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A WITNESS TO THE TRUTH

and a warning against the deception in the last days
foretold by Christ

"Take heed ye be not deceived"

AT THE TABLE OF THE LORD

THOUGHTS FOR THE PRESENT TIME

BEHOLD, WHAT MANNER OF LOVE THE FATHER
HATH BESTOWED UPON US

BEWARE OF CROTCHETS!

SIGNS OF HIS COMING AND OF THE END OF THE WORLD

NEWS FROM THE ECCLESIAS

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At the Table of the Lord

"I WILL INSTRUCT THEE AND TEACH THEE"

IN THESE LAST DAYS, days of difficulty, of trial and testing for all who seek to serve God in faithfulness, we may sometimes feel, "Where can I turn ; how can I know what to do ; what does God want me to do ?" We may especially feel the need for guidance, for help to know how in difficult decisions, as we seek to please God more fully.

How great the blessing, brethren and sisters, that we are given help, are not left destitute, but have, in His mercy, the direction of the Father. It is all too easy to overlook, or to take for granted this provision of the Almighty. If we do slip into this position we can soon find ourselves out of the way of Truth.

David was one who was aware of this merciful provision of God and speaks of it for our help, Psalm 32 : 8, where God said :

"I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go : I will guide thee with mine eye."

How few there are to whom God speaks in this way ; for He so speaks only to those who, like David, are struggling above all to please and honour Him alone. Do we, then, know His instruction, His teaching in the way we should go ? Do we, brethren and sisters, receive it, value it so much that we not only receive it but actively search for it ? "*I will instruct thee*", God assures. How much love is conveyed in these words to our brother and to ourselves as we struggle to honour Him. How much *we* need these words.

We find that "*to instruct*" comes from a word meaning "*to be circumspect*". "I will help you to be circumspect through my instruction", God has said to David and says to us this morning. David responded to that instruction in various difficult circumstances, one of which we read in I. Samuel 18. Saul cast a javelin at David to kill him because he feared him. In verses 14, we see how David reacted to Saul's anger.

"And David behaved himself wisely in all his ways ; and the Lord was with him."

"To behave self wisely", we find, is the same word used for instruct. David, having received God's instruction, behaved himself wisely and so God was with him. It is not easy to behave oneself wisely, especially in circumstances such as those in which David found himself. Through no fault of David's, Saul sought to kill him. How the flesh likes to rise up in wrath and demand vengeance. In the face of adversaries seeking to hurt, let us strive to hear the in-

structions of God, to behave ourselves wisely, that God may be with us. Are we not surely shown the way God would have us go ?

"I WILL GUIDE THEE WITH MINE EYE"

He says, "I will guide thee with mine eye". "*To guide*", we find, relates "to advise", "to counsel", "counsellors". We read in this connection in Proverbs 11 : 14 :

"Where no counsel is, the people fall : but in the multitude of *counsellors* there is safety."

It is through the careful thought-out counsel of several whose spirits are right that *the Spirit* works as He has said :

". . . where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

In such a way, God reveals how He would have us go. We do need counsel, for we alone cannot see all that is involved. God's eyes, however, see everything—are able to look into the heart and to know all that is there. In this knowledge, then, He guides, counsels, instructs. We know that *we* can fail, can be wrong ; but that He cannot. How needful, then, is the guidance of His all-seeing eye, given to us through His Spirit, working in a multitude of counsellors. Let us, then, brethren and sisters, be ready to counsel, to accept counsel as the guidance, the instruction of our Father who knows the way that is right for us. We have seen disaster strike where there has been refusal to counsel, or where counsel has been disregarded. In our own way, we so soon can go astray from the path of righteousness.

We, then, can more fully perceive God's mercy, His provision in the words, "I will instruct and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go . . ." Often His instruction, His teaching is contrary to what *we* think we want—to what seems to us the prudent thing to do. But, if we believe that God knows all, knows what is best for us, indeed establishes the way for us to go, do we not need to submit to His counsel ? Jesus did just that, for we remember His words, "nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt". These words were spoken as He agonised in the garden to follow God's instructions, which He knew would lead to His death on the tree. God was teaching Him the way He must go, guiding Him with His eye. Jesus went in God's way, faithfully. In obedience, He died and now mediates for all who, like Him, value God's instructions and follow them.

"FREELY HAVE YE RECEIVED, FREELY GIVE"

In our portion in Matthew 10, we hear Jesus instructing His twelve apostles how they should go, verses 5-8 :

“These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles . . . But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils . . . ”

These were very specific instructions, not vague generalities, but help for them as they were sent to do the work of God. They were instructed how to use the gift of the Spirit which was given them, that God might be glorified—not themselves. Jesus further said, “. . . freely ye have received, freely give”. How helpful these instructions are for us, brethren and sisters. As long as we submit, we are granted the guidance, the help of the Spirit—not to do miracles as did the Apostles, but to walk in the way, guided by His eye. God has given to us *freely* of His Spirit for this great purpose. We find the word “freely” is used as gift, and comes from a root meaning “offering”. As we perceive how little we deserve this and value what He has freely given, do we freely give of ourselves, our time, our energy, our homes, our hospitality, as an offering in gratitude for all we receive of Him? To freely give involves doing so gladly, gratefully, without prodding, complaining, or grudging, even though there may be other things we would prefer and feel a great need to do at the time.

Further, Jesus instructed those whom He sent forth—and ourselves as well, verses 9 and 10 :

“Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, Nor scrip (a pouch for food) for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves . . . ”

How foolish ! the flesh would say, to go forth not knowing what will happen and yet be unprepared with money, food, clothing, two coats for whatever may arise, shoes or even staves. We can't tell how long the journey may be, the flesh says. Yet, Jesus instructs, don't take care for these things. It reminds us of Abraham. Hebrews 11 : 8 :

“By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out . . . obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.”

Here was the same spirit, the same instructions that Jesus speaks of that God spoke of to David. How difficult such an attitude is for us, not to give great consideration to the temporal needs ; but to go forth in the way shown, feeling the greatest care, the most urgent need is in His work and that He in such circumstances provides all that is required, believing that He goes with us, even as He did with Abraham. Jesus tells us, “. . . the workman is worthy of his meat”. (Matthew 10 : 10). If we are truly workmen of God, follow-

ing the instructions, the teaching of our Master, will He not provide for us in the way ? Will He not guide us exactly as He has promised with His eye, the eye which never fails ?

Jesus, again, helps, instructing in Matthew 10 : 19 :

“ . . . take no thought how or what ye shall speak : for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.”

It takes sure faith, trust, that God is with us to do this ; to take no thought, or, as the words mean, to be not anxious about what we shall speak in such circumstances. We must be prepared, not in our own thoughts or instruction but in His promise, “*I will instruct thee and teach thee . . . I will guide thee with mine eye.*” Is this the key to trust, to faith like David’s, like Abraham’s ?

We see this same trust in Jacob in our portion in Genesis 28 : 15, where God said :

“And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land ; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.”

Jacob had left Isaac to go to Padan-aram to seek a wife of the daughters of his mother’s house. On the way, he had a dream, seeing a ladder reaching to heaven, and the angels of God ascending and descending on it. A vision of God’s purpose to be accomplished in the Lord Jesus as the means of communion between men and God in His heavenly dwelling place. Then, God spoke to him, instructed him, taught him of the way he should go and told him how God would be with him. What was Jacob’s reaction ? Verse 16 :

“ . . . Surely the Lord is in this place ; and I knew it not.”

Jacob’s perception of God’s presence was more acute, more real because of the vision and the instruction given to him there. He called the name of that place Beth-el, the House of God. How close he had been to his Father, and so could go on to Laban’s house, was deceived there for twenty years, suffered at Laban’s hands ; yet, would, in these dire circumstances, remember again and again God’s instruction to him, “Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest . . .” Jacob was sustained by this belief. Can’t we be, as well, brethren and sisters, as we face today’s trials, difficulties, testings, sorrows ? We know it is allowed under His hand ; and that if we submit, we can know the wonderful secret as did David, “*I will guide thee with mine eye.*”

God *is* there, guiding. We may be slow to see as was Jacob ; yet, He reveals Himself for our help. Can we, then, like Jacob, like

David, like Jesus, like the twelve sent forth, see Him, realise His closeness and, above all, receive His *instruction*, His teaching? Can we, like, Job, through trial and agonising say, “*Now mine eye seeth thee.*”?

J. A. DeF.

Thoughts for the Present Time

The Parable of the king and the servant who was a debtor

WHAT A SALUTORY LESSON is contained in the parable of the king and the servant who owed him a great debt. The servant was forgiven, but failed to forgive and show mercy to his fellowservant who owed him far less. The teaching Christ desires to have conveyed from this is summed up in the words :

“O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desirest me :

Shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee ?

And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.

So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.” (Matthew 18 : 32-35).

Either a real or imagined grievance if it is allowed to ferment can only cause an attitude, which Christ in the parable condemns, for it can bring about an exacting of the uttermost from the fellow servant. God is asked to have patience, but when the fellowservant makes the same request, there is no heed, and no yielding. Jesus says that the antidote for such a retrograde work and deliverance from its condemnation, is *forgiveness from the heart*. Not merely verbally and superficially but right inside. The inward thought then is wiped clean of any feelings, which if persisted in, can only endanger the harbourer by removing divine condescension from such. Moreover the hard and unmerciful action that can result brings much hardship and sorrow upon those who have to endure it.

THE MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART

David's example is a great help. His appeal was similar to the appeal of the servant in the parable.

“Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkind-

ness ; according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.

Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.” (Psalm 51 : 1-2).

David’s appeal for forgiveness, and for mercy was sincere. Hence the resultant mercy he himself showed upon a number of occasions, when it was in his power to have gained his revenge. David’s desire to be a true fellowservant is seen in the words :

“Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation ; and uphold me with thy free spirit.

Then will I teach transgressors thy ways ; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.” (Psalm 51 : 12-13).

His desire was to work for restoration and forgiveness of others, according to the mercy and desire he himself needed from the Most High.

THE NECESSITY OF SELF-EXAMINATION

These thoughts bring to mind the words of the Apostle :

“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith ; prove your own selves.” (II. Corinthians 13 : 5).

When the Apostle wrote these words, he was inviting consideration and self-examination. True he said these things in a letter from a distance, and this letter has been preserved for these times. But the Apostle was not merely a man of word, he was also a man of deed. Many of his deeds, and the truth in action as seen by what he did will never be known in this dispensation. Yet without doubt the Apostle’s remonstrances were not only from a distance. Evidence is immediately forthcoming on this point :

“This is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.”
(II. Corinthians 13 : 1).

Travel was not so easy in those days, but the Apostle was prepared to spend and be spent for his brethren. How essential it is to heed the Spirit’s advice to examine self. Human nature can so easily deceive itself through pride which works in all. Men can fall into the trap of being so sure they are right, that they fail to examine their own position, and so spiritually die contending that they are “right”.

Look what happened in 1954. If there had been a sufficient degree of self-examination there would have been discussion to make sure of facts ; and a spirit of desiring to be helped from the scriptures,

if necessary, would have been shown. Instead the leader, and those led refused to discuss ; they were absolutely self-confident. Therefore some were condemned without a hearing on the pretext that it was contention.

It is a sobering lesson, because there was a considerable knowledge of the Truth, and some were masterly at exposition. But in self-examination they were bereft.

CHRIST'S CONDEMNATION OF CROTCHETS WHICH COVER AN UNDERLYING EVIL

How can a people who have walked in the light get into such a position ? The scathing words of Christ's denunciation come down the years in context with such consideration :

“Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel ;
Woe unto you . . . for ye make clean the outside of the cup
and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and
excess.” (Matthew 23 : 24-25).

All have thoughts of the flesh within, and need the aid of the Spirit to suppress them. But it is when the thoughts and workings of the flesh are covered by a thin veneer of a professed and meticulous care for the commands of God, that such action is regarded as so obnoxious by Christ. When matters of dispute arise the above error can be avoided in the divine maxim :

“In the multitude of counsellors there is safety.”
(Proverbs 11 : 14).

ROBERT ROBERTS ON CROTCHETS

A few words of Robert Roberts may help on this subject.

“The time is short. The scene will suddenly be changed in a short time ; and all these matters will appear in their true light to every one.

Many will discover that they have been wasting their time and hurting their brethren by bootless and embittering controversy, instead of redeeming the evil days by the consolations of the truth. They will see too late that instead of imbibing the sincere milk of the word, they have been feeding on ashes, that instead of dispensing a portion of meat to the household in due season, they have been giving them gall and vinegar ; that instead of strengthening the hands of fellow-labourers, they have been casting stumbling blocks in the paths of the weak, and discouraging the hearts of the strong ; that instead of rejoicing in the Lord, they have been fretting their souls with barren contentions ; that instead of

filling up a good account with works of humility and mercy and faith, they have been sowing a harvest of envy and strife and every evil fruit.

That instead of helping to purify a peculiar people, zealous of good works, their influence has been only mischievous, and that continually obstructing the work of the Lord, pulling down the work already done, and throwing clouds and darkness over the beacon intended to guide the feet of the stranger to life eternal. Let us aim to be out of the ranks of this number, that the Lord, at His coming, may approve our faithfulness in small things and give us higher work to do."

**LESSONS FROM THE MORE RECENT DIVISIONS
AND TROUBLES**

Crotchets arise in many cases, if not all, because of a lack of self-examination, which allows underlying motives to deceive under cover of a profession of contending *for the right*. This was the cause of the eruption of the 1954 trouble ; the cause of the "binding and the loosing" schism ; and now the degree to which contending over the "sister's hair" has caused some to depart.

Subtle divisions these have been, where those in error have either contended, or refused discussion, under a veneer of a professed seeking for purity and truth. The words of the parable again come to mind :

"Shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee ?"

Look back on the divisions of the last two decades and see if there was any real compassion in the heart, and then allow self-examination to be brought to bear in the thought, may these lessons not be forgotten in the days that remain.

D.L.

“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us”

(I. John 3 : 1).

Part 2

TO RELIEVE THE AGONY of mind of those bound to the letter (“which killeth”), Jesus took as an example Sabbath keeping, and showed the Spirit (“which giveth life”) in his own actions and words and also by referring the Pharisees to the examples of David and the shewbread, and the priests who “profane the Sabbath and are blameless”. Did Ahimelech not weigh in his mind David’s need, brethren and sisters, as against the Law, before he gave him the hallowed bread to eat? Did Jesus not endorse the priest’s action before the Jews? (Matthew 12 : 5). Did he not ask the Jews was it wrong to do good on the Sabbath, to heal or fulfil a need?

The Jew made the letter of the law a curse—“a yoke on the jaw”—and it was impossible for them to know God or obtain salvation through the Scripture as they read it. Jesus saw and felt the bondage his people laboured under, and he grieved for them—the chosen of God, now divided, in sects, arguing over the Law, contending, suffering, estranged from God and outside the Covenant.

“Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me. For I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

The yoke of the Spirit of the Law which he preached which was “strange doctrine” to them, but identical in thought (and almost in words) to the appeal of God through the prophets to Israel. Perhaps we could illustrate from experience. When we were young and in spiritual darkness of Christendom we were taught to keep Sunday and attend Church, and the discipline was helpful and in a sense reassuring. As we matured and saw the folly of strict “Sabbath” keeping while employing others, and beginning to discern the unscriptural nature of the things we had been taught, we relaxed more on Sunday, but with certain unease. Until we joined those who had had the Truth, we found Sunday little valued above another day. We were told “Let no man therefore judge you . . . of the Sabbath” (Col. 3), and in a sense the unease increased with the lack of direction regarding the seventh day—a day so obviously set apart throughout the Scriptures. We struggled with the printed word, we enjoyed a Sunday paper, and certain activities and plea-

tures until, through doubt or ignorance of what God required of us on that day, we grew to dread it.

How wonderful it was to experience the joy and the assurance as God "shined into our hearts" the Spirit of the Truth as He drew us to the One Body of His Son ; to turn back to the Law and to the Spirit of Christ which permeates every precept.

"If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day ; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable ; and shalt honour Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words, then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord." (Isaiah 58 : 13-14).

The prophet's words, coupled with the teaching of Jesus, give us the perfect answer, revealing the mind of our heavenly Father on what He desires of us on the day we meet to break bread in remembrance of His Son's death. The Spirit of the Truth always raises us above, and frees us from contention over the letter, giving us peace and unity.

Jesus fulfilled the Law and it was done away with in His death—through Him God removed what Israel had made an unbearable burden, and the believer from that time reverted to the covenant of grace made with Abraham—to faith, and hope and charity—and in being freed from the bondage of the Law ; in the Spirit we remain bound to Christ "with bands of love". "Being made free from sin, ye become the servants of righteousness" Paul said—"There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit". Do we not see the power of the Spirit, brethren and sisters, as the whole world argues, contends, and even fights over the written word; only the One Body, in finding the Spirit of the Truth does (and only can) achieve the unity enjoined by Christ and the apostles—which is essential, helping us to bear one another's burdens and our own, for as we find that Spirit of Christ, our burdens are eased, for our Father knows He has laid on His children burden enough in their striving to overcome the flesh, and we don't want to add again what *He* has removed. Wasn't that the thought behind the message sent to the early brethren and sisters by the apostles ?

"For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things."
(Acts 15 : 28).

God is love, and nothing is rated higher by Him than loving obedience—so high indeed that John says, "We know that we have passed from death unto life *because we love the brethren*", and

that love casteth out fear and the dread that was inescapable from the burden of the written Law. The Spirit of the Truth is the only thing that separates us from the world, brethren and sisters; the pearl of great price that permits us to have the true fellowship of the Father and the Son; but we hold it in the "earthen vessels" of our weak flesh, and need not only to be helped but to give help in whatever way God has appointed for us, remembering the words of the apostle:

"Obey them that guide (marg.) you, and submit yourselves for they watch for your souls as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief, for that is unprofitable for you."

If each in Israel had loved his neighbour in the spirit God commanded, if he had made that extra effort that we all must, and trusted him—he would have been shown that his brother (or sister) would have done nothing to cause him hurt or offence—indeed would have laid down his life for him "in spending and being spent".

Christ has surely made us free, but that freedom is something to be treasured, not abused, for as God would have drawn Israel "with bands of love" (which they could not discern), so Christ has bound us to Him, and to each other. Paul, writing to Timothy, said:

"Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience and of faith unfeigned. Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man . . ."

(Concluded) J.P.

Beware of Crotchets!

THROUGHOUT THE HISTORY OF THE TRUTH crotchets have disturbed and plagued its peace. It is amazing how those blessed with the "whole truth" should allow their minds to become obsessed with one particular item to suit a whim, and to serve pride.

At the beginning of this century one in Liverpool was always introducing into his talks and exhortations that the earth was flat! Sheffield produced a member who was obsessed with Hebrew. Every time he spoke from the platform he would pronounce certain words, supposedly in Hebrew. No one could tell whether the pronunciations were correct. Doubtful whether he could himself. In the first World War one advertised himself with a new idea. A crotchet that Germany was the "King of the North"! Wherever he went brethren and sisters had to hear about this. It gave him a certain distinction: perhaps a better word would be *notoriety*.

Often Scripture is used, as it can be to support a crotchet. It is not difficult to wrest Scripture to feed pride. So another arose of this kind, with an unbelievable crotchet, saying:

"The sun was literally to become black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon literally turned into blood."

Quite a few were led away with this foolish idea, and with its sponsor left the Truth.

An example of a crotchet serving pride was seen in two able expositors, but who did not know a note of music, being made to feel out of the centre of things when the new hymn tunes were being chosen. First, they stopped singing, followed by the crotchet that singing was wrong, and was reserved to the Kingdom. What, we suppose, was really happening in their hearts, was because they could neither play nor sing, nor understand music, others must not be allowed to sing. Their lack in this one particular gave them a sense of inferiority, and hurt their pride!

Then there arose a sprinkling of crotchety ones claiming that at the Table:

"Unleavened bread should be used, as Jesus did".

Again not a few minds were preoccupied with nothing else but "vain jangling", resulting in the loss of the Spirit. Crotchets rivet the mind on a small point—something no larger than the crotchet in music, and such victims become deaf to the reasonableness of the Truth.

Later peace was disturbed by another crotchet, the unwarranted insistence that :

“Whatever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

Claiming that in withdrawal by an Ecclesia, others need not look at the evidence, and that the words of Jesus ensure that such a withdrawal must be right.

A further crotchet which has arisen over the years is that “unclean meats” must not be eaten. A great leader, tainted with this false doctrine, who was accused of being inconsistent by eating bacon, said it had been “cured”. When asked “cured from what” there was no answer ! Those who have contended for this crotchet, overlook the fact that “every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving”.

Diet, too, since the days of Dr. Thomas has become an obsession with some ; not that it matters what an individual may choose for himself, but it can be a very disturbing crotchet where campaigning for a certain diet takes the place of discussion on the sublimities of *the Truth*. As Dr. Thomas wrote :

“We care not at all about the physiologists (dieticians belong to this class) who have as many *crotchets* when it suits them as the theologians. If we square our diet by their fashions we shall be reduced to bread and water. We shall not quarrel with anyone who chooses prison fare, provided he does not incorporate it with the Gospel.”

To say fish is a doubtful food, and must not be eaten with bread comes near to this ; it is a denial of the divine goodness in the miraculous provision of Jesus for the 4,000 and the 5,000.

The sisters’ “covering” that “if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her”, has been carried to the extent by one who has left the Truth that it is a “transgression for a sister to pull *one* hair out”. So no sister should ever use a brush, which removes many hairs ! Truly a crotchet.

Contemporaries of Jesus were proud men, so that it is not surprising they had a large crop of crotchets.

Just an example out of many : It was claimed that a brother could swear by the temple, but not by the gold !

These criticised (yes ! that is the object of the crotchet) the disciples for plucking the ears of corn on the sabbath, saying it was not *lawful*.

In reply Jesus showed how they failed completely to understand the beauty of the divine teaching of the Sabbath ; that the law permitted "well-doing on the sabbath day".

Some in their anxiety to show that plucking ears of corn was not a breach of the law, have said that this was not "servile work". Do they realise Jesus could have said this, but did not ? Are they wiser than Jesus ? To rise above such paltry and specious arguing, it is as well to remember that Jesus taught on this occasion that the :

"Sabbath was made for man and not man for the sabbath."

To show the technical objection of the Pharisees was wrong, Jesus went further, saying :

"David ate the shewbread, which was *not lawful*."

Was Jesus wrong ? How can that which is "*not lawful*" be right ? Jesus showed there was an overriding law, which was never applied to destroy, but according to Jesus this allowed for doing good on the sabbath, adding :

"But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have *mercy*, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless." (Matthew 12 : 7).

How sad that the beauty and lovely meaning of God's Truth should be sullied and slain by crotchets !

These are like the dead flies—small—but have a putrifying effect on the holy "ointment of the apothecary", turning its divinely appointed fragrance of unity into a repulsive and evil smelling ferment of pride.

W.V.B.

“The Signs of His Coming and of the end of the World”

“I WILL PLANT IN THE WILDERNESS THE CEDAR,

“the shittah tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine, and the box tree together: That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the Lord hath done this and the Holy One of Israel hath created it.”

(Isaiah 4 : 19-20).

THESE ARE DAYS OF “small things” as compared to what is coming, but the evidences are not to be despised. Zechariah spoke with encouragement to his brethren of former times, and his words to them have been preserved for two and a half millenia to encourage and warn those of the present day who hope in the promises to Israel. Zechariah said :

“For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel . . .”

(Zechariah 5 : 10).

Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua, the son of Jozadak, in those earlier times were stirred up through the work of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, to build the house of God at Jerusalem. Previously there had been a cessation of activity due to the enmity of the mixed races towards the Jews, who having, for a time, obtained the favour of the Persian Emperor Artaxerxes were given sanction to prevent by force the progress of the Jews.

But “the day of small things” was not to be despised. At the set time when there was response to the Spirit’s overtures, and the Jews began to make an effort, they were helped by divine agency and so they prospered. The Persian overlord granted them provision for the work, and warned the mixed races not to thwart it. The outcome was one of joy in the keeping again of the feast of the pass-over at Jerusalem, which had been lost by their forefathers. Moreover “the plummet”, or work that had ceased, was seen advancing and being measured and directed under the hand of Zerubbabel, who was in control of it by divine choice.

(They) “. . . kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy: for the Lord had made them joyful, and turned the heart of the king of Assyria unto them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.” (Ezra 6 : 22).

The present day sees something of a repetition of those former times, though as stated previously as yet it is a day "of small things", which are but in a formative stage.

The Israeli Prime Minister speaking last August on the occasion of the 70th anniversary convocation on Mount Herzl of the Kol Ha-Adama (Call of the Land) had this to say :

"If we look back on what has happened during these past 70 years, we can't help but think what could have been if more had worked towards the realisation of the vision. Many more Jews would be alive today and the State of Israel would be more firmly based. Perhaps the tragedy of war would already be behind us if there were five million or six million Jews in the country—and such numbers are not an exaggeration. However, those who did come, those who dared, carried out two revolutions and achieved two goals at the same time : the national revolution through contact with the soil of the homeland and the personal revolution of each individual, since these new farmers had never known what it was to work the land. And today there are spheres in agriculture in which Israel has nothing to be ashamed of in comparison to larger, older countries, with a long tradition of farming. This is what we have accomplished through the force of our will and belief. We know our historical rights and obligations. Every stone is a witness that we were here, that we have worked and created."

The inference in the above words is that many Jews preferred to allow difficulties to thwart their desires towards the building again of a place for their race in the land of their forefathers. Others preferred the comfortable existence they had made for themselves amongst the nations, even though they had to bear the reproach of their distinctiveness. Therefore when the Nazis rose to power, there was no way out of the dilemma for many, no door of hope through which they could pass into a new future.

At the present time, though things have changed, it is obvious even now that some Jews are reluctant to return because of difficulties that would have to be faced, and threats from the mixed races that would have to be endured in the land of the forefathers.

But the time is coming when "the plummet" shall be seen in the hand of the Greater Zerubbabel, when the "scattered" and those who have scattered them are to be made to see, if they will, that the day of small things should not be despised. Such in the mercy of God are to stand upon the threshold of greater events described so eloquently in the promise :

“Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.” (I. Corinthians 2 : 9).

So as the attention is directed Zionward by those called to the hope of Israel ; the springing up of beauty and of glory amongst what was once barren hills and plains due to centuries of neglect, is discerned as a beginning, in preparation for what is coming.

The area of Israel within the pre-June 1967 boundaries is roughly the size of Wales. Two-thirds of this 8,000 square miles is barren desert. But a start has been made. Since 1948 land reclaimed for agricultural settlement by the Jewish National Fund totals 700,000 acres. A further 97,000 acres has been planted with nearly one hundred million trees. To date reclamation efforts have been mainly centred in the more fertile areas of the centre and the north, where swamps have been drained and hills cleared of rubble and rock. Even so, efforts are also being made to establish settlements and develop the desert lands of the northern Negev and the Arava.

Israel's farmers today produce seventy five per cent of the country's food requirements, and also contribute considerably to its exports. Local requirements are met except for cereals, grain fodder and fats. It has been stated that Israel's agriculture is one of the fastest developing in the world, and since Israel's independence, has achieved global pre-eminence in dairy production and arid zone farming.

Robert Roberts only knew of a largely desert place in his day, but he visualised the transformation when he wrote :

“Forsaken and hated for ages, the land, at that time not far ahead, is now ‘an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations’. God has fulfilled His promise, and has made ‘her wilderness like Eden—her desert like the garden of the Lord’. ‘Come and see’. We go ; we stand on the hills of Judea, now no longer sterile and wild. They are clad with glorious vegetation, of every form and fragrance. The hills are clothed with pleasant woods, and the valleys rejoice in the smiling beauties of a rich cultivation—field and vineyard, fruits and flowers, corn and wine. The air is clear and warm, and laden with pleasant odour. The view on all sides is magnificent and far reaching. No smoke obscures the landscape, no fog on the valleys, no mist on the hills. The sky is cloudless, and the sun pours his healing flood of light on rejoicing land and ocean.”

This will be the day of which Isaiah speaks :

“ . . . all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead

of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree : and it shall be to the Lord for a name, *for an everlasting sign* that shall not be cut off." (Isaiah 55 : 12-13).

A transformation, just beginning heralds the day, when the anti-typical briars and thorns are to be burned as the land is delivered from the constant threat of those who would tear down and thwart its fruitfulness. In their place will be seen the "trees of righteousness" (mighty ones), "the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified." (Isaiah 61 : 3).

Therefore to those who remain in these days of small things there is a *message of hope* even as there was to a *remnant* of the Jews in times of old. For the plummet shall be seen in the hand of Zerubabel.

D.L.

News from the Ecclesias

EDEN, NEW YORK : Grange Hall, Church Street.

Sundays : Breaking of Bread 11-30 a.m. Sunday School 1-30 p.m. Bible Class : Midweek, Forestville, Buffalo, Hamburg and Orchard Park. Alternate week : Revelation Study.

As the work with two here continues, much encouragement is given by response to His hand working. It is a delight to see appreciation grow as the Truth in its wonderful light unfolds through His Word. The way is not without its difficulties ; yet, where desire is strong, help is so graciously given.

In these last days, God is testing His people, shaking so that those who cannot be shaken may remain. Much gratitude is felt for His so evident guidance and for the unity of spirit and love shown among brethren and sisters in a time of shaking. Truly, God is ever mindful of His people.

J.A.DeF.

"PENTRIP", Black Rock, Portmadoc.

Breaking of Bread : Sundays, 11-30 a.m.
Revelation Study : Mid-week.

We have had the pleasure of the company and the help of Bro. J. Smith on April 30th which was greatly appreciated.

Evidence of the value of the Lightstand here is shown in the fact that interesting contacts are frequently being made with both visitors to these parts and also local people.

A possible development is awaited from such a one who has recently expressed a desire to understand the Word of God.

per J.S.

MANCHESTER : Memorial Hall, M.A.P.S. Building, Albert Square, Manchester.

Sundays : Breaking of Bread, 11-30 a.m. Lecture 3-30 p.m. Tuesdays : Bible Class 7-15 p.m., Onward Hall, Deansgate.

Our lectures for June are due to commence with : "Is there a way of escape ? The Brutal Buffetings of men's hopes by the history of

the present century. Hence the question which only God can answer”.

Some have left us necessitating our withdrawal from them : a painful but necessary duty made imperative because of their refusal to meet for discussion with those involved. Manifestly, a contravention of scriptural commands and the tradition of the Body, seen in the acknowledged Constitution :

Clause 32—

“That it is the duty of brethren to live in peace. Should misunderstandings arise it is their duty to settle them between themselves before sundown without burdening others. If this settlement cannot be effected others may be brought in for counsel and assistance but it must be in the scriptural way. No matter of accusation or evil report against any brother shall be listened to in public or in private until the brother bringing or reporting the accusation shall have taken the course prescribed at Matthew 18, and any brother refusing to take this course whilst persisting in his accusation or in alienation on account of it shall himself be considered and be dealt with as an offender against the law of Christ. Where the scriptural course has been taken without success the matter may then be brought before the Ecclesia but not until the accused brother has had a week’s notice of the meeting at which the accusation shall be brought forward.”

The lamentable aspect is that the leader of those who have departed has only been with us for five years. Prior to this he was with the *Ecclesia of Christ*, but failed to uphold our withdrawal from this body in 1954 and so has spent over twelve years in the darkness in the last eighteen. Is this why his vision is blurred to see what is required when an item is in dispute ? No scriptural reason can be given for refusing discussion with a view to reconciliation, whether those alleged to be wrong are so or not.

He did not leave the darkness of the *Ecclesia of Christ* voluntarily, but was cast out. Some months passed before he came to us, broken in heart and spirit. Then he was allowed to find *the Truth* once more, and the sympathy and comfort which only *the Truth* can provide.

It is hoped that these may repent of their error before it is too late. Eternal life is too precious to lose.

We can now turn to the joy of spending time with Bro. and Sis. Steiger from the States, who hope to visit this country in August.

W.V.B.