

NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

W. Edmund Smith

A great world-wide church conference was recently held in Amsterdam, Holland, in which more than 140 different Protestant denominations participated. Economic, political and especially spiritual conditions of the world were discussed by prominent Church leaders. Mr. John Foster Dulles, of the American Presbyterian church, gave a strong address. I had the privilege of hearing him at the recent Methodist General Conference, in Boston. He impressed me as an able, sincere and devout man of the Herbert Hoover type. He is no great orator but just a plain, blunt man, who speaks straight on. But there is power back of his words because he believes in the overruling power and wisdom of God in world affairs. He is regarded as the greatest American authority on foreign affairs. If Gov. Dewey is elected, Mr. Dulles will be his Secretary of State.

In his address at the recent conference, he plainly declared that Russia and her ideology are absolutely atheistic. To Russia religion is a stultifying opiate. She has no regard for moral law. Laws to her are only matters of expediency, to be enforced and practiced as convenience suggests. But we of the Protestant faith believe in a moral order, and man who may throw himself against God's laws is bound to be broken. He pictured plainly the awfulness of another war and plead with all to pray and do all in their power to allay a war-like spirit.

There is much war talk in the air, especially as things are so tense in the Berlin area. But many leaders are optimistic. Ambassador Smith says: "We hope for the best and prepare for the worst." The great danger is that some satellite of Russia may do some desperate thing that will necessitate the western powers using force and thus starting a great conflict. Let all the Christian people pray that such a calamity may be averted.

* * * *

We hear much about the high cost of living, and there is ground for complaint. But we, both in U.S.A. and Canada, are living in a most self-indulgent day, when many billions are being spent every year for that which contribute to national and individual destruction. Think! Last year more than nine billion dollars was spent for alcoholic beverages in America; some four billion was spent for cigarettes, the major portion handed out by women and girls; several more billions was spent for pipe tobacco and smoking incidentals. They are paying as much as a hundred dollars for a gold cigarette lighter. More billions are spent by women for cosmetics and for the creating of a beauty she confesses she does not possess. If all these billions were directed into legitimate channels of trade, there would be no lack of food and other physical comforts and necessities. In the face of all this perversion of the good things of God, He continues to bless the world with abundant harvests. The prospects are good the world over.

But there is a judgment day coming as truly as there is a God in heaven. Who has written into the constitution of things that "Whatever a nation soweth that she shall also reap." There will come another recession and thousands will be lamenting their prodigality in these prosperous years.

In the midst of all the threatening world conditions, it is blessed to be sustained by an unflinching trust in an omnipotent Holy and Good God, whose works were known unto Him from the foundation of the world. Yes, I believe in the freedom of the individual and also in the eternal sovereignty of God. My freedom lies within a little circle. I can defeat God's purpose in my own life and destroy much good by a bad example, leading others down to hell. Or, I can be a laborer together with God not only as to my personal salvation but also to the salvation of others. I cannot frustrate God's eternal purposes, for He throws individuals, and churches and nations aside who will not fall in line with His programme, and seeks others to fulfil His will. This makes me feel like shouting and praising God, and like keeping true to Him. One with God is in the majority. There is no such thing as defeat to a trusting soul. The martyrs died in victory, and by faith saw the coming of a better day.

* * * *

Yes, I am what you may call an optimistic pessimist. Were I to look at immediate circumstances I might say the Gospel is a failure as a world panacea for sin and evil. But I think of what the world was in Jesus', and Paul's and Wesley's day, I say truly God has been marching on to victory, and Isaiah says, "that He shall never fail nor be discouraged till he has set judgment in the earth and the Isles shall wait for his law." I find that the more love I have in my heart, the more I pray and rejoice in victory, it is then I have more and more faith for the progress of the Gospel. The skies are still full of Pentecosts, and the days of revivals have not gone by. The very restlessness and sinfulness of old and young reveal a heart hunger that cannot be satisfied by the things the eye can see and the hand can handle. We were built upon a bigger plan than that. "These hearts of ours were made for Thee, and they can never be satisfied till they find rest in Thee." Thus cried the once licentious Augustine who by the grace of God became one of the holiest of men.

And beloved, if God has done for us the best He can do in cleansing and sanctifying our hearts, we feel that He can save anyone. It was no sanctimonious cant that made Paul say, "Unto to me who am less than the least of all saints is this grace given". The more grace we have the less worthy we feel apart from the mercy and the goodness of God.

Inbred sin in the human heart is like Communists in the nation. We are finding that some who held responsible positions at the right hand of the chief executive, have been boring from within and giving our enemy information and encouragement. The inner foes are the hardest to fight. So these uncrucified tempers and passions are what defeat us. We are inclined to blame it upon everything but the real thing. We always want an alibi when we suffer defeat. Inbred sin makes us our own worst enemies. It is because we still want to Trust in ourselves, in our environment, our mortality or liberality—anything but fully in the Blood of Jesus that cleanseth from all sin.

FEED IS MORE EFFECTIVE THAN WHIPS

J. B. Chapman, D. D.

In the old "horse and buggy days" there were some horsemen who spent considerable money for whips with which to drive their horses along. But there were some who found the horses would possess good spirit and get

along with speed only if they were just fed and properly cared for. I think churches are like that. Some preachers try to drive the church, others just feed the church well and get good service without much whipping.

Today a preacher came to tell me how poor his church was, and I was not surprised to hear that it had become impossible to raise the denominational budgets, and that it looked doubtful whether it was going to be possible to meet the local bills and keep the doors of the church open. I soon discovered that this preacher had preached poverty to his people until they had become really poor—financially and spiritually—and that from him they had caught "the poor mouth," so that they felt even poorer than they were. There is not much that can be done there, so far as I can see, except to find a richer preacher, so the people will get their courage back.

Some shallow preachers tell the people to "give until it hurts" in support of the program of the church. This is not standard—some people hurt too easily. People must be taught to tithe and to support the work of God faithfully and regularly and joyfully. Even the preaching of tithing must be done in the spirit of love and the anointing of the Spirit. Tithing can be taught so legalistically that all will look upon it as a burden and wish most heartily they could get away from it. The tithe is the minimum—there is no maximum, except the full amount of one's possessions. People who are full and overflowing with the love of God find tithing and giving both easy and desirable, and such people do their part gladly. The joy of giving is greater than the joy of receiving—but only when the giver loves God and gives as unto the Lord.

In the whole of the Christian service, duty is to be swallowed up in privilege, and, like the machine with plenty of good oil in the crankcase, the fuller the joy the less the friction. And if we really believe God we must allow the poor widow to give her last handful of meal to the work of God in the full confidence that this is the way to prepare for the coming famine. Devoted, happy people are hilarious givers.

DENOMINATIONS IN CONGRESS

The Lutheran gives the following religious and political complexion of Congress. Of the members, 109 are Methodists, 82 are Catholics, 21 are Lutherans. Sixteen denominations are represented. Of the estimated 73,000,000 church members in the United States, 25,000,000, or thirty per cent, are Catholics, but their percentage in Congress is only sixteen. The Methodists, with a membership of 9,000,000, have 109. The Lutherans in Congress are Republicans three to one. The Methodists are equally divided between the two major parties. The Baptists and Catholics are predominantly Democrats.—J. D. R., in United Presbyterian.

IT NEVER PAYS

- To argue about religion;
- To run into debt for luxuries;
- To cherish a fault-finding spirit;
- To warm our hands at the devil's fire;
- To join a church that does not demand something of one;
- To marry for money or social position;
- To send the children into the streets in order to secure silence in the parlor;
- To deprive the children of the privilege of having good reading matter.—Selected.