

# "The Birthday of Exclusivism."

1830 to 1845 from a "Bethesda" point of view.

It is now nearly sixty years ago since a few believers, coming together to read the Word of God, saw that it was their privilege as disciples of Christ to break bread in remembrance of Him. The principles in connection with worship and ministry which have already been laid before you in those held among ourselves, were very much the result of constant prayerful study of the Word in those days. The first meetings of these believers were held in Dublin; but subsequently Plymouth became the spot where the leading brethren were found, and whence most of their earlier publications were sent forth. But Mr Müller and Mr Craik, at Teignmouth, had commenced the weekly breaking of bread connected with an open ministry, more than three months before anything of the kind was known in Plymouth, and while Mr Darby, the subsequent leader of the Exclusives, was preaching in the pulpits of the Church of England. Mr Darby was born at Westminster, and received his early education in the celebrated school there; but his ancestral home was Leap Castle, Roscrea, Ireland; and he studied for the Bar in Dublin University. He entered the ministry of the Established Church on his conversion, and was ordained both deacon and priest. For seven years he continued searching the Scriptures, and preaching Christ from Cabin to Cabin among the Wicklow mountains, to the poorest of the poor. He early joined the little company of "Brethren" who first met in Dublin. My father, Mr A. N. Groves, afterwards missionary in Persia and India, and Mr Bellett, who have long since fallen asleep, were of the original number, also Dr Cronin who has lately passed away. Mr Darby left the surplice and the prayer-book behind him, but he always adhered to Infant Baptism; nor could he altogether divest himself of his clerical prestige. He possessed a personal influence, of which no one can form an idea who has never been personally acquainted with him. I mean the power of attracting those who saw and heard him, and of carrying their judgment in spite of themselves: in this he had, perhaps, no rival. His writings are often obscure, and we need his interpreter, Mr Kelly, to explain them to us; but the testimony of those who knew him intimately in former years, is that his power of imparting his own thoughts to others in conversation, was wonderful. Just as a skilful musician can delight us with a few notes by the way he strikes the chords, and a real artist brings before us exactly what he wants us to see, by a few strokes of his pencil, so Mr Darby reached many and did much, enforcing the stamps of his teaching in words and looks not easily forgotten. Unembarrassed by any family ties or other circumstances, possessing a good constitution, ample means, and untiring energy, he turned these gifts to the best account. Leaving Ireland he travelled incessantly over England. Wherever a few believers were gathered as "Brethren", he remained a while, and instructed them in the things of God, and was also used in very many cases of conversion. When

† It has been explained before that Mr Darby, after leaving Anglicanism, used his liberty in preaching for years if asked. This has furnished occasion for misunderstanding.

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he had somewhat established the meetings, he moved on to a fresh sphere. After labouring for a time in England he went over to France, and thence to Germany. His labours were greatly blessed in both countries, and many assemblies were formed. Hence it will not be difficult to understand that at the end of ten or fifteen years from the commencement of his ministry, he was personally known to and loved by a far larger number of believers than was any other of the ministering brethren. In the meantime the work was rapidly progressing in England - more especially at Plymouth where nearly a thousand persons were at one time in fellowship. At this meeting the most prominent & gifted man was Mr. B. W. Newton. He had taken his degree at College with a view to ordination, but had abandoned the idea when he saw the Holy Spirit to be the only one who can call and qualify for the work of the ministry. As a teacher and expounder of the Word he was greatly valued, and notes of his discourses were habitually made and circulated by several in the meeting. About the year 1845, Mr. Darby was greatly dissatisfied on hearing accounts of the influence Mr. Newton had gained in Plymouth, and suddenly returning there, took up a hostile position against him. Mr. G. V. Wigram from London, came to aid him in his purpose of breaking up the assembly. "Clericalism" was the principal charge brought against Mr. Newton at that time, but differing prophetic views had much to do with the conflict. On the last Sunday of that year Mr. Darby spread a fresh table in Plymouth - not on the ground of any heresy or immorality, but on account of the incompatibility of their views. This, then, may be reckoned as the birthday of Exclusivism. Co. L. Groves.

### "Bethesda Family Matters"

\* This "incompatibility of views" was in no sense the ground; but the setting aside of the Holy Spirit's action by clericalism; positive moral evil alleged; & the destruction of the meeting wherein disciplinary cases were looked into.