

**THE PLYMOUTH
BRETHREN: THEIR
HISTORY AND HERESIES**

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The Plymouth Brethren: Their History and Heresies by James Grant

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BY JAMES GRANT,

AUTHOR OF "OUR HEAVENLY HOME," "TRUTHS FOR THE DAY OF
LIFE AND THE HOUR OF DEATH," "THE HISTORY OF
THE NEWSPAPER PRESS," &c. and EDITOR OF
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P R E F A C E .

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THE bulk of this publication appeared some time ago in a work of mine, in Two Volumes, entitled, "The Religious Tendencies of the Times." It attracted great and general attention when it appeared, but the price—Twelve Shillings—of the volumes, prevented many who were desirous of reading the work from obtaining a perusal of its pages. Hence a great number of applications have been made to me to reprint the "History and Heresies of the Plymouth Brethren." With the urgent requests thus made I have at length complied, making many important additions to the matter of which the publication originally consisted. Having a profound persuasion that Plymouth Brethrenism, as taught and practised by the Darby section of that body, is essentially at variance with the spirit and doctrines of the religion of Christ, and that it is working great mischief wherever it has got a footing, I hope that by republishing what appeared in my "Religious Tendencies of the Times," with the

numerous additions I have made to it in this form, and being brought out at the price of One Shilling, great good to the cause of the truth as it is in Jesus will thereby be done. I have remarked elsewhere, but it may be well to state the fact here, that wherever no mention is made by me of the party of the Plymouth Brethren of whom I am at the time speaking, my observations relate to that section of which Mr. Darby is the recognized leader.

JAMES GRANT.

35, Cornwall Road, W.

15th October, 1874.

THE
PLYMOUTH BRETHREN.

CHAPTER FIRST.

THEIR ORIGIN AND EARLY HISTORY.

THE Plymouth Brethren are a sect of whom we hear a great deal, but of whom the public know but very little. Even other religious denominations, who might be supposed to be well acquainted with their origin, their ministry, their numbers, their doctrinal views, and their form of church government, only possess very limited information in regard to these and the other points on which they differ from other religious bodies.

The Plymouth Brethren, so far as respects several of their doctrinal views, existed for some years before they were called by that name. Their origin, in this sense, took place in Ireland, and the time may be quoted somewhere between the years 1828 and 1834. The interval between the first and last of these six years was one of great commotion in the religious world, although the commotion was but little observed beyond the evangelical pale. It chiefly arose from the pulpit ministrations and published works of the Rev. Edward Irving, and his expulsion from the Scotch Church, Regent's Square, followed by his excommunication from the Church of Scotland by the Presbytery of Annan, to which Church and Presbytery he belonged. His expulsion and excommunication were caused by his having introduced not only a new style of preaching, but much important new doctrinal matter.

I am sure I will receive the reader's permission if I pause here just for a single moment to say that it was my privilege to be personally acquainted with Mr. Irving, because it furnishes me with the opportunity of remarking that I never met with a man with whose thorough sincerity in all his views I was more deeply impressed, or of whose personal piety I had a more exalted opinion; while with

regard to his appearance and manner in the pulpit, I have never seen so remarkable a mingling of majesty with modesty as in him. Even at this distance of time, I can imagine I hear the tones of his magnificent voice, and see his noble countenance, radiant with what seemed literally a light from heaven, blended with an expression of benevolence, which no one who once witnessed it could ever forget.

✓ He had embraced Millenarianism, which at that time had found its way into but very few pulpits, either in the Establishment or out of it. But the simple fact of inculcating the doctrine of the personal reign of Christ on earth for a thousand years, would not of itself have caused the excitement produced by Mr. Irving's pulpit ministrations and published works. The sensation which he created arose chiefly from his dwelling, in almost every sermon, with all the intense earnestness, and all the transcendent eloquence which characterized his preaching, on his newly-adopted belief, that Christ might come to our world any day, and at any hour, but would most certainly come in that generation, to erect a visible kingdom on earth, over which He Himself was to reign personally.

✓ In conjunction with the doctrine of the immediate advent of Christ to reign personally on the earth, Mr. Irving contended earnestly for what is called the peccability of Christ's humanity. The meaning of the expression is, that our Lord, in taking our nature upon him, took it in precisely the same condition in which it was in the person of Adam, before he fell, and that, therefore, Christ was liable to sin, just as Adam was before he sinned, though, unlike Adam, he never sinned. His views on this point were first misconstrued and then misrepresented. He was charged with believing in the sinfulness of Christ's humanity though it did not break out in overt thoughts or acts; and no denial of the charge, however often, and however emphatically made, could or would satisfy the evangelical world, that the charge was groundless. He preached and wrote with an earnestness never surpassed in its repudiation, declaring that his very soul shrunk from the idea of Christ's human nature being in the slightest degree tainted by sin; but all to no purpose. I can speak from personal knowledge when I say, that the imputation, persisted in after all his solemn repudiations

of the charge, well-nigh overwhelmed him with sorrow; and all the more because many of those ministers of the Gospel whom he regarded with the warmest affection persistently refused to believe his solemn disclaimers.

In association with these novelties in doctrine, there was another. Mr. Irving fully believed that the gifts of working miracles and speaking with tongues were not withdrawn from the Church.

I myself have repentedly heard Miss Hall, who was believed to be more largely endowed with the gift of speaking with tongues than any one else, exercise that gift in Mr. Irving's church in Newman Street,—the place to which he removed on being expelled from the church in Regent's Square. While, on a particular day I was one of from 2000 to 2500 persons who were present, she burst out again and again, in loud and solemn, almost unearthly tones, while Mr. Irving was preaching in terms of eloquence and solemnity which would almost have been supposed to be those of some supernatural messenger of mercy, descended from celestial regions to warn the world of its sins, and to seek to prevail on it to forsake them, and receive by faith the Lord Jesus Christ as the only Saviour of sinners, and as *their* Saviour. The moment Miss Hall—a young and ladylike person—uttered her first words, Mr. Irving stopped in his sermon, and placing his head on his hand, remained in that attitude, as if absorbed in deep devotion, until she had finished, when he resumed his discourse. The principal communications made by Miss Hall to crowded assemblies related to the personal coming of Christ. I remember being present on one occasion, when in the midst of Mr. Irving's discourse, and all were enthralled by his mingled eloquence and solemnity of manner, she rose from her seat, and in tones which no one that heard them ever could forget, shouted aloud, "He's coming, He's coming, He's coming! Behold, He is at the door. He is *here*." It were impossible to form any conception of the consternation which the suddenness, the voice, the manner, and the matter of Miss Hall created on this occasion in the crowded assembly.

I should here observe that the speaking with tongues in Mr. Irving's congregation was not in unknown tongues, as most people, who had never heard them, supposed.