

**THE HISTORY AND
TEACHING OF THE
PLYMOUTH BRETHREN**

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The history and teaching of the Plymouth Brethren by J. S. Teulon

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BY

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PREFACE.

THE writer of this little book contributed an Article on the Plymouth Brethren to the *Church Quarterly Review* of April 1879. He has, however, carefully examined the whole subject again, and recast his treatment of it; while several elements in the teaching of the Brethren, which found no notice in the Article, have been dealt with in the following pages. It has been his endeavour throughout to gain his acquaintance with their system from a careful study of their own recognised writers, and while he has read such treatises of their opponents as have come into his hands, he is not aware that he has accepted a single statement as to their teaching which he has not found to be fully confirmed by themselves.

January 1883.

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CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

THE religious movement with which these pages are concerned has arisen during the present century. From very small beginnings it has in the course of fifty years attained a wide-spread influence, and has enlisted under its banner persons of distinguished rank and of the highest intellectual culture. Nor has its work been by any means confined to the country of its birth. It has found a home in many continental States; it is well known in the colonies, and in America; while in most of the larger towns of Great Britain its representatives have their places of assembly. Though it employs evangelistic agencies to make its tenets known, and to gather in its converts, the main instrument of its propagation has been the press rather than the pulpit, and numbers, to whom the society itself is little more than a name, have unconsciously

imbibed its principles from a perusal of its periodicals, its pamphlets, and its leaflets.

It is always instructive, and often most interesting, to trace the rise of an influential school or sect, to note the circumstances which gave it birth, and the different forms which it has assumed in the course of its development. Such movements are not the result of chance; nor do they merely represent the product of individual piety, genius, or self-will. Though in most cases they may be referred to some individual founder, they could never gain wide acceptance unless they were felt in a measure to supply some want of the age; and therefore a careful study of them will often furnish us with a key to the religious history of the day in which they arose. But the interest and instruction are multiplied tenfold when the movement under consideration has arisen in our own age. It then becomes a paramount duty to examine it with care. It throws light upon the period in which we live, and even in its most abnormal developments may remind the Church

of the day of some portion of her inheritance of truth which has been forgotten for a season, but for the revival of which the circumstances of the time are imperatively calling; while on the other hand the special character of any false teaching which may accompany such movements demands the attentive and dispassionate examination of all who desire to see their way through the perplexities of their time, and to secure the religious interests of their country. All these considerations apply in full force to the remarkable movement with which we are now concerned. Its rapid growth, its wide-spread influence, its tenacious hold on those who join it, all go to show that it is felt by many both in this and foreign countries to furnish some kind of supply to the religious necessities of the age. An examination of it then may help us to see what these necessities are, and should lead Churchmen to enquire further whether the Church herself out of the abundant stores committed to her keeping is not fully able to supply them.

CHAPTER II.

THE HISTORY OF THE PLYMOUTH BRETHREN.

ABOUT the year 1828 a small company of devout men, chiefly churchmen, were in the habit of meeting in a house in Dublin for the study of the Scriptures, mutual conference, and prayer. The main object of these religious exercises was the deepening of their own spiritual life, and the strengthening of those bonds which bound them as Christians to each other. But over and above this they were much exercised in mind about the state of the Religious World. They believed in the near approach of the second Advent of our Lord, but they saw around them few visible signs of preparation for His coming. Both the Church and the sects fell far short of the ideal exhibited in the New Testament; there