this chapter, it is generally and almost universally believed and taught that man is immortal by nature. And so we hear them talk of “**natural immortality.**”

The New Testament abounds in promises of immortality to a certain class—“**those who seek it.**”

Immortality must mean something in the Bible different from that of “**natural immortality,**” and they define it “*immortal happiness.*” The

Dictionary, and the Greek Lexicon, tells us immortality means “**exempt from death.**” Neither of them defines it as happiness. Natural immortality, men define as “**endless existence.**” They assume it. The Bible nowhere speaks of it. But if it were true they define it correct. **But Bible immortality, because it tells who may inherit it and who may not, is defined as happiness, nothing in the context requiring such a construction; in fact, the context demands the literal sense—endless life.** Here is Braden’s rule, the Dictionary and Lexicon all guiding us to the true meaning of scripture. I call Braden, Deny, Sommers, Morris, and any other living man, to answer why this difference! And to say if it isn’t a clear case of perversion of language.

In a subsequent chapter I have pointed out where Mr. Campbell said if a word can have any other than a literal meaning, it would be begging the question to adopt the literal.

Let us reason this matter a little. Campbell was a great scholar, professor, speaker, writer, and debater, and it was he who made the above remark.

About the same time the *Eclectic Review* said we must determine the literal meaning will not serve before we have any right to adopt the figurative. Mr. Braden follows in recent years, just as well informed as Campbell, as well educated, as powerful in debate, and as deep in his writings, and takes direct issue with Campbell. Neither Campbell, nor Braden, then could decide the question for us. **We must decide for our selves after we hear the rules and the scripture to which they are applied.** Still later comes Mr. Morris, of Kansas, perhaps the equal of Campbell or Braden, matured in study, and sides with Campbell, holding the figurative meaning the greatest. And thus we might go on indefinitely lining them up on either side, proving that they have no fixed rule of interpretation, from the fact that they ignore all rules, and each other’s position.

We believe with the *Eclectic Review*, and with Whately, Hedges, Blackstone, and Braden’s rule, that the literal sense of the word must be retained and pressed unless the context shows it would involve an absurdity—then will be time to modify its meaning.

Here are these leaders, divided upon the most simple and necessary rules that have been approved by the scholarship, which opportunity and industry could inspire. **What then must the people do who are listening for the truth?** What would you expect them to do? They can be no less divided than you are, and no more agreed. And the cause of

truth suffers.

It is the height of folly to seek a figurative meaning when the literal will stand and be intelligible and sensible. It is an almost infallibly safe rule to observe, and in which human nature will acquiesce in unity.

It is a dangerous and unprofitable art that traffics in the sliding sense of words, leaving impressions with the people that are untrue.

The question to be asked is not, does the Bible say it; **but, is it figurative or literal?** The Bible may say it, and we may be unconsciously injecting into it another sense altogether foreign.

No interpreter but will admit the Bible abounds in both figurative and literal terms; in parables, allegories, metaphors, types, shadows and illustrations of numerous thought and variety. The interpreter's business is to be able to sift them down to mutual agreement, that the obvious literal texts may be confirmed by the figurative, and not that the whole system of teaching be reversed, with a figurative meaning ground into the common words, and urged as the greatest meaning. And this is the very situation and complication confronting us today.

It is therefore not a misstatement of facts when we charge that these spiritual lights of the church have laid down and sanctioned strict measures governing the interpretation of symbolic language, and have been the first to depart from them. Many will be brought to notice and their own violation of said rules made manifest. Suppose that fact should be known by the people, that their teachers absolutely ignore their own rules for interpreting scripture, and would it not have an unsalutary effect? They would justly be incensed with such a breach of propriety.

Mr. Trench, a noted scholar and scriptorian, saw the same liberty, the same latitude, the same looseness with the sacred text as we find today: persons laboring to establish weak tottering theories from metaphors, and the same results flowing out from them. Indeed, it is a practice hoary with age. And it is made possible the more easily from this fact.

I do not say there is a difference between the narration of real events and the narration of parables. A parable reads like a real event, and that is why our commentators become confounded in their employment of them. Yet it seems strange that this should give us trouble. It would be as simple as the alphabet, should we but start right. And any one who does start right, will be dumbfounded at every step at the extent the simple words of the English language have suffered violence at the hands of undesigning men perhaps, but men, nevertheless, who could

plead “bias” with more propriety than “ignorance.” And when it is done, they force it into credulous ears with all the power a Paul would use before “Felix” reasoning of the judgment to come.

Here are French’s thoughts concerning it:

“The parables may not be made first sources of doctrine. **Doctrines otherwise, and already established, may be illustrated, an indeed further confirmed by them. But it is not allowable to constitute doctrines first by their aid...this rule, however had been forgotten often,** and controversialists, looking around for arguments with which to sustain some weak position, **one for which they find no other support in scripture, often invent for themselves support in these**”—*Trench on the Parables.*

Not only do men define words with a double meaning, and press the figurative where every rule and context loudly demand the literal sense, but they take up the grand narrative of the Lord’s preaching called parables and proclaim them as “*real circumstances,*” assiduously denouncing those who object.

We will give you an authoritative definition of many of the words mostly concerned in this work. Definitions that are sound, solid, and unquestionable, and will invite any test at your command and desire.

For the English I shall use Funk and Wagnall’s “New Standard Dictionary,” 1913 edition.

“**Life**—The state of being alive, that condition in which animals and plants exist, as distinguished from inorganic substances, and from dead bodies.”

“**Immortality**—The quality or state of being immortal. Exemption from death or annihilation; life without end.”

“**Death**—Cessation of physical life. The total and permanent cessation of the functions or vital actions of an organism.”

“**Mortal**—Subject to death. Destined to die.”

“**Destroy**—To bring to ruin or to demolish in any way.”

“**Destruction**—The act of destroying or overthrowing; demolition, devastation, ruin, perish, to pass away from life or existence: be destroyed or consumed, hence to be lost, come to naught, wither, decay.”

“**Burn**—To destroy by combustion or heat, to consume.”

“**Consume**—To destroy gradually as by burning, eating, etc., or by using up, wearing out, wasting or squandering.”

“**Annihilate**—To put out of existence, destroy absolutely.”

“**Punishment**—Pain or any other penalty inflicted on a person for a crime or offence, by an authority to which the offender is subject.”

“**Unquenchable**—That cannot be quenched; inextinguishable.” (Webster’s Unabridged.)

“**Quenched**—To extinguish, to put out.” (Webster’s Unabridged.)

These definitions are the primary meanings of the words, which we

call the literal meaning.

Just because all these words are used in scripture with a different sense from the Dictionary meaning, I will make assurance doubly sure, and give another authority, the Encyclopedic Dictionary.

“**Life**—Existence as a living being, as opposed to one in the literal sense dead.”

“**Destroy**—To demolish, to pull to pieces, to annihilate, to ruin, to consume, to kill, to extirpate, to devour, to put an end to.”

“**Destruction**—State of being destroyed. The act of killing, of destroying. Destruction is an act of immediate violence.”

“**Consume**—To destroy as by decomposition, waste of fire. ‘And the fire of God came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty’ (2 Kings 1:2). Bring to utter ruin, to exterminate, to devour, to cause to disappear.”

“**Devour**—To destroy or consume rapidly and violently. To annihilate, to do away with utterly.”

“**Annihilate**—To reduce to non-existence in the literal sense of the word. To reduce anything to non-existence by dissolving it into its constituent elements, and thus destroying its distinctive character.”

“**Punishment**—That which is inflicted as a penalty imposed by law.”

“**Death**—That state of any animal, being or plant, in which the vital functions have totally and permanently ceased to act. The extinction of life; destruction, capital punishment.”

I have a special object in citing these two authorities on words, which will be seen subsequently.

For the Greek, the definitions are taken from “Liddel and Scott’s Greek Lexicon.”

It is a mark of unfairness to attach peculiar meanings to the Greek works, which are found in the New Testament Scriptures, **when those meaning are absent in the Greek Lexicons. If they were defined thus and so in the Greek, we would expect to abide by them in the New Testament. But since it is not true, we have a perfect right to object.**

And this new definition given to the words in scripture which has no relevancy whatsoever to their native tongue, and which they receive in the transition, is nothing more nor less than the opinions of men, the very thing the Lord condemned in the Jews for annulling the law by traditionary teachings.

If one man has the right to say that a word found in the Greek Testament has a different meaning than the word meant in its primary sense, then all men have that right, and there can be no fixed rule of interpretation; and that is the prime reason why we have no fixed rule, and why every man has a rule of his own, ever ignoring it.

But grant that the apostles knew what they wanted to say, and selected such words from the current language as would convey their meaning. Believing this to be the true rule of interpretation, the definitions of the following Greek words are the definitions used in the Greek classics:

“**Bios**”—Time or course of life. (Luke 8:14)

“**Zooa**”—One’s living, substance: (later) life, existence.

“**Zaao**”—Properly of animal life; to live. (Matt. 17:63)

“**Thanatos**”—Death, whether natural or violent. (Luke 2:16)

“**Thnatos**”—Liable to death, mortal. (2 Cor. 4:11)

“**Paucha**”—Breath, life, spirit. (Acts 20:10)

“**Athanasia**” (ethanatos)—Undying, immortal; opp. To Thnatos. (1 Cor. 15:53, 54)

“**Aphthartor**”—Incorruptible, imperishable (1 Cor. 15:52)

“**Phthartos**”—Corruptible, destructible, perishable. (Rom. 1:23)

“**Phtheiroo**”—To corrupt, spoil, ruin, destroy. (1 Cor. 15:33)

“**Ollumi**”—To destroy, consume, make an end of, to kill, to slay.

“**Olethros**”—Ruin, destruction, death. (1 Cor. 5:5)

“**Apollumi**”—A stronger form of ‘Ollumi.’ To destroy utterly, to kill, to slay. (1 Cor. 1:19)

“**Apoolea**”—Loss, destruction. (Mark 14:4)

“**Kathairesis**”—A putting down, destroying, killing, slaying. (2 Cor. 10:4)

“**Suntrimma**”—A fracture, a stumbling bloc, offence. (Rom. 3:16)

“**Asbestor**”—Unquenchable, inextinguishable. (Matt. 3:12)

“**Kolasis**”—A pruning or checking the growth of trees. Chastisement, correction, punishment. (Matt. 25:46)

Now here is a list of Greek words found scattered throughout the Greek New Testament, and their English equivalents which we have in the English New Testament, and as we find them in the English dictionary. There is no difference in the meaning of those Greek and English words. They are interchangeable, and we know what they mean.

Upon these clear and simple definitions I stand and will remain until the discrepancies between the theory of endless misery and the Bible are swept into oblivion. And I invite a free-handed co-operation in this effort to rid the church of the greatest theological tangle that now remains as obstruction to the progress of the truth.

Space forbids giving each passage in which the above words occur, not would it be commendable, so I have given but one. Nor do I undertake to say that the above words are the only ones occurring in the New Testament of similar meaning. But let the common meaning of the words be carried to the word of God as in every day life, and the end of all argument will be at hand; and in no other way can the agitation be ended; and in no other way should it be.

Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

