

A Faithful Echo

by

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Dear brother,

Your letter followed me to Ireland where I have been for the last 3 weeks only returning home on the 9th. I am sorry, tho' not surprised, to hear how near the Strange independency¹ has come to you and you have probably seen another circular issued from Acton in reply to that from T. W. The leaven of Devonshire House² confederacy has got such a footing amongst us through Bethesda³ sympathizers in our midst who are encouraged by our weak & broken condition to

1. {Charles Strange was a brother at Tunbridge Wells (T.W.), England. He was silenced locally in 1903. When he discovered that he had many sympathizers (who judged independently of T.W. that C. Strange did not merit such censure), he did not bow to that action. T. W. refused fellowship with him and his supporters in 1909, the supporters rejecting T. W. and taking independent ground at that time.}

2. {Devonshire House, London, was the location in 1906-7 of a series of meetings between some so-called Open Brethren and some so-called Exclusive Brethren. The result was that many exclusives gave up the principle of bowing to assembly decisions made by a local assembly and embraced the principle of each assembly judging matters independently of each other.}

3. {Bethesda Chapel, Bristol, England, was the place where the independency (or autonomy) of each assembly to judge persons coming from elsewhere was first acted upon in the 1840s. Open Brethrenism started here.}

think that the time has again come for forcing Bethesda independency upon our acceptance, just as the act of Dr. Cronin did in spreading a schismatic table at Ryde (1879) in the face of all his brethren, and which through the Lord's mercy at that time was overruled by leading Park St. judgment to refuse as schism the sympathizers with Dr. Cronin and his party.⁴

I fear we have not laid to heart as became us, what betrayed us into that snare nor have we accepted with becoming thankfulness and exercise the deliverance then wrought for us by the Lord, and so the adversary is encouraged again to assail that truth which the Lord has committed to a few of His feeblest ones to keep in His Name and which the enemy so hates, vexed as he is that this feeble despised few have through God's grace, still a word to say for the truth of God, and surely our desire is that we may have grace to give a more certain sound as those who receive into our hearts and would echo in our lives the meaning of those two welcome "nevertheless" in 2 Tim. 1:12 and 2 Tim. 2:19.

. . . the Adversary . . . is . . . seeking to stay the execution of Assembly discipline altogether.

Tho' the forms of attack vary and many of Satan's dupes little know what his purpose is, yet the anointed eye has little difficulty in discerning that any feeble witness of the Lord's purposes concerning

4. {When two families rejected an assembly decision (related to the Ryde matter of 1879) and left the assembly at Lee, the assembly at Blackheath (W. Kelly's home) judged independently of the assembly at Lee to receive them.}

His body the Assembly for time & eternity is the object of attack and all the tactics & wiles of the enemy to this end have been fully forecast for our warning & sustainment and not only so but the *manifold* grace which is able to make us overcomers in His Name & for His glory unites & encourages our confidence. Because of the failure *real* or *imagined* that has been found in the exercise of that discipline which the Lord has entrusted to the two or three gathered in His Name, the adversary of the truth is at this very time busily engaged in seeking to stay the exercise of Assembly discipline altogether, & so make it easier for leaven to work amongst us at its leisure. The Lord has ever given to local assemblies gathered in His Name, however small, the ability & power & authority to discern & deal with, in their midst, every form of evil, moral or doctrinal, & those small companies of two or three gathered to His Name everywhere & endeavoring to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the bond are so connected by the Spirit that what affects one, affects all, as they each & all seek to maintain the holiness that becomes His Name among them.

The Lord has ever given to local assemblies . . . authority to . . . deal with . . . every form of evil

. . . It is very clear from Scripture that the Lord gives to each company the responsibility of maintaining holiness & that He looks to the local company to deal with any evil *where it occurs*, & all others walking in the truth accept & echo the action of the company responsible, without enquiry into the details themselves, knowing that the Lord opens out before the responsible company the true details & bearing of the failure to be dealt with, as he does not

to others & hence it is that when so many take upon themselves the self appointed office of "Inspector of assembly judgments," they are permitted to be deceived in the true circumstances & almost always invariably misinformed. Every form of difficulty which has worried & divided for many years past has its spring & support in the very same form of independency which gave rise to the "Letter of the Ten" which was the origin of the Bethesda division & little as they know it, the true ground of "Open Brethren". I was with open brethren myself & left them 40 years [ago] without one word of unkindness between & ever since, I never have any difficulty with them -- but there is not one in ten amongst them who know why we are separate & very often lately, when in answer to their request, I have stated the cause of our separation, they have almost invariably told me that they never heard it before.

. . . all others walking in the truth accept & echo the action of the company responsible . . .

It is an entire denial of the Unity of the Spirit to say that where a brother turns his back on the Lord's Table where he lives -- he can be accepted by those who own as the Lord's Table that upon which he turns his back; this is distinctive Bethesda ground, if possible less guilty on their part, because they profess to openly & honestly confess that they all act on this principle -- We have separated from them because we believe it to be contrary to the truth of God.

A man like Strange counting on our weak & broken state & knowing well independent sympathy which alas he can count on, goes about threatening

simple saints with division if he is not accepted.

One's comfort is that tho' we have so failed & by our half-heartedness opened the door to such angels of light, to deceive with good words & fair speeches -- yet the Lord is graciously in His faithfulness showing Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is perfect towards Him. We need to know better the power daily of Eph. 6:10-18.

“Inspectors of Assembly Judgments” . . . are . . . almost always invariably misinformed.

This spirit of independency has been forced upon us lately in a very daring way. In Dublin, Dr. E- the principle brother there, having exerted unblushingly Bethesda leaven for some years in our meeting there, openly broke bread with a Bethesda meeting there, after having stood up in our prayer meeting & abused saints with us generally in terms which few Christians can approve, and yet *after* thus attacking the few gathered in His Name in Dublin & for *three weeks breaking bread with loose brethren* -- is wired for by Dr. B- to be present at the late meetings of which you have heard & *was present there*, as was also another loose brother, Mr. J- L-, who is equally opposed to the truth which the Lord has in His mercy & grace still preserved to a few very feeble unworthy ones.

He has come in in much faithful grace in Dublin & instead of Dr. E- carrying away the whole as he had hoped, they have been awakened & exercised to see with Him, to where they had through carelessness of soul suffered themselves to be drawn away from the truth & I cannot but feel that His glory will be the fruit of it. Dr. E- is *distinctly*

outside. I spent 3 weeks in Ireland & had a very encouraging time, Dublin, Belfast, Portadown, and Fermanagh, proving for one's own comfort that the “word is not bound” & that we are not “straitened in Him”.

Not a feature of the varied forms of leaven, which one meets today in the Assembly of God, but has been forecast & provided for: 2 Tim. 3:16 & 17 is if possible more precious & all sufficient day by day. Psalm 73 is wholesome & a blessed word today especially verse 17.

The enemy . . . would make us believe that all is a matter of opinion . . .

The enemy is seeking to make capital out of the confusion in which the will of the flesh has involved the state of the House of God & would make us believe that all is a matter of opinion as to what is the path of the saint today & that I am to respect *your opinion, & you mine*, and thus agreeing to differ-- form the most unholy confederacy that this poor world has ever witnessed, Isaiah 8:13.

I met our dear brother W- of G- yesterday who is, like many others, truly grieved & indignant, Jer. 15:17, at the voice of these meetings at Dr. B-'s at which I understand Strange was present & took part. Those who desire to be independent avail themselves of the form of discipline exercised at T. Wells & say he was not put out. But while this may give some an excuse for receiving him to break bread, it can be no excuse for receiving his ministry in the face of the printed notices of T.W.

. . . may He keep us true to Himself . . .

May we know more of casting ourselves on Him (2 Cor. 10:3-5) & with a single eye on His glory wait on Him in prayer, *abiding in Him & He in us* & His words abiding in us (James 1:1-8). With love in Him, may He keep us true to Himself --

Affectionately in Him,
(sgd) J. Barton

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