

NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

By W. Edmund Smith

1950. We are at the turn of the century. The New Year has come in with a beautiful smile upon us in the east but with a dark frown upon those in the middle west and far east. While we have been basking in phenomenal weather, cold, blizzards and floods have been scourging western and southern states. Think of buzzing bees, running sap, blooming flowers out doors in Vermont, and New Hampshire in January! We doubt if Mr. Bruin has gone to sleep yet in the Maine woods. No snow, no cold weather as yet in New England; all weather records broken on the top end of the thermometer. New York crying for water, and in Boston we need a lot of rain. But, as I look out I see some big flakes coming down which remind me of what we called a sheep-killer in April.

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Some think that the old year has dumped a big mess in upon the New Year. 1948 was, from the material standpoint, a wonderful year. Production and employment were at high levels. Some prophesy the continuance of this prosperity in 1950. True, there were many strikes, most of which were settled amicably, and while John L. Lewis has put his mine workers on a three-day week we are glad that there is a law to bring him into line with the principles of honest labor. The President's message to Congress, that convened Tuesday, was optimistic. He prophesies wonderful prosperity by 2000 A. D.—a veritable millenium of material prosperity, that is, if the Democrats still hold office and the nation's credit holds good.

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The situation which makes all the political leaders hold their breath is China. The Communists have swept all before them. Chiang Kai Shek and his government have been driven from pillar to post and have finally taken refuge in Formosa, where he is none too popular. His government has been utterly discredited, and the people have risen up to overthrow it. The will of the people is sovereign, and if they choose a communistic form of government it must be recognized even though we hate Communism. But I believe God is going to use China for the discomfiture of Russia. They can never agree. Chinese Communism is not of the same brand as the Russian. Russia's revolution was carried on with awful ruthlessness. Stalin came to his position wading through blood. The Chinese have had regard for the lives and the work of missionaries and the schools and colleges. Britain has recognized the new government with the understanding that it will have regard for human rights, and administers internal and international affairs according to the principles of law and decency. For centuries those 17 provinces of China have been separated from one another by a diversified language or dialects. Think of the handicap of one province not being able to understand the language of another! This great upheaval will unify those four hundred millions of people. But let us pray that in all this turmoil Britain and America may not become alienated. The devil and some politicians would like to drive in a separate wedge.

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Billy Graham has come to Boston! Who is Billy Graham? He is a young southern evangelist not long out of college. He said he was

a failure as a pastor and God called him to the evangelistic field where he has had phenomenal success.

He is just from Los Angeles where he had a great revival which even stirred dirty Hollywood. He has been highly publicised. Many churches have joined in the Boston area to make this campaign a success.

With his colleague, Mr. Wilson, and his song leader, Mr. Harris, and his soloist, Mr. Beverley Shea, he opened fire on New Year's Eve in the Mechanic's Hall, Boston. The hall seats more than 5,000 and was crowded, the most of whom remained to see the old year die and the New Year born. And every night since that hall has been filled with worshippers, listening to the singing of the old Gospel songs and the preaching of the rugged gospel. Already more than a thousand people have gone into the inquiry room. This is the greatest meeting Boston has seen since the Gipsy Smith meeting, and the response to the preaching seems to be greater.

"Well, tell us of the evangelist," some may say. He is a handsome young man of about thirty years, rather slight in form, six foot, 2 inches tall. Light complexioned.

He preaches the Bible in a very simple rugged way. He magnifies Christ as the solution of all the domestic, social and political problems. It is either Christ or chaos with him. He is a forceful speaker, but not an orator that stirs your emotions. I have heard him every night but one; I have never heard him tell a graveyard story or a pathetic story in all his preaching. He is altogether different from either Billy Sunday or Gipsy Smith. The former was dynamic and epigrammatic. He could give a rapier thrust, and coined phrases that stuck. I hear Billy Sunday saying with some scorn, "Some of you folks sing of throwing out the life line. Why, you haven't life enough to put up a clothes line." I went from the Billy Sunday's meeting saying, "What a smart man. What an actor!" Gipsy Smith was tender and scriptural. No man could move me like he did. I remember saying to myself, "I'm not going to let Gips make me cry. I'm going to be hard boiled," and went to the service with something of that resolution; but in less than ten minutes Gipsy would tell some little incident by way of illustration and I could not keep the tears and the praises back. He made me weep for joy, and I always came away saying, "What a wonderful Saviour we have! I must love Him more and serve Him better."

But I must confess that Billy Sunday, while he is very earnest and forceful, yet he never has moved my heart any more than that I will assent to the truth, which is put in a very simple manner. His homiletics are crude, he seems sincere, he wants to honor God and God honors him. He gets results. There is no levity in the meetings. Those who go forward look earnest and solemn. His cry is, "Believe on Jesus!" He does not preach repentance so much. "Just believe and He is yours." We praise God for all the truth he preaches and for everyone who makes a step towards God and salvation. But it is impossible for those who are full of the world, the flesh, and the devil to truly believe on Jesus unless they count the cost and repent and are willing to go the way of the Cross.

The meetings continue next week in the opera house and end on the evening of the 16th in the great Boston Garden that can take in 18000 or more. The rent of these auditoriums

for these campaigns is costing more than ten thousand dollars. This came from Dr. Ockenga, who is the prime mover in the campaign.

I may add that many come to the services from considerable distances. Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine have delegations present every night. The Nazarene churches, of which there are more than twenty near Boston, are well represented, and they are praying for the salvation of souls. Billy says, "It is not my preaching but your praying that is bringing the victory." He has organized prayer chains that run night and day. Noonday meetings are held in Tremont Temple. There does seem to be a revival spirit in the air. Never in all my ministry have I felt the blessedness of intercessory prayer and its potency as I do today. I can report a growing prayer list with the Holy Ghost praying through and in me. Beloved, prayer is a very dry and grinding work unless we have the Holy Ghost. And the depth of prayer life determines the depth of our spirituality. You good people down in the Maritimes and elsewhere pray for the work in New England.

God is never going to send much of a revival to any denomination that thinks more of getting members and raising money and boosting statistics rather than getting souls saved and sanctified. The church that boosts the Sunday School and is indifferent to the prayer meeting cannot prosper spiritually. I have seen a Sunday School bring in such a crowd of worldlings that the spirituality of the church was crushed in ministering to and entertaining that worldly crowd. And then the denomination seems to think it can boost everything by a man-made programme, and latest catchy methods. It says, "we must keep all the members we have, good, bad, and indifferent, and get more churches and more members and raise more money, and when the spirit has been grieved away then the Church has to use all manner of expedients to squeeze money out of the people. The growth, financial, numerical, educational prosperity and success have always been a prophecy of the movement's decline even though the leaders will all be shouting, "We are going ahead by leaps and bounds! We once were not a people, but now we are the people. We are rich and increased in goods and have need of nothing. We are leagues ahead of the dear old ignorant shouting folks who started the movement." This is the weakness of humankind.

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That mercy killing in Manchester, N. H., is stirring the world. A law to permit this would make it possible for bad people to get rid of undesirables. God's law and man's law cannot be established or enforced on or by human sympathy.

MY HIGHEST POSSIBILITIES

I am persuaded that I shall obtain the highest amount of present happiness, I shall do more for God's glory and the good of men, and I shall have the fullest reward in eternity, by maintaining a conscience always washed in Christ's blood, by being filled with the Spirit at all times, and by attaining the most entire likeness to Christ in mind, will, and heart that it is possible for a redeemed sinner to attain in this world.—M'Cheyne.