

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

By W. Edmund Smith

## A GREAT FEAR

Some tourists, back from Great Britain and the Continent, tell us that there are not nearly so many expressions of fear and apprehension from those whose cities are under the shadow of the Kremlin, and would be the first to be blasted by the atomic bomb, as there are in U. S. A.; and we so far removed from the enemy. It does seem that in this country, many newspapers, evangelists and preachers take delight in painting scenes of destruction that are calculated to create fear, and to intensify it where it now exists. One senator has predicted that most of us in U. S. A. will be destroyed within seven years. That is the menace of the Atomic bomb. But the Atomic bomb is only a fire cracker in comparison with the destructive force of the prospective Hydrogen bomb. I read that a Canadian scientist has declared the danger of this bomb setting the whole world on fire. And then we are told that this bomb may never, never materialize; it may be a dud. And yet we get the hysteria from what may never come to pass. If we would take this synthetic fear which has been engendered and built up by the threats of our enemies and the wild suggestions of our friends, and subject it to the analysis of a living faith, it would either evaporate or subside to the realm of mere possibilities. But then we must have something to fret about.

## Pessimism and Optimism

We cannot absolutely partition off these two categories and say I am wholly in one or the other. The fact is we all are partially in both. There is a rosy optimism that is not of God. It has come about by theologians swinging from the absolute sovereignty of God to His universal Fatherhood.

It says we are all children of a loving father, and have nothing to fear. Sin is only good in the making. God is very lenient toward it. Hell is a relic of the Dark Ages—the creation of Roman Catholic superstition. A good God is bound by his gentle character to bring all safely home at last. This is called final Restoration.

Yes, we believe in the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man; but it is based not on the sentimental speculations of those who repudiate the supreme authority of God's word, but is based upon the experience of regenerating grace which alone can make us children of God. The Pharisees boasted of God as their father. Jesus gave them their pedigree and told them they were of their father the devil. The greatest co-laborers with the devil are not the wild lawless crowd that will do most anything for money, but they are the cultured, educated rationalists and materialists, with degrees enough to their names to hang them, holding prominent places in university, church, and state, who with their specious sophistries would undermine all faith in the supernatural and utterly repudiate the reality of all experiences in grace.

There are always two sides to every moral and spiritual estimate. The Church has ever been the grandest institution under the sun. To the Church we owe all that is best in home, in education, in morality and religion. Preachers have been the protagonists of these good things.

On the other hand, the Church has been the

greatest hindrance to the cause of Christ, and preachers have been the greatest examples of satanic power. Here we have the good and the bad in contrast. We see it especially in the writings of the prophets. Read Jeremiah and Isaiah and see what pessimists they were, painting the blackest pictures of moral depravity amongst the people, but soon breaking forth in triumphant songs of the glory of the coming kingdom. Then they were optimists.

## Freedom and Sovereignty

The sovereignty of God, that makes him the absolute determiner of our moral and spiritual destiny, in its ultimate logic, would destroy all individual freedom, and we say with that would go all moral responsibility. I cannot explain the relation of God's omniscience to my moral freedom. I know Paul says that "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." That was not through the operation of irresistible grace. If every child of God's salvation were settled irrevocably back in eternity, then every impenitent sinner's final destruction was fixed absolutely back there too. John Wesley said such a doctrine made God worse than the devil.

But we know, too, that our freedom lies within a narrow circle in comparison with the absoluteness of God. We feel we are free by the grace of God, to choose to run in the election and to make our election sure. If man is not free to determine his own destiny, then the tears Jesus wept over Jerusalem had little meaning. He cried, "Oh Jerusalem! Jerusalem! How oft would I have gathered you together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not!" Shall we say they would **not** because they could **not**. That their choices for evil were predestinated as the choices of Peter and Paul were predestinated for good! But old Dean Burnham would say, "You Methodists preach like Armenians and then get down and pray like Calvinists. You cry, 'O, Lord, save this man. Make the pressure so heavy that he cannot resist. Break down his stubborn will.'" We do believe in a sovereignty of God that can cause the wrath of man to praise Him, and restrain the full measure of wrath. Here is where my optimism comes in. I believe it was God who handled Alexander, Napoleon, Kaiser Wilhelm, Hitler and Mussolini. He has his eye on Stalin. And so I say we must trust in God and do all in our power to turn our enemies from precipitating war, by conciliation and assurance that we seek only a world of freedom for all; and such freedom will have high regard for the rights of others, be they Americans, British, or Russians.

## My Last Contribution

Although there are generally some mistakes appearing in every contribution I make to The Highway, yet the last excelled them all. There was little regard for Orthography, punctuation or grammar. The *i* was left out of villain. I tried to describe the preciseness of a formalist in religion. I said, "they may even wear long skirts." I put 90,000 as the crowd at the football game; it was printed 9,000. Then my final note was cut short in the word Pharisee and there was appended a most beautiful spiritual effusion by another writer. I have always been against the dual authorship of Isaiah, but there can be no dispute about the dual authorship of that last contribution of mine.

The internal evidence is most conclusive. I never could write so beautifully as that unknown writer in what seemed to be a closing paragraph. I wish the entire article might appear. The editor may give it to us in the next issue. In the meantime I hope some one in the office may read over what I have written and so save me from some of the mistakes that I have not made.

## Palestine

Palestine is still a hot spot in the council of nations. Prophets are prophesying that the Jews are going back to establish a millennial kingdom. But the Jews and Arabs face each other in threatening attitude. Violence may break out any day over the possession of the Holy Places and the final control of the Holy City. The Jews are not inclined to listen to the voice of conciliation from the UN. They will have their own way or else. In the meantime the several million of Jews in America seem not too much concerned with the situation. They seem little inclined to leave a land of prosperity to go back to a land stricken with poverty. Food, clothing, housing are of great scarcity in Palestine. The Jews are calling on the UN for financial relief, which they estimate at several hundred million dollars. They seem to have the vision of a kingdom of material splendor, that would put them at the head in the international race with Russia. I wish I could see the slightest sign of any recognition of Jesus and His spiritual kingdom amongst the Jews in Palestine.

It does look as if the Jews are ever converted to Jesus, it will not be by the suasive influence of the Holy Spirit and the spiritual transformation of the individual, but by the sovereign power of God. If that be true, then God will change his entire method of saving men. Individual moral freedom will have no place in the Jews' decision.

## THE CROSS

Redeemed from death, with joy we'll sing;

The triumphs of our suffering King;  
His wounded hands—his bleeding side,

The wondrous cross on which he died.

Those wounds are fountains, whence do flow

Rivers of balm for human woe;

That blood can make the vilest pure,

That blood alone can cleanse and cure.

Those hands, extended on the tree,

Hold out a pardon full and free,

And, stained with sacrificial gore,

Point ruined souls to mercy's door.

The spear's deep gash which gapes so wide,

Invites the fugitive to hide

In God incarnate—there, alone,

Sure refuge from his fear is known.

The crown of thorns proclaims a King

Victorious by suffering;

Henceforth, shall grief to Christians be

Arrayed with regal dignity.

That dying groan, that last loud cry,

Are the glad shout of victory;

The bruised heel grinds Satan's head,

And life is won by Jesus dead.

The cross a conqueror's chariot seems,

Prouder than warrior's wildest dreams,

Where Christ, all red with battle's stains,

Drags sin and death in captive chains.

Then let us, glad and grateful, sing

The triumphs of our suffering King;

Count all things else as empty dross,

And glory only in the cross.

—Unknown.