

NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

By W. Edmund Smith

Thanksgiving Day will soon be here. It is an important day in our calendar. But we ought to make it more a day of worship than a day for sport and feasting. The gobblers are singing in a minor key as they see the day approaching, for they are doomed to be gobbled by many who worship their stomachs more than they do God.

Constant thanksgiving is the attitude of the truly sanctified heart. It persists in looking on the bright side of things, and, no matter how low the clouds may hang today, it believes in a brighter tomorrow. Thanksgiving is the dominating note of the Psalms, and Paul spread it thick on all the pages of his Mss. The prayer of the saint is always keyed to the note of thanksgiving; thanksgiving seasons his food and inspires his song; labor cannot weary it nor can the water of sorrow and affliction quench it in the holy heart. He walks the pathway of life in the spirit of gratitude and praise to the good God, who hath given us all things so richly to enjoy. But he who has a Thanksgiving day every day, is the one truly prepared to gain special blessing on the day appointed for public thanksgiving, even as he who keeps every day holy gains special blessing for carefully regarding the one day in seven God has given us for physical recuperation and spiritual inspiration.

We all have much for which to be thankful. We are told of an illiterate young preacher who shouted, "I thank God for everything, even for my ignorance." An old lady spoke out so all could hear, "Well, you have much to be thankful for along that line, Brother." We laugh at the expense of that brother, but when we sift his saying down, he may have been right, at least according to the teaching of Paul, who tells us that God hides things from the wise and prudent and reveals them unto babes; that not many mighty, not many wise, not many noble are called, for God has chosen the weak things of this world to confound the mighty. This has its application to those, who, altho they may be able to write many letters after their names, received from great institutions of learning, yet, they are as confused and confounded as was the learned Nicodemus when confronted by the mystery of regenerating grace, not to speak of sanctifying power.

Dear old Amanda Smith, that saint in ebony, the abused wife of a drunken husband, once discouraged by her trials and often tempted to give up the battle, heard that a man by the name of J. S. Inskip was holding services in a Methodist church in Chicago, not far from her home. She went and soon became very hungry for real heart victory. She counted the cost, and finally made a complete consecration of all she had, to God; this included an old wash-tub, in which she rubbed out the means of her livelihood. And then there was that brutal husband whom she was trying in vain to handle. Amanda got on the altar herself and took off both hands. The fire fell and Amanda Smith was lifted up to heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Perhaps many finely educated ladies heard the same messages but saw in them no beauty; they may have been really disgusted when they heard this poor colored woman recently sanctified wholly, shouting the praises of God for her new experience. They had too much worldly wisdom to get sanctified; Amanda did not know any better than to go

in for the best God had for her. Truly the lame take the prey. When it comes to finding God, ignorance may outrun carnal wisdom and always will.

This may have been what that Brother meant when he said he thanked God for his ignorance. He just didn't know any better than to take the blessing God offered so full and free.

We may give expression to our Thanksgiving in a little rhyme:

Thank God for fields of ripened grain which barn and granary fills;

Thank God for fruit upon the trees and potatoes in the hills;

For the music of the barnyard flock and the lowing of the kine.

A hand is opened bounteously—a hand that is divine.

Thank God for burdens that we bear and trials that press us sore;

We know that Jesus has a care and tells us o'er and o'er

That all these things can't hurt us—are blessings in disguise—

All transformed by the Holy Ghost; 'tis marvelous in our eyes.

Thank God that war is silent now in those lands beyond the sea,

Where for long years her tongue of flame produced such misery,

Which lingers yet in want and wounds — in millions in distress—

Thank God for John and Uncle Sam who would heal and truly bless.

For all the freedoms we possess oh let us praise the Lord!

They come to us the price of blood; God ever has a sword.

It brought the open Bible, we live in Freedom's day;

No Roman priest dare threaten us, no tyrant say us nay.

We cannot show thanksgiving by eating till distressed;

When oftentimes the stomach is cursed instead of blessed.

I am no cold ascetic — not scornful in the least—

But simple food with love divine can make a bounteous feast.

Then let us spread Thanksgiving real thick throughout the year;

Let's keep our songs a ringing in notes both strong and clear.

The devil can't deceive us by all his subtle art

When every day is blessed of God with thanksgiving in our heart.

I read in many religious papers and was inspired to praise the Lord when I recently read, in a Baptist paper, of a great revival of old-time religion that has come to a town in the state of Mississippi, down near the Mexican border. The town was noted for drunkenness and wild disorder. The Baptist church in that place was run down and the building dilapidated.

A new preacher came and soon had a great burden on his heart for the salvation of souls. He fasted and prayed, after a while had others to join him. A revival broke out which has transformed the church and the town. The account filled an entire page of the Watchman-Examiner, a great religious paper. A marvelous change has been wrought in many of those once enslaved by strong drink. The

movement has reached out far, and many preachers have come to see the work that God has wrought and have caught the flame. We may make allowance for reports. Nothing is said of "Tongue" or of wild extremes. The day of revivals has not gone by.

The same day I read in another religious paper a disparaging note against emotionalism in religion. We are willing to agree that there is a wild hysterical emotionalism and the running after the spectacular and the miraculous which is detrimental to the true cause of Christ. Wesley saw it in his day and condemned it strongly. But he did not discourage true emotion in religion, for he knew by experience emotion is the heart of the Christian experience—It is "righteousness, and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." It is the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost given unto us."

But this editor seems to discredit real spiritual emotion. He forgets the history of the great Methodist church, especially of its founder Mr. Wesley, who carefully reared in a very religious home, and a graduate with high honors from a great university, could not think his way through to a satisfactory religious experience, but groped his way in the fog of unbelief until he accepted salvation by simple faith in Jesus' blood and his heart was "strangely warmed." "That emotional experience of Wesley meant more for Great Britain," said the great poet Southey, "than all the victories won by her armies and fleets on land and sea in all the 18th century." This editor says "we must think our way through to a satisfying experience."

Martin Luther, nor Wesley, nor Finney nor has any true child of God gained a real experience of grace by reasoning it through. Germany left the way of faith, pointed out by Luther, and she handed in the bog of rationalistic and materialistic philosophy. They put their carnal reason above the word of God. This spirit dominates our so-called great institutions of learning, where there once was holy fire, there now are the ashes of cold speculation and formal devotion. "If any man will be wise let him become a fool that he may be wise." "The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God." It is speculation and not true reason that enslaves the church today. In the fulness of God's blessing, our rational powers preserve their highest integrity. We rest upon the sure word of God. The simple trusting soul, and such a soul was Wesley, feeds on the riches of divine grace, while the proud philosopher, boasting of his carnal reasoning, drifts far out into the sea of uncertainty and scepticism.

Immanuel Kant has long been regarded as the greatest philosophical thinker of his day. He spoke of the glory of the starry heavens above and the imperative of the moral law within, yet he finally expressed his belief in the doctrine of metempsychosis, or the transmigration of souls. And the mighty Emerson, in his doctrine of transcendentalism declares that all the immortality there is, is in our personality being swallowed up in the great Oversoul. It is just like a little brook being swallowed up in the great river, or the river losing itself in the mighty ocean. These are some of the speculations of those who leave the word of God and try to think their way through to a religious experience. Well, let us thank God for our ignorance, when we are willing to rest our all upon the word of God and have the inner revelation of the saving, cleansing power, Amen and Amen.