

Christian Holiness

by F.W. Grant

The Plymouth Brethren are not Antinomians, but rather believe in the sovereignty of God and the importance of holiness.

Scripture: John 3:3, Romans 5:9, Romans 8:9, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Ephesians 2:10

Topics: "Sanctification", "Justification"

Description

Dr. Steele, in his sermon on Christian Holiness, challenges the concept of being born again as merely a figure of speech, dismissing the profound spiritual reality of new birth and its significance in the believer's life. He questions the doctrine of imputed holiness and misinterprets the biblical teaching on justification by faith and the atonement through Christ's blood. His arguments against the new birth and the believer's identification with Christ lack depth and fail to grasp the transformative power of spiritual rebirth and union with Christ.

Transcript

Christian Holiness.

INTRODUCTION.

THE immediate occasion of the following pages has been a recent attack upon "the theology of the so-called Plymouth Brethren" by a professor of didactic theology in Boston University, in which what many beside the present writer regard as some of the most precious doctrines of the Word of God are stigmatized as antinomianism. This will account for whatever controversial character may be found in them; a thing scarcely to be regretted if it serve, as it does undoubtedly serve, to bring out and emphasize the fundamental questions, as well as to exhibit the strength of the arguments on either side. Truth will only suffer if there should be found in this a spirit of acrimony or a contention for the mastery rather than the truth: both which, alas are apt to be engendered by controversy. This, if it should be found in me, I shall not beg my reader to excuse. Holiness is not a theme to be discussed in a manner so essentially unholy.

I do not think Dr. Steele will deny my competence to speak in behalf of the doctrines he incriminates. If he has studied them, as he tells us, for ten years (p.100), I have done so for twenty-five; and while he has done this from an outside (if not a hostile) stand-point, I have known them from inside, estimating them by internal experience (a very different thing), and bringing them daily to the test of the Word of God. I speak

of this the rather, because I do not propose to bring forward in general the testimony of men, but to appeal to the Word itself throughout, while yet I shall have again and again to disclaim Dr. Steele's representation of the views he has attacked, of which I must say he has still very partial knowledge. If he dispute my own, I am ready to meet him on that ground also. In the meanwhile, I am sure that those who are acquainted with the writings of those referred to will confirm my presentation of them.

It is Dr. Steele who should have proved that the views he attacks are really the views of representative writers among the "so-called Plymouth Brethren." He has certainly not done so with any thing like the care that might be expected in so grave a question. With the exception of a quotation or two from Mackintosh's "Notes," and one from the "Eight Lectures on Prophecy," he has given little or nothing with which one can properly credit "Mr. Darby and his school" (p. 86). Some of his quotations are without clue to the writer; others are from the large number of (supposed) "sympathizers" (p. 30), as to whom nothing is given to show how far their sympathy extends, or that the doctrine presented in them is really that of those they "sympathize" with. Dr. Steele speaks of Mr. Darby as "their leading mind" and the head of the school.

He has studied their writings for ten years, knows of course that Mr. Darby's own fill thirty-seven volumes of near six hundred pages each, and it would be reasonable to expect that he would quote largely from these so far as I know, there is not one quotation. Dr. Steele's "Darbyism" somehow leaves out Darby! And this is all the more strange, because he brings forward six times what that "venerable Christian scholar" said to the writer (pp.18, 60, 131, 158, 181), which of course we have no means of verifying; but not one line or sentence from his written books!

But Mr. McDonald, in the preface, has quoted Mr. Darby: "Any thing which looks like church prosperity is, with Plymouth Brethren, a delusion. 'The year-books of Christianity,' says Mr. Darby, 'are the year-books of hell.'" (p. 15.)

Yet even this is given without a clue to whence it is derived. I have taken some trouble to find it, but as yet without success. Mr. McDonald may be surprised, however, to learn that it is from a Romish historian (I think, Baronius), and not from Mr. Darby at all; although it is used by him somewhere to show the state of the professing church. This is not an extreme specimen of that kind of mis-representation of which the book before us has many instances. Intentional misrepresentations I do not mean, but the effect is the same for readers of such things. Take one example from Dr. Steele himself as proof:- "At my request, Mr. Darby gave an exposition of Matt. xxv. 31-46. What pitiable makeshifts to explain away this most solemn and awful passage in holy Scripture 'It was not a final and universal judgment, but a review of the Gentile nations. Individuals are not here judged, but nations other than the Jews.'" (p. 185.)

This is all put within quotation-marks, as if it were the very words used on this occasion. In fact, it is only Dr. Steele's impression of what was meant, and a very false one. Take the written statement of the Synopsis (vol. iii. p. 164), as evidence: "It is the judgement of the living, so far at least as regards the nations - a judgment as final as that of the dead." And if any one will turn to his tract upon eternal punishment, he will find this very passage argued upon in proof of it. "Eternal life and eternal or everlasting punishment answer to one another, and mean the same in either case he punishment of the wicked, then, is said to be of equal duration with the life of the blessed." This settles the question conclusively as to whether in Mr. Darby's thought individuals or nations (as such) are before us in this text. Inasmuch as it is with him a final judgment to eternal life or eternal punishment, there can be no question that it is of individuals. "All the nations" means simply "all the Gentiles," as he affirms.

It is a strange excess of prejudice that can cause gross misconceptions such as these. And then with thirty-seven volumes that lie open to criticism, to prefer to give judgment upon private conversations! Assuredly no honest mind will accept Dr. Steele's account in defiance of published statements such as these. I am sorry to say that it is not only in such ways that Dr. Steele shows the spirit that can animate one who "is not ashamed to confess with tongue and type and telegraph and telephone" that he believes in "a genuine CHRISTIAN PERFECTION." (p. 25.) Not only are sentiments imputed to the objects of his attack which they refuse and abhor, but immoral practices also. They are stigmatized as Antinomians, who believe that the sins of Christians are not real sins (p. 89), that the efficacy of faith is concentrated into a single act of assent to a past fact (p. 50i), who are indifferent to inward and outward holiness (p. 101), concealing the offensive features of their doctrine with Jesuitical cunning (p.130), and soon. Perhaps the title of Dr. Steele's book should have prepared us for such charges. It would have served his purpose better to have proved them; especially as somehow these people "insist on deadness to the world, and entire devotion to God" ! (p. 55.)

But we are sanctified only by the truth: if, then, the doctrines in question are not truth, we must concede they do not sanctify. Our business at this time is wholly with the doctrines.

CHAPTER ONE

ANTINOMIANISM : WHERE IS IT?

MR. FLETCHER'S definition of antinomianism a curious illustration of the value attaching to names of this kind in such controversies. Luther invented the term to designate the views of Agricola, who denied the use of the law to produce conviction and repentance, as well as sanctification. Mr. Fletcher's statement would condemn Luther himself, and it was intended to include the chiefs of the Calvinistic evangelical party of his day. Dr. Hodge says ("Outlines of Theology," p. 404), "Antinomianism] has often been ignorantly or maliciously charged upon Calvinism as a necessary inference by Arminians,"- such as Mr. Fletcher and Dr. Steele; and he retorts the charge upon them thus: "It is evident that all systems of perfectionism, which teach (as the Pelagian and Oberlin theories,) that men's ability to obey is the measure of their responsibility, or (as the papal and Arminian theories,) that God for Christ's sake has graciously reduced His demand from absolute moral perfection to faith and evangelical obedience, are essentially Antinomian." (p. 526.)

Thus it seems the Plymouth Brethren have companions under the same imputation with themselves. As I have said, Mr. Fletcher's definition was admittedly not made for them, but for such men as Hervey, Toplady, Romaine, Whitefield, and others,- men with whom it would be an honour to be condemned, but whom Dr. Steele seems anxious to associate with those who "decry that evangelical legality (!) which all true Christians are in love with - a cleaving to Christ by that kind of faith which works righteousness"! And, reader, you are, according to the definition, an Antinomian, unless you expect to be justified before God by your own personal obedience, and not by the obedience of Christ, in the great day of final account. (pp. 31, 32.) That is the test of antinomianism for Mr. Fletcher. - Dr. Steele, in summing it up, however, adds new features, which are some of them indeed part of the creed of hyper-Calvinisni, while some of them probably no one would own in the present day, and none but a fanatic could ever hold. Let Dr. S. produce, if he can, from the thirty-seven volumes of the "leader" of the school, or from the numerous writings of C. H. M., or Wm. Kelly,- wide enough scope, if this be the Plymouth doctrine,- the least intimation that "my faith is simply a waking up to the fact that I have always been saved or that "a believer is not bound to mourn for sin, because it was pardoned before it was committed, and pardoned sin is no sin;" or that "by

God's laying our iniquities upon Christ, He became as completely sinful as I;" or that "no sin can do a believer any ultimate harm;" or that "the conditions of the new covenant, repentance, faith, and obedience, are not on our side, but on Christ's side, who repented, believed, and obeyed in such a way as to relieve us from these unpleasant acts." (pp. 35, 36.) After ten years of patient inquiry, an accuser cannot be guiltless in putting out such things in a book professedly against the Plymouth Brethren without guarding his readers against attributing them to them as they would do necessarily otherwise. It is true Dr. S. has not directly charged them with them; but this is the creed of an Antinomian, and they are Antinomians. The argument is too simple and necessary not to be made, and he must know it would be.

We now have a historical sketch of antinomianism, which is of no special importance for our purpose. It only needs to remind the reader again that the doctrines attributed to one and another in it are not to be supposed transferable to that class of people in whom we are told it has been in these days "revived." They are responsible for their own views, but for nothing more. And the association with Dr. Crisp and others only can avail to stir up feeling and create prejudice before the real cause is taken up. Dr. Hodge states as to Crisp, that he denied the inferences put upon his doctrine (" Outlines of Theology," p. 404), and certainly it is hard to believe that he actually wrote or said, "Sins are but scarecrows and bugbears to frighten ignorant children, but men of understanding see they are counterfeit things" (p. 141). If he did say this, it is altogether needless to bring him up from merited oblivion.

It is strange, however, that whereas Agricola, Tobias Crisp, and such like come conspicuously to the front, as do "John Wesley, the apostle of experimental godliness and of Christian perfection," and "the seraphic John Fletcher," we are not once told with whom these contended in their day, or with what.

On the whole, we are well pleased with Wesley's definition of antinomianism. According to its root idea ("against law,") the only scriptural definition must be "the doctrine which makes void the law through faith." (p. 38.) We have, then, to find the real Antinomian to take the New Testament doctrine of the law, and inquire who makes void the law? who refuses to take it for whatever purpose God has given it? who perverts it to any other use? who takes off the edge of its requirement? Searching along these lines, we can scarcely fail to find the Antinomian in the only proper sense.

What, then, is the office of the law according to Scripture?

It is (1), to give the "knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3: 20), not only by putting it into account,- reckoning it up as the items of a bill (Rom. v. 13), and making it exceeding sinful, as breach of plain command (vii. 13), but also by detecting it in the heart in the shape of lust (vii. 7) and giving it power by the very prohibition (vii. 8, 9).

(2) Although ready to justify the doer of it (Rom. ii. 3), yet requiring complete obedience (Jas. ii. Gal. iii. io), and finding none (Gal. iii. 10), it only condemns and curses and never justifies- (Rom. 3: 19; iv. 15 ; Gal. ii. i6, 2! ; iii. ii ; V. 4).

(3) Its principle is not faith (Gal. iii. 12), and it cannot be added to or disannul the promise of grace, which 430 years before had declared the way of blessing for all the earth (vv. 17, i8); being given for a certain time and purpose till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made (v. i9).

(4) For those under it in the day of judgment, there can be therefore no escape (Rom. ii. 12 ; iv. ii).

(5) As to holiness, sin shall not have dominion over you, because you are not under it, but under grace (Rom. vi. 4); it is the strength of sin (i Cor. xv. 56), even to those delighting in it (Rom. V11. 22); in order to live to God and serve Him, we are delivered from and dead to it by the cross (vii. 7, 6 ; Gal. ii. 19), and dead, that we might belong to Christ, and so bring forth fruit to God (Rom. vii. 4): we cannot have the law and Christ, as a woman cannot have two husbands at the same time (vv. 1-3.) The "righteousness of the law" is thus, and only thus, fulfilled (viii. 4).

This is the Scripture-doctrine of the law, and to the whole of it the so-called Plymouth Brethren fully, and with a free heart, subscribe. It will be difficult, therefore, to prove them Antinomians. As for their "rule of life," it is most certainly true that they do not believe it to be the law, but to result from their place in Christ, a new creation. This is what the epistle to the Galatians explicitly teaches: "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature (ktisis, creation). And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy" (chap. vi. 15, 16). Thus the exhortation is, "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, walk ye in Him" (Col. ii. 6). Or, as the apostle John says, "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked" (i Jno. ii. 6). This manifestly includes the "righteousness" - all the practical, moral excellence - of the law," as the greater includes the less. Or, if Dr. Steele will say it does not, he will no doubt let us know it. But, in fact, Dr. Steele evidently does not speak the whole truth about the objects of his attacks. He only permits you to see partially, and then through coloured glasses. I am not aware that once throughout his book he speaks of the "rule" which the Plymouth Brethren acknowledge. Yet their writings abound with exhortations as to it, and he has studied them for ten years! Why this utter silence, when he can permit himself to say of the "consistent Antinomian," and they are such for him, "He thinks that the Son of God magnified the law that we might vilify it; that He made it honourable that we might make it contemptible; that He came to fulfill it that we might be discharged from fulfilling it, according to our capacity" (p. 34). On his own part, it is only simple truth to say, nothing that can vilify is omitted; nothing that could brighten the picture is allowed to be seen.

But the antinomianism is here, that we "affirm that our evangelical or new-covenant righteousness is in Christ and not in ourselves," and that we are not under the law-modified to make it practicable (here is Dr. Steele's own real antinomianism) as a rule of judgment. For the opposite view, he quotes Baxter (Aphor. Prop. 14-17,- "Though Christ performed the conditions of the law (of Paradisaical innocence), and made satisfaction for our non-performance, YET WE OURSELVES MUST PERFORM THE CONDITIONS OF THE GOSPEL. These (last) two propositions seem to me so clear, that I wonder that any able divines should deny them. Methinks they should be articles of our creed, and a point of children's catechisms. To affirm that our evangelical or new-covenant righteousness is in Christ and not in ourselves, or performed by Christ and not by ourselves, is such a monstrous piece of Antinomian doctrine as no man who knows the nature and difference of the covenants can possibly entertain." (pp. 92, 93.)

So we must give up "His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." (Jer. xxiii. 6.) We must give up that Christ "of God is made unto us wisdom, and RIGHTEOUSNESS, and sanctification, and redemption." (i Cor. i. 20.) To affirm that our righteousness is in Christ and not in ourselves is but a monstrous piece of antinomianism! Do Wesleyan Methodists indeed hold this? Let them speak out if they do not, and disown this attempt to take from the Lord of glory one of His "many crowns"! For our part, the name of Richard Baxter affixed to this bold heresy will be of no avail to make it truth, nor weigh the lightest feather-weight against the NAME we are thus called to renounce. Be it so, we are Antinomians for it, then Antinomians we will be, and one of our proudest titles it will be forever

Do we believe, then, that we have not to "perform the conditions of the gospel"? If this means that Christ repents and believes for us so that we need not, away with the utter absurdity, and saddle it where it belongs! If Dr. Steele can find a sentence or hint to this effect in any of the writers with whom he has been ten years familiar, then we give up the man to the scorn and condemnation of all sane, moral men. But neither repentance, nor faith, nor both together, are the righteousness in which a believer stands before God. Faith is but that in which we rest in Another,- the hand with which we lay hold upon Him. Repentance is the acceptance of the divine sentence upon ourselves which leaves us hopeless except in that other. Thus they are both included in true conversion, and never found separate. As conversion is a spiritual turning round, so if the back is turned on self, the face is turned to Christ, and vice versa. These are, if you will, conditions of the gospel, although sovereign grace alone brings about in any the fulfillment of them, but their fulfillment leaves us just as much Christ as righteousness,- the only righteousness in which we are accepted.

Dr. Steele's comment upon Baxter contains the full endorsement of these errors, with others of his own :- "Thus speaks this pious, practical, well-balanced dissenter against the fatal errors arising from confounding the Adamic law with the law of Christ, the first demanding of a perfect man a faultless life, the other requiring an imperfect man, inheriting damaged intellectual and moral powers, to render perfect, that is, pure love to God his heavenly Father through Christ his adorable Saviour, with the assistance of regenerating and sanctifying grace." (p. 93.)

There are here about as many mistakes as lines, and they are serious ones. Where does he find this Adamic law demanding of a perfect man a faultless life? From Genesis to Revelation there is not even a hint of it. "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." This, as I understand it, was the law to Adam. Was there a *lex non scripta*, different from this? Where have you it, Dr. Steele? But there is small danger of confounding this with the law of Christ, methinks. Theology perhaps may affirm what Dr. S. maintains; but theology has fallen on evil days: we have learned *nullius in verba magistri*, save of our "One Master," Jesus Christ. Now for this "law of Christ" cited, once more to the statute book, Dr. Steele ! We know that the apostle says to the Galatians who "desired to be under the law," but were biting and devouring one another, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." (Gal. vi. 2). And we concede fully that the will of Christ is law to the Christian. We believe fully that we are "inlawed," as it has been literally expressed, "to Christ." (1 Cor. IX. 21.)

But all this fails to show that peculiar character of law which our reviewer insists on, that immoral law (as it would surely be) that lets off easily a man of damaged moral powers, and allows him to proclaim aloud "with tongue and type and telegraph and telephone" his "genuine CHRISTIAN PERFECTION." Oh, sir, if this be all, you should, methinks, take your way more humbly into heaven; and if this is the righteousness in which you hope to stand accepted before God, allow us to thank Him that for you and us He has provided a better,- even in Him whom you, alas! refuse as that.

This is fairly and fully the very antinomism with which Dr. Hodge, not without cause we see, charges the school of perfectionists to which our author belongs. And notice, that while he contrasts his strict Adamic with his relaxed law, which we will not call the law of Christ, the only law which God gave to man, what is called such in Old Testament and New, contrasted as such with the gospel and its grace, that law on which the apostle in Christian times insists as of unbending holy requirement,- this law escapes somewhere into the darkness, evaporates, and is lost.

With Dr. Steele, thus, there is no right standard of holiness; the Christian is let off easier than the Jew while there is no true "salvation of God" at all. God puts man in a salvable state, that is all; his final salvation is of himself, with God's assistance. As for peace, upon this system none ought to have it, and, indeed, Dr. S. does not say any one ought. "The removal of the wholesome safeguard found in the fear of being morally shipwrecked and cast away, must tend to looseness of living in not a few cases. It is possible that a few might suffer no detriment from embracing such a theory, but they would be exceptions." (p. 96.)

And this is for people in whom no "sin in the flesh" remains,- in whom spirit and soul and body are entirely sanctified So that along the easy road of the relaxed law the perfect Christian requires to be driven with a scourge of this kind! And these are they - for the absurdity cannot be left incomplete in this strange and incongruous mixture of contradictory things,- in whom perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment!

In fine, we have neither peace, nor salvation, nor law, nor grace, and certainly not holiness. Such is the really Antinomian law-gospel of Dr. Steele.

CHAPTER II.

HOLINESS ROOTED IN A TRUE ATONEMENT.

THE questions that are now to occupy us I prefer to take in their real sequence rather than as presented by Dr. Steele. The doctrine of atonement is fundamental to that of holiness, as he evidently admits. We begin, then, with atonement. And here we have a right to complain that, instead of taking the "Plymouth view," as given by a "Plymouth" writer, he takes a representative from the large group of supposed "sympathizers," for all whose statements we are held responsible. How would Dr. S. treat us if we were to take our views of Wesleyan Methodism, not from Wesley or Fletcher or any acknowledged authorities, but, let us say, from Oberlin Presbyterianism instead? Yet this last is in very evident "sympathy" with it. Why should our author, after ten years' study, prefer to take his own views from Dr. Bishop rather than from Mr. Darby, the head of the school? It is plain what would suggest itself to most; but we would rather leave the question for himself to answer. Why will he not accept our own statements of doctrines with which he charges us? Surely it is not a righteous course.

Moreover, what Dr. S. charges upon us as "Plymouth" doctrine is no more than it is of all the many who hold a true satisfaction for sin,- a true substitutionary work in the cross of Christ. As elsewhere also, he often charges us with what we do not hold at all. He quite expects to have his word taken for proof, if there be no other. Yet he is not consistent. On p. 40 he says,- "Theologians who state the doctrine of the atonement with proper safeguards, are careful to limit its vicarious efficacy to the passive obedience of the Son of God, His sufferings and death. His active obedience constitutes no part of His substitutional work. The germ of antinomianism is found in the inclusion of the latter in the atonement!" Now it is notorious that the "Plymouth" doctrine is completely cleared by this, and no germ of antinomianism can be found in it! For the people in question, it is well known, hold precisely that the Lord's sufferings and death were vicarious, but not His life, and they do not include the latter in atonement!

But they are not allowed to escape so easily. On p. 121, the charge is quite a different one. Here he says,- "The basis of the doctrine of imputed holiness is that theory of the atonement which represents that Christ, Jesus, the sinless Son of God, in whom He was well pleased, was literally identified with sin so as to be 'wholly chargeable therewith, that we might be identified and wholly charged with righteousness.' This

quotation is from Dr. Geo. S. Bishop, who proceeds to say, 'The atonement which we preach is one of absolute exchange, that Christ took our place literally - that God regarded and treated Christ as the sinner, and that He regards and treats the believing sinner as Christ. From the moment we believe, God looks upon us as if we were Christ. . . . We then are saved, straight through eternity, by what the Son of God has done in our place. . . . Other considerations have nothing to do with it. It matters nothing what we have been, what we are, or what we shall be. From the moment we believe on Christ, we are forever, in God's sight, AS Christ. Of course, it is involved in this that men are saved, not by preparing first,- that is, by repenting and praying, and reading the Bible, and then trusting Christ; nor the converse of this - by trusting Christ first, and then preparing something - repentance, reformation, good works,- which God will accept; but that sinners are saved, irrespective of what they are - how they feel - what they have done - what they hope to do - by trusting on Christ only; that the instant Christ is seen and rested on, the soul's eternity, by God's free promise, and regardless of all character and works, is fixed.' (pp. 121, 122.)

Now, as I have said, Dr. Steele has not the least right to demand that I should defend all this, any more than he, as a representative of Wesleyan Methodism, could be forced to defend all that Dr. Mahan or Mr. Finney might say for Christian perfection." Nor do I at all maintain that Dr. Bishop has guarded his words from abuse, as they might easily be guarded. Dr. Steele, on the other hand, has, after his usual manner, told us nothing as to whence he has derived this passage, or we might have found the necessary guarding in close proximity to what he has quoted. Again, I say, I am not concerned to defend it. Dr. Bishop would very likely refuse for himself with perfect justice to be held as representing the views of Plymouth Brethren in the matter. For the sake of truth, however, and to meet fairly all issues, I am not going to shelter myself from Dr. Steele's attack thus, but to state freely for myself how much I hold of this, and why I hold it. I prefer, however, to let Dr. S. state his objections, as he does at length, and to examine them one by one, as he states them. We shall thus have all before us whereon to found a judgment.

"1. Repentance is not necessary to saving faith." This I have, in fact, already answered. There is no true faith without repentance, no true repentance apart from faith. God has, in His perfect wisdom, provided for this. It would indeed be impardonable to represent God as if He were careless about repentance; and I am sure that Dr. Bishop would earnestly disclaim the thought. But nevertheless, what atones for sin, expiates it, purges sin from the soul, is not at all repentance, - nay, not even faith, but the precious blood of Christ. And the essence of repentance itself is that real rejection of the filthy rags of our own righteousness, no less than of our sins. Thus the eye of the convicted sinner is to be fixed, not upon his own repentance, as if that were any thing, but wholly and altogether upon Christ. And this is what is absolutely necessary to make repentance itself real and availing. Dr. S. will thus see that I contend folly for the necessity of repentance, and I can only trust that here, as often, his own heart is sounder than his creed.

Fix a sinner's eye upon his repentance, as if that were to be a makeweight in the scale of his acceptance, you will find, if he be real, that he will never be free from the torturing doubt, "Have I sufficiently repented?" On the other hand, let him flee from all the vain refuges of his own performances to Christ as Saviour, here is the best evidence of a satisfactory repentance. Christ, not repentance, is the Saviour, not a half not a whole one. What does not wash away my sin can never save; and a blessed thing it is to be enabled to torn a poor convicted one away from self in every shape - repentance, faith, or any thing else, to the blood of Jesus.

"It is not thy tears of repentance, or prayers,

But the blood that atones for the soul

On Him, then, who shed it, thou mayest at once

Thy weight of iniquities roll."

Does not Dr. S. believe this? In spite of his words, I most believe it of him. Otherwise what becomes of that initial justification which the "seraphic Fletcher" preached, but to which he was not indeed, any more than our author, always true, "by faith without works"? Good works, as the fruit of saving faith, and proof of its genuineness, have no place in this scheme of salvation, and are distinctly repudiated; and well they may be, since by the first act of faith, as a bare intellectual, impenitent apprehension that God punished His Son for our past, present, and future sins, 'the soul's eternal salvation, regardless of character and conduct, is FIXED.' 'What we shall be matters nothing, since we have a through ticket for heaven. St. James is an impertinence in this scheme of salvation, and his epistle may well be called 'straw!'"

Here is, indeed, the most serious objection to Mr. Bishop's language, while I am sure he would refuse the interpretation which I must say is here quite naturally put upon it. But the truth is, that He who fixes the salvation of the soul, fixes in this way no less its moral condition also: "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." (Eph. ii.) Blessed it is to know that a poor lost sinner coming to a living Saviour finds a salvation secured for him which is internal as well as external, from the power of sin as well as from guilt and from wrath. Will Dr. Steele say this is unworthy of Him? or that it is impossible to Him? And if it be possible, is it not most worthy? would he not be delighted to find it true? Dr. S. can put his hand upon no writings of "Plymouth Brethren," that I am aware of, that consider the epistle of James as a "strawy" epistle, or depreciate good works as the fruit and test of saving faith. They are surely both, but that does not for a moment make the works to be saving. Nor does it imply that we are to rest upon the works. "Lord, when saw we Thee a hungered and fed Thee?" is a distinct repudiation of good works in this respect on the part of the righteous, exceedingly significant for Dr. Steele, since we know he accepts the "sheep" here as Christians in the day of judgment. Peace is through the work and word of Christ, and will never be found in any other way; while, if "sin shall not have dominion over you, because ye are not under the law, but under grace," we are right to press this as fully against laxity on the one side as on legality on the other.

Again, we do not account that saving faith is "a bare, intellectual, impenitent (!) apprehension" at all. And I boldly challenge Dr. S. to prove we do, not by fragmentary quotations from nameless writers, but by honest proof from accepted leaders among us. Yet again and again he asserts something similar to this. We all believe that a fruitless faith is no faith, and the best proof that Dr. S. has NOT found faith to be defined as a mere intellectual assent in our writings is that he has not produced it. The writings are easily to be found. They are in honest black and white, and know not how to prevaricate or deal falsely in the matter. The charge on Dr. Steele's part is a rash and unworthy charge, and nothing else.

We go on to his third objection:-

3. That God regarded and treated Christ as a sinner, in other words, that He actually punished His Son because He was guilty of our sins." This language, again, I repudiate with all my heart. God did not "regard" His Son as a sinner. He regarded and treated Him as the Substitute for sinners. Nor was Christ "guilty of our sins," or punished because "guilty" of them. "Guilt" - at least in the sense in which we ordinarily use the word, - is not transferable, but penalty may be. "The chastisement of our sins was upon Him," says the prophet; "God hath laid upon Him the iniquity of us all." We alone were the guilty ones; the punishment was of our sins, but it was punishment. What avails it to quote Martin Luther against us, or an

ex-president of the Y.M.C.A.? Dr. Steele's title-page says, "The Theology of the Plymouth Brethren Examined and Refuted." Luther, we had thought, at least, dated some centuries before. Some Calvinistic text-books use very much the language Dr. S. condemns. With what fairness could this be called the theology of Plymouth Brethren if even some of these may have used it? And this their accuser never undertakes to prove!

But his own theology is much more erroneous :- "We indignantly repudiate the monstrous idea that Jesus on the cross was a sinner overwhelmed with the bolts of the of Father's personal wrath. What we do affirm is that His suffering and death were in no sense a punishment, but a substitute for punishment, answering the same end, the conservation of God's moral government and the vindication of His holy character while He pardons penitent believers." (p. 124.)

This is what is called the "governmental theory" of atonement. It is indeed a theory, nothing else ; and a theory against which Scripture is decisive. The one text which Dr. Steele cites and seeks to explain- 2 Cor. v. 21: "He was made sin for us who knew no sin,"- is not only not the one argument, but not even the most conclusive one.

Yet, even here, if he would look a little below the surface, he might see that, granting the word "sin" to stand in this place for "sin-offering" (which the analogy of the Hebrew may be held to justify), there must yet be a reason for so significant a fact as that the same word stands for both these very different things. Why should this be, but because that which is made sin becomes thus the sin-offering.

And if we look at the type in the Old Testament, what means this, that in the highest grade of it we see the beast so offered carried without the camp and burnt upon the ground without an altar? It is the thing, as the apostle in Heb. xiii. remarks, that makes the blood of the victim able to penetrate into the sanctuary,- that is, really to sanctify the offerer. "Without the camp" was the place outside of all that was owned of God ; and without an altar, shows that that which sanctifieth the gift is absent; the victim is in the awful place of sin upon which a pure God cannot look. This, at the cross, the darkness shows,- the withdrawal of light, and "God is light ;" while the Lord's voice out of it interprets for us,- " My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me ?"

Beside, however the word in 2 Cor. v. 21 may by itself be capable of the rendering "a sin-offering," yet if we look but a little further we shall see clearly why the Revisers did not so put it here. It is that "sin "is contrasted with "righteousness," as well as connected with the same word, "sin," following: "He was made sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made God's righteousness in Him."

Thus Dr. Steele has by no means justified the proposed rendering, nor if he had, has he got rid of the idea that is plainly to be found in the passage before us. "Common sense exegesis" is here at fault, as it often is, for what it means often is but a superficial, off-hand view, without the need of true spirituality or careful study of the Word ; and such, I grieve to say, is often the character of Dr. Steele's interpretations. But apart from this passage, what does Dr. Steele think of the passage in the prophecy already adduced,- "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him "? or of this: "The Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquity of us all "? Or of this from Gal. iii. io: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us "? Or this from Peter (1 Pet. ii. 24): "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree "? Was not the curse on sin the punishment of sin? And this special curse,- so unaccountable in itself - that "he that hangeth upon a tree is accursed of God ": how can we view it, save as typically designed to mark out this one "death of the cross," which for those who realized the glory of the Sufferer would seem to be

impossible to bear this character?

But Dr. Steele openly rejects the teaching of Scripture. His fourth objection is,-

4. We have insuperable philosophical and ethical difficulties in the way of receiving the statement that the guilt of the race was transferred to Christ. Character is personal, and cannot be transferred. Sin is not an entity, a substance which can be separated from the sinner and transferred to another and be made an attribute of his character by such a transfer. Sin is the act or state of a sinner, as thought is the act or state of a thinker. Neither can have an essential existence separate from their personal subject, any more than any attribute can exist separate from its substance." (p. 126.)

Much of this is mere misconception. The guilt of the race was not transferred to Christ. Could it have been, all men would be necessarily saved. Nor was guilt transferred, but penalty, as I have before said. Sins were laid upon Him, borne by Him,- transferred to Him therefore: so the Word (and we have quoted it) directly says. But they were laid upon, borne by Him, as a burden,- i.e., in their penalty. Sin was not made an "attribute of His character ;" who ever supposed it but Dr. Steele?

Thus his fifth objection we may for the most part pass over as already answered, and we shall leave Dr. Bishop to defend himself as to what is replied to him. Our author contends, however, that "while it is true that Jesus is our substitute, He is our substitute truly and strictly only in suffering, not in punishment. Sin cannot be punished and pardoned also. This would be a moral contradiction. . . . Sin was not punished on the cross. Calvary was the scene of wondrous mercy and love, not of wrath and penalty." (pp. 128, 129.) Yet Scripture says, none the less, "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him." Delitzsch says of the word emphasized, "We have rendered 'musar' 'punishment,' and there was no other word in the language for this idea. . . . David, when he prayed that God might not punish him in His anger and hot displeasure (Ps. vi. 2), could not find a more suitable expression for punishment, regarded as the execution of judgment." (Isaiah, vol. ii., p. 318.) Think of any one saying of the dread cross of our Redeemer, "Calvary was not the scene of wrath and penalty"!

But "sin cannot be punished and pardoned also: this would be a moral contradiction." Not in the least! If the person who sinned were punished, this would be : but he to whom the due of sin is remitted is pardoned, though the due of his sin has been paid. For He who paid is He who remits.

If it were otherwise, and the due were not paid, there might be pardon, there could not be justification. Justification is only possible in one of two ways: either by the proving of innocence, which on our part is impossible, or by the proof that the punishment of sin has been borne. This is our case: we are "justified through Christ's blood." (Rom. v. 9.) Justification and pardon are in the same way opposed to one another, as are punishment and pardon: contrasted, indeed, in thought, but not contradictory in fact, in God's wonderful plan of salvation. All this, on Dr. Steele's part, is ignorance of plain Scripture. His closing sentence we shall have to look at further on. I only say that the "imputed holiness" with which he there charges us, we repudiate as much as he does.

One last objection remains

6. A limited atonement is the inevitable outcome of the doctrine that sin was punished on the cross. Whose sin?

If it be answered, That of the whole human race, then universalism emerges, for God cannot in justice punish sin twice. It must be, then, that the sins of the elect only were punished. Hence, at the bottom, this system rests on the tenet of a particular, in distinction from a universal, atonement." (p. 130.)

And the writer goes on to inveigh against the "Jesuitical cunning" of those he is attacking in not confessing their Calvinistic tendencies, closing with a report of a conversation with Mr. Darby, in which he answers a question upon election, in the frankest and most outspoken way possible!

But the truth is, the Plymouth Brethren in general do not believe in "limited atonement" in the sense in which this is usually understood. They accept Christ's being a propitiation for the whole world, in the ordinary acceptance of "world;" and in ten years of study our author should have discovered this. Nay, in another place he does give us some inkling of the truth. "They make a distinction," he says, "between the death of Christ for all, and the blood of Christ shed only for those who are through faith sprinkled and cleansed thereby. By this means God saves believers, and presents an 'aspect of mercy' toward all mankind." (p. 59.)

Dr. S. will allow me to put this in my own way, without meaning to pledge all my brethren to acceptance of it. I do not believe in what he calls "the old and exploded commercial theory - so much suffering by Christ equals so much suffering by the sinners saved by Christ." (p. 59.) I believe that Christ paid the penalty of sin, not an "equivalent" penalty merely, as even those who believe in a true "satisfaction" are mostly content to say. No, it was the PENALTY ITSELF upon men - death and judgment, the full wrath of God. True, He could not be holden of it. The Holy One of God could not remain under that which for the glory of God He had taken. He was "heard for His piety," "raised from the dead by the glory of the Father." But though necessarily and in righteousness delivered from it, He went into it, bore sin in its dread penalty, vindicated God's holiness as against it by submitting to its real due, glorified Him fully so.

The value of this obedience unto death is infinite. It is not a quantum of suffering - so much for so much sin; but God glorifies in a true Substitute drinking actually the sinner's cup; not Himself one, but a substitute.

For whom then a substitute? For the world as such? No: that would be universalism. For the elect as such, a definite number of people marked by this election? Again, no: that would be a strictly limited atonement, which would give no basis for a universal offer of salvation, and would not allow of Christ a "propitiation for the sins of the whole world."

These are the two alternatives of Dr. Steele: is there no other possible? There is, and it completely answers all demands. It is here: "Upon the seed of Abraham He taketh hold. Wherefore it behoved Him in all things to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high-priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people." (Heb. ii. i6, ii.)

It is for His people, for the seed of Abraham, for believers, the atonement is made, - a satisfaction available for all the world upon condition of faith; actually such for all believers. It is an atonement unlimited in value and availability for all men; limited only by the unbelief that slights or rejects it. This must be to Arminians at least a very intelligible thought. It answers, as I have said, all demands, and removes all difficulties.

Thus only when one believes does he cross from the place of condemnation into that of acceptance with God, and find sin really removed. "My faith" is NOT "a waking up to the fact that I have always been saved" (p. 35), as Dr. S. represents it for me, but a faith by means of which I am actually justified; although

that which is the ground of justification is the blood of Christ simply and solely. And it was not God's laying the sins of believers upon Him that did or could remove mine UNTIL I was a believer. I grant this is opposed to the "commercial view" of atonement - so much suffering for so much sin, which Dr. Steele would insist on my defending. This would require just a definite number of foreseen and exactly appreciated sins to be laid on Christ, - mine, and no other's - in order to my salvation; and then it might be justly argued, I was justified before I was born. Scripture refuses this, and I refuse it. Yet as a believer I can say that my sins were really laid upon Him, and that He put them away from me by the sacrifice of Himself.

Upon a subject so central and fundamental as atonement I desire to be very plain, and I trust Dr. S. will find these statements free from the Jesuitical cunning which he so freely imputes. Is this the love that thinketh no evil? Is it not unworthy of himself?

CHAPTER III.

JUSTIFICATION AND ACCEPTANCE IN CHRIST.

WE are now to look at the question of justification, and to see what is the righteousness in which the believer stands before God from the moment of his being such. Here again it will be found how far from accurate are Dr. Steele's representations of the views he has been so long (vainly, it would seem) studying. Thus he says, - "The idea of justification is not that it is a present act taking place in the mind of God in favour of the penitent believer, but it is a past, completed, wholesale transaction on Calvary ages ago." (p. 60.)

This, understood in the way I have already stated it, would not be so bad; but the trouble is that Dr. S. applies it evidently in such a way as to make it clash with present justification by faith, as if we did not hold the latter. I confess the connection between the two things has not always been clearly put or conceived by writers among us. But the fact is, that, instead of the two things being contradictory, the one naturally and necessarily proceeds from the other.

We may put it as a syllogism, thus:- The blood shed on Calvary was the justification of every true believer
A man becomes today a true believer; He is now, therefore (and not before), justified through faith.

And this shows, as plainly as possible, the different sense in which faith justifies and the blood of Christ justifies. My justification by faith is only my entrance by faith into the sphere in which justification by blood applies to me. It is not as if my faith were a meritorious somewhat added to the work of atonement. The work remains in its own peerless transcendancy, while faith is the way I come into the provision made for me, - made for all the world as well as for me. Election does not touch the fullness of the provision. It secures that (spite of man's rejection of it naturally), there shall be fruit of Christ's work.

As believers, then, we are justified by the blood of Christ, - by what was done more than eighteen centuries ago on Calvary. "Himself bare our sins in His own body on the tree." Did He not? Was not the bearing of them accomplished then?

Moreover, as "He was delivered for our offences," so "He was raised for our justification." (Rom. iv. 25.) His resurrection is the public act of God on our behalf: the testimony that the burden is gone, the sin removed, the debt cancelled. Justification for believers is not an act merely "in the mind of God," but a sentence openly given on our behalf. "If Christ be not risen, - ye are yet in your sins." (i Cor. xv. 17.)

Faith, then, has the work of Christ and the Word of God to rest upon; and this it needs to be faith. Frames and feelings apart from this are absolutely untrustworthy. The work of the Spirit is, to take of the things that are Christ's and show them to us. (Jno. xvi. 14). Apart from this, what we may regard as an "impression from the Holy Ghost" (p. 105) may be only a delusion. It is not, as Dr. Steele puts it, that feelings are to be scouted, but to be tested and certified. It is certain that Scripture says that we are justified by faith, never by feelings. "To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." (Rom. iv. 5.) This is the Scripture method of assurance. Joy and peace come in believing (Rom. XV. 13), and it remains for Dr. S. to prove that they come rightly in any other way. From Scripture he has not attempted to do so, and I believe he will hardly attempt it. It will be time enough, at any rate, then to listen.

This justification by the blood of a substitute, how far does it go? Is it from sins past, present, and to come? (p. 34.) Is it, as some would define it, simply the pardon of past sins?

The latter is founded upon a wrong view of Rom. iii. 25, 26 ; where the "I say" of the translators, not found in the original, confounds two distinct and contrasted things ; " the passing over of the sins done aforetime" (R. V.)- of believers up to the cross;- and, now that God's righteousness is fully shown forth in it, the justification of him that believeth in Jesus.

On the other hand, it is freely admitted that Scripture never speaks of a justification from future sins; and that for very obvious reasons. It does not speak as if there were to be future sins for a believer,- certainly not as if they were tolerated or of little account. It would be the language of license, not of divine holiness, and I refuse and condemn it altogether.

But yet Scripture does not leave the future doubtful, or the standing of the believer uncertain for a moment. First, justification by the blood of One standing in our place before God,- our Substitute,- means His death counted to be our death. We have thus died with Him: and though we live, it is in Him we live. The force of these expressions we shall have shortly to examine, but it will be seen at once how they carry out and complete the thought of justification by death meaning Christ's death our death.

If, then, in God's sight in the death of Christ we died, let us consider that death is the limit of man's natural responsibility. In the day of judgment itself men are only judged for the "deeds done in the body." There is no such thought, save in theology sometimes, of any sins in the disembodied state, or in hell, to be accounted for. Thus, if we have died, we have passed beyond the limit of accountability as sinners: our responsibility as saints is another matter. Justification by the blood of Christ is thus complete and eternal. No wonder, then, that the apostle declares, "Much more, then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved through His life." (Rom. v. 9, 10.)

Here the completeness of the justification in the present settles triumphantly the question of the future, and the life of the Lord in heaven,- " Because I live, ye shall live also" (Jno. xiv. 19),- is the abundant guarantee of the continuance of the reconciliation by His death. In Him we live, and this is eternal life.

Dr. Steele mixes up this question of standing with another,- that of "imputed holiness." The last, I refuse most fully and earnestly. It is nonsense, and worse; only Dr. S. must prove that Plymouth Brethren hold it. Of this at another time ; but standing and acceptance are very different from it, and Dr. S. has apparently confounded them together. He says, "The phrase "in Christ" is perpetually quoted as a proof-text to sustain the doctrine of imputed holiness an attribute of Jesus Christ regarded by God as belonging to

Christians, even when they are unholy in character and wicked in conduct. The theory is, that Jesus Christ is standing today in the presence of the Father as a specimen and representative of glorified humanity, and that faith in Him so intimately unites us with Him, that all His personal excellencies become ours in such a sense as to excuse us if we lack them"! (p. 151.)

This abominable doctrine, if it be true that Plymouth Brethren hold it, should have been proved against them by decisive quotations, and fastened as a mill-stone round their neck to sink them forever with Great Babylon itself under the reprobation of all decent persons. Dr. S. need not then have written a book of 266 pages to expose their views. Yet, strange to say, this most necessary thing he has neglected to do. Mr. McDonald has, indeed, tried to remedy the deficiency, and given us an extract, from whom, he knows best himself. (p. 19.) I simply desire him to give the name, and let us know where he belongs. Meanwhile, those who make these charges without proof expose themselves to reprobation only. No man has a right to fling such charges broadcast without fullest evidence of where they belong.

I speak of what I know when I say that imputed holiness is not a doctrine of Plymouth Brethren. Holiness is state, not standing, and Dr. S. is witness that they keep these separate. They never say that people may be "in Christ" either without being new creatures, or God's children without God's image, or born of the Spirit without the fruit of the Spirit. That "there is no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus" they quote for what it says, not to prove any thing of this sort. And let me tell Dr. Steele, if, alas! he does not know it, that if God's eye could be turned from Christ for us, to accept or reject us for what He saw in us, not one of all of us could stand in His holy presence for a moment. Take the standard - that we walk as Christ walked, and let him say, if at his best (not worst) he dare face the eye of God in this manner.

"In Christ" is not "used to prove an actual incorporation into His person," - at least by those intelligent as to it. Nor is "an actual incorporation into His person" an intelligent expression. We are by the Spirit baptized into His body, - not His actual glorified person, but His mystical body, as we are accustomed to say. This is union, which "in Christ" does not express, but identification. Dr. S. is therefore in a wrong contention, while it is plain the phrase means for him as little as possible. It meant much for him who said "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," however; it involved the whole fact of justification. But think of one who can quickly paraphrase, "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption," thus he is quoting Meyer: "But truly it is God's work that ye are Christians, and so partakers of the greatest divine blessings, that none of you should in any way boast himself save only in God"! That Christ is made these things to those "in Him," drops thus out of the account.

If Dr. Steele had looked a little further into Romans, he might have found that the expression here points out Christ as our spiritual head, as "in Adam" speaks of our natural one. By life and birth we come to be in Adam; by spiritual life and new birth we come to be in Christ. As in Adam we inherit corruption and condemnation only; in Christ we come into possession of a new nature and a righteous standing, - "justification of life." (Chap. v. r8.)

The expression, then, is a simple one, and full of blessing for us. Its meaning can never be decided by Scripture handled in the fragmentary way in which our author handles it. God's Word may thus mean almost any thing or nothing, according to our taste. It does not mould us, but our thoughts mould it. Dr. Steele's treatment of it is as little reverent as may be.

Take a text Dr. S. is venturous enough to quote ; it may surely stand for a scriptural definition; "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." (2 Cor. v.) Here, first, any one in Christ is a new creature : by a new birth he belongs to that creation which replaces the old one. But then also "old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Will Dr. S. say this is true of every one born again as such ? In Christ, it is true of him indeed, for in Christ - identified with Him,- his standing is perfect, absolutely so. In Christ,- represented by Him,- God's holy eye itself can find nothing but perfection.

CHAPTER IV.

IS THERE SUCH A THING AS BEING BORN AGAIN?

We are now arrived at the question of holiness,- a question which divides, however, into a number of others. Before we can consider the motives to it which the Word of God supplies,- for we are all agreed that it must be a free and voluntary disposition of heart acted on by these,- we must consider who and what the man is to whom they are addressed. What is it to be a child of God? and who is a child of God?

Dr. Steele gives us an answer from his favourite Mr. Fletcher, which, for its evaporation into nothing of blessed Christian truth, is scarcely to be exceeded by any thing we have met in the whole range of theology. It is a special invention to meet a special difficulty with the Arminian creed, which converts and reconverts any number of times that may be needed to save its free-will theory from shipwreck. What do you think, child of God, if such I am addressing,- what do you think that this precious term implies? Relationship? Any real affinity, such as, in nature, your being your father's child suggests? Well, then, you are mistaken : it is just an orientalism, a figure of speech Had you learnt Hebrew in your youth, you would have been better instructed.

"But I thought I was born again? People are not born again to be children of the devil, are they?"

Ah, you are uninstructed! "Born again !" Why, you should remember what a mistake "honest Nicodemus" made about it. Are you carnal enough to think of any thing real in it? It is all the oriental mode of speech, dear friend: a figure, just a figure!

"They ask, 'Can a man be a child of God to-day and a child of the devil to-morrow?' . . . The question would be easily answered, if, setting aside the oriental mode of speech, they simply asked, 'May one who has 'ceased to do evil' and learned to do well to-day, cease to do well and learn to do evil to-morrow?' . . . If the dying thief, the Philippian jailer, and multitudes of Jews in one day went over from the sons of folly to the sons of wisdom, where is the absurdity of saying, they could measure the same way back again in one day, and draw back in the horrid womb of sin as early as Satan drew back into rebellion," etc., etc., etc.? (p. 135.)

Yes, why not even ten times a day? It is all very easy to the imagination, if - let our author still pardon the doubt;- if new birth be only a figure of speech, and man is converted by his own will simply, or the Holy Ghost's work be just like a friend's words in the ear, and nothing more!

So it must be for Dr. Steele. He simply makes nothing of it. "Common sense exegesis" does not too narrowly scan texts, nor are God's ways so unlike human ways, it seems, for this to be any great objection!

But we have Dr. Steele's exposition, with the help of some of his favored exegetes, of the doctrine of new birth as found in the crucial passage (Jno. iii.):-. "Two natures coexisting in the believer, in his best possible earthly state, is proved by Jno. iii. 6, which is amended to read thus: 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and remains flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.' This is quoted to prove that the single nature is untouched in the new birth, while an entirely new nature, or rather new creature, is created and associated therewith." (p. 114.)

His own exposition is found in his objections

1. That John uses the term 'flesh' in the Pauline sense, which, as Meyer says, is strange to him, while Cremer, in his 'Biblico-Theological Lexicon,' quotes this passage as an instance of John's use of *sarx*, 'flesh,' to signify merely that which 'mediates and brings about man's connection with nature.' He finds six shades of meaning to this important word, the last only embracing the idea of sin. He excludes from this meaning all passages in the four gospels in which the word occurs."

Bold it may seem to take up again what Cremer and Meyer have thus settled for us. No need to give their reasons, even ! Yet, spite of the temerity of the undertaking, we are going to look at the passage for ourselves. Let us, however, now go on with the objections:

2. It is assumed that such writers as Weiss and Julius Muller are in error when they say that the meaning of Jesus is, 'the corporeal birth only produces the corporeal sensual part.'" (p. 115.)

Dr. S. and his commentators seem to forget one thing essential to all exposition of a text,- the context. The question raised here is, Why cannot a man enter the kingdom of God without being born again? It is no answer to say, "The corporeal birth only produces the corporeal sensual part." What, in fact, do these words mean? That the human spirit is not the product of natural generation? That has nothing to do with the matter; for then it would mean that the work of the Spirit was needed to produce the higher part, and the Lord would be talking throughout of natural birth, not of being born again.

It is plain that man as he is cannot go into the kingdom of God; he may have spirit and soul and body, as every natural man has, yet he must be born again. 'That which is born of the flesh must be, then, the whole man; and the whole natural man-spirit and soul and body - is only 'flesh.' This is not, therefore, "what mediates and brings about man's connection with nature," as Cremer says ; it is the proof that he is a fallen being. Spirit and soul and body are all only characterized by their lowest part; and that is, the fallen, the sinful state: men must be born again. Let us hear the next objection.

3. There is a confounding of birth with creation out of nothing. 'For, as generation,' says Dr. Whedon, 'is a modification of substance or being, imparting to it a new principle of life, conforming it, as living being, to the likeness of the generator, so regeneration is a modification of the human spirit by the Holy Spirit, conforming the temper of the human to the holy.'"

But Scripture calls new birth a creation, Dr. Steele. "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." (Eph. ii. 10.) A natural birth must not be confounded with a supernatural. A supernatural birth means for man human nature raised to a higher plane, even to the likeness of the Generator, as Dr. Whedon well says; thus "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

This is, as Dr. Steele quite truly says, not the creation of a new man put into the believer, but the impartation of life to one before dead in trespasses and sins. I grant to him that this language about the

new man is a mistake often made, but which many of the Plymouth Brethren have a good while since protested against. A new life and a new man are different thoughts. But a new life means a new nature. In this way, however, it would be plainly wrong to speak of a change taking place in the old nature. It might give place to it: how far it does so we must prove, not assert; and to say that "soul, body, and spirit" are "born again by the endowment of spiritual life" (pp. i i6,) is to go beyond Scripture. "If Chr

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