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I. SPURIOUS RELIGIOUS EXCITEMENTS.

It is believed all thoughtful Christians are alive to the fact that religious excitements, which consist of temporary movements of the emotions devoid of any saving operation of the Truth on the reason and conscience, are equally frequent and mischievous in America. This judgment not seldom expresses itself in very queer and inaccurate forms. Thus: good brethren write to the religious journals grateful accounts of a work of grace in their charges, and tell the Editor that "they are happy to say, the work has been purely rational and quiet, and attended by not the slightest excitement." They forget that the efficacious (not possibly, tempestuous) movement of the feelings is just as essential a part of a true religious experience, as the illumination of the intellect by divine truth; for indeed, there is no such thing as the implantation of practical principle, or the right decisions of the will, without feeling. In estimating a work of divine grace as genuine, we should rather ask ourselves whether the right feelings are excited; and excited by divine cause. If so, we need not fear the most intense excitement. This misconception is parallel to the one uttered by public speakers, when they assure hearers that, designing to show them the respect due to rational beings, and to use the honesty suitable to true patriots, "they shall make no appeal to their feelings, but address themselves only to their understandings." This is virtually impossi-

ful, can poison none. The more enthusiastically we admire her genius, the more inexorably must we condemn her character and her life. We can never think of her save as a colossal figure, marred and defaced by sin. A sad spectacle is before him who stands and contemplates the wreck of her nature on those rocks of doubt above which her own hand had set this beacon gleaming :

“ No great deed is done  
By falterers who ask for certainty.  
No good is certain, but the steadfast mind,  
The undivided will to seek the good.”

JAMES HENDERSON SMITH.

## VII. CRITICISMS AND REVIEWS.

### PLUMPTRE'S "SPIRITS IN PRISON."

THE SPIRITS IN PRISON, AND OTHER STUDIES ON THE LIFE AFTER DEATH, *by E. H. Plumptre, D. D., Dean of Wells. New and Revised Edition, Fifth Thousand.* New York : Thomas Whittaker, 2 and 3 Bible House. 1887. 12 mo., pp. 440.

The doctrine of this book is that there will be another probation beyond the limits of this present life. The question which is discussed bids fair to emerge into fresh prominence. The *New York Independent* is quoted as having expressed the opinion that the religious press of this country is, with inconsiderable exceptions, outside of Andover, true to the old conservative doctrine of the evangelical churches. We are glad to learn this, but yet we fear that the tendency is a growing one to relinquish that doctrine. When such scholars as Farrar and Plumptre lend their influence to its overthrow, and their works meet with acceptance, at least with a demand, so wide, the apprehension we have expressed cannot be regarded as groundless. There is a call upon the evangelical school to re-affirm the arguments for their position, and to subject to a careful examination those which are now advanced on the opposite side.

The learned author of this work has broken with so much of Calvinism as is asserted in the Thirty-nine Articles of his Church. He treats as abhorrent the sovereign decrees of God, utterly rejects unconditional election, disparages "the forensic theory of atonement," confounds punishment with discipline, contends for the office of free will as the determining factor in the matter of personal salvation in this life, and for the continuance of that office in the case of the ungodly in the

world to come. In short, he is partly Arminian, partly Socinian and partly Universalist. One does not wonder, therefore, at finding him in revolt against the doctrine of the irrevocable issues of death and judgment. Judging from the tenor of his views, and from his undisguised admiration of Frederick Denison Maurice, we would assign him to the Moral Influence School—a school which endeavors to accomplish the amazing feat of reducing justice and mercy to the unity of one special divine attribute, of making the judgments upon Judas Iscariot, Herod, Ananias and Sapphira expressions of God's compassion, the execution of a criminal a token of paternal love, and heaven and hell in different degrees a like exponent of infinite benevolence to man. Such is the general character of the author's views, and should the Church of England, or any other Church, come to embrace them, it will be in palpable insurrection against the consent of the Church Universal.

It is true that Dr. Plumptre has exhibited great scholarship and learning in quoting Fathers and theologians and poets in support of what he calls "The Wider Hope"—a hope of the future restoration of those who died without faith in Christ. This very phrase, however, by which he imparts an air of fascination to that hypothesis, is in itself a confession that the creeds and symbols of all Christian Churches embody another and narrower doctrine. The presumption is vastly against him and those who think with him, which is derived from the consentient testimony of the Church, in its interpretation of the Word of God.

It is almost needless to observe that this profound question touching the everlasting destinies of men is one which in the main rests for its determination upon the teaching of the Scriptures. It has been truly said that proof-texts from the Bible must settle it. What saith the Lord? The ingenious attempt to make the term *Æonian* express a kind of life rather than an endless duration, or indicate an indefinite but not illimitable period, has often been made, but it has failed to convince the unsophisticated readers of the Bible. If it does not signify everlasting when applied to the destiny of the wicked, there is no proof from the Scriptures of the everlasting happiness of the righteous. The argument proves too much, and is therefore logically worthless. The disproof of an eternal hell might be very desirable, so far as our human sympathies are concerned, but it would be dearly won by the corresponding disproof of an eternal heaven.

We do not purpose in a brief notice like this to examine particularly Dr. Plumptre's scriptural argument, but we cannot refrain from remarking that while he has expended great, but, as we believe, fruitless ingenuity in attempting to show that some of the positive statements of the Scriptures support his theory, he has not examined other positive statements that certainly seem to deny it, and, more than all, that his argument is fatally damaged by his neglect to notice what John Foster said were stumbling-blocks to him—"the negatives" of the

Bible : such as, the worm that dieth not, the fire that is not quenched, the great gulf fixed which none could pass from Abraham's bosom to the place of torments, nor from the place of torments to Abraham's bosom, there remaining to those who sin wilfully after they had received the knowledge of the truth no more sacrifice for sin, and the like. Alas, these fearful negatives ! No wonder they are overlooked by the advocates of the Wider Hope, or treated, as the author treats them, as "seeming contradictions" to that hope.

The key-note of the book is struck in a sermon with which it begins, and which had been delivered at St. Paul's Cathedral, on the text, I Pet. iii. 19: "He went and preached to the spirits in prison." He takes this passage as teaching that Christ, in the interval between his death and his resurrection, went to Hades and preached the gospel of hope to those who had lived in ungodliness and died in unbelief. Without going into an elaborate discussion of the meaning of this difficult and much-controverted passage, we have to say that it is too intricate, too susceptible of divergent interpretations, to be employed as a proof-text in favor of the dogma maintained by the author. It is capable of a construction, it has received a construction, exactly the opposite of that contended for in this work. Judging from the whole context in which it stands—and we know of no surer canon by which an author's meaning is to be ascertained than the drift and strain of his argument—we have reached, aside from any connexion with this question of the future restoration of the wicked, a conclusion precisely contrary to that of Dr. Plumptre, and those who agree with him. The passage is too doubtful to be made a proof-text of a doctrine which the author himself acknowledges to be seemingly contradicted by other Scriptures, especially by the words of our Lord.

The great assumptions of the work, demanding but not receiving, clear proof from the Word of God, are that the sufferings of the lost are disciplinary, and that the free will of men in hell is capable of improving the discipline to the ends of faith and repentance. It behooved him to prove these affirmations from Scripture. This he has not done, and could not do. Failing that, he ought to have produced scriptural evidence in favor of the efficacious influence of the Holy Spirit upon the souls of the lost. This also he has entirely failed to do; indeed would deny, since he denies that such an influence is exerted upon men in this world. One thing is perfectly certain: It is that except sinners, either in this world or in the next, are born again, of water and of the Spirit, they cannot enter into the kingdom of God. The author's doctrine cannot be proved from the Bible, unless it can be shown from that sacred volume that men are regenerated in hell. When that is done, it will gratify our human inclinations to preach the Wider Hope, *but not before.*

We close by commending to our readers a now almost forgotten treatise against Chauncy the Universalist by the younger President

Edwards. It is marked by the remorseless and consuming logic which distinguished the polemical writings of his illustrious father. It destroys the assumption that suffering in the future state is disciplinary and remedial.

JOHN L. GIRARDEAU.

DOCTRINA DUODECIM APOSTOLORUM.

DOCTRINA DUODECIM APOSTOLORUM, CANONES APOSTOLORUM ECCLESIASTICI, AC RELIQUAE DOCTRINAE DE DUABUS VIIS EXPOSITIONES VETERES: Edidit adnotationibus et prolegomenis illustravit, versionem Latinam addidit *Franciscus Xaverius Funk*. Tübingae, in Libraria Henrici Laupp: 1887. Svo. pp. LXVII, 116.

Dr. Funk, of Tübingen, was one of the patristic scholars to whom the critical world looked for guidance, when the discovery of the *Teaching* was announced, nearly four years ago. His response was a sober and valuable paper in the Tübingen *Theologische Quartalschrift* for 1884 (pp. 381-393), followed since by reviews, from time to time, in the same journal, of the more important literature of the subject; and, early this year, by the publication of the Greek text of the *Teaching* with a Latin translation, in the new issue of his valuable edition of the Apostolical Fathers. The limitations of space required by the form of that publication, left many things unsaid or said in insufficient detail, which it seemed desirable to say. And hence, Dr. Funk has yielded to the solicitations of his friends, and prepared the present separate edition of the document itself and its kindred writings. It may be said at once that the book is worthy of the distinguished reputation of its learned author. The prolegomena are a model of sober judiciousness and concise statement. In the space of some sixty-seven pages, they give us an adequate review of all the really important critical questions, a survey of the literature and history of opinion, and an acute and telling criticism of opposing views. The text is furnished with a suggestive commentary—one of the most careful that has been published. And the whole is clearly and beautifully printed.

The views which Dr. Funk defends are without essential modification the same which he has already published in his journal. He asserts the integrity of the text of the *Teaching*, as transmitted to us in the Constantinople MS., and admits only the bare possibility that even I. 3-II. 1 is of later interpolation. He holds the *Teaching* to be older than, and the source of, the similar sections in Barnabas and Hermas; and assigns it to a probably Palestinian or Syrian origin of about the end of the first century. He believes the Latin Version (the MS. containing which he has himself recovered,) to be more likely early than late, and to depend on Barnabas. The *Ecclesiastical Canons*, he thinks, were probably Egyptian in origin and belong to the first part of the third century. The *Apostolical Constitutions*, he assigns to the middle of the third century, while the interpolator and continuer (to whom