

## THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS.

By Rev. W. Edmund Smith

Psalm xxix :2: Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

To many the word beauty is a poor word to describe holiness. They say that holiness as taught by those that profess the experience is to them not beautiful. It is austere, prohibitive, and self-denying. It meets you the very first thing, with a cross, and says: "If any man will be my disciple let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me." It demands that one cut off the right hand, if it offends, and pluck out the right eye.

"Holiness to us," they say, "is not beautiful, for those that profess to be holy are noisy in their demonstrations, and clamorous in their praying. We think that holiness should be quiet. Be still and know that I am God." Again they say: "Holiness is militant and aggressive. It is ever making trouble where it goes. Its favorite song is 'The fight is on.'"

To all these assertions I will agree, with some explanations. Yes! Holiness is austere and prohibitive, with the same austerity a fond mother has when she takes from the hand of her child the sharp knife with which it might injure itself. Of course the child cries when its will is crossed, and so does the carnal Christian cry when he or she is called to give up those recreations and indulgences that are pleasing to the flesh, but work injury to the soul. Christ puts the cross before our eyes and says: "They that are Christ's must crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts." The majority of people shrink from a surgical operation. But this is the death which leads into life more abundantly.

And we will agree that those that have the blessing of holiness are somewhat noisy and demonstrative. We have strong Scriptural justification for this. "Praise is comely for the upright." "Cry out and shout thou inhabitant of Zion, for great is the holy one of Israel in the midst of thee." When the announcement was made to the meek and lowly Mary that she was to be the mother of our Lord, she did not bow her head in silence. She said, "Be it unto me according to Thy word." But when the holy Elizabeth met Mary, the former cried out with a loud voice, praising God, and there came from Mary's soul that wonderful deliverance called the Magnificat. What a jubilation those two holy women had, one of them to be the mother of John the Baptist, and the other the mother of Jesus! And, when those disciples in that "Upper Room" were filled with the Holy Ghost, they did not whisper their testimony down a well; they shouted and praised God so hilariously that those who were not on the inside thought they were filled with new wine. Peter and John were so filled with God that they had to get soap boxes and stand on the street corners and testify to the glorious power of Christ. They were simply irrepressible. The authorities, the holiness fighters, tried to put the lid on, but it was blown off every time by the dynamite of God that filled the hearts of those humble men. This was not beautiful to those who had murdered Jesus and wanted to forget it. Red hot testimony to the power of the cleansing blood is not sweet or beautiful to worldly, sanctimonious Christians, who are trampling the blood of Jesus beneath their feet by their godless walk and conversation.

Yes! we agree that holiness is militant and aggressive, and this makes it beautiful in the eyes of God. The holy person is bound to take a stand against everything he believes to be not of God, and is bound to line up with everything

that makes for righteousness. Jesus said: "I came not to bring peace, but a sword." And often there has to be many pieces before there can be permanent peace. "Sure I must fight if I would reign. Increase my courage, Lord! I'll bear the toil, endure the pain, supported by Thy word."

"Onward, Christian soldiers, marching as to war,

With the Cross of Jesus going on before."

These are some of the militant songs true holiness people sing. But what a mockery for dancing, card playing, movie, theatre-going, tobacco-using church members to sing, even if they do belong to a church called "The Holy Trinity" or some other big and pious name. All the holiness such people have is in the name of their church. A few really sanctified people in a carnal church, who will stand strongly against all the carnal worldliness in it, will cause the poor little man-pleasing parson more trouble than fifty of his card-playing members. And when the preacher gets the blessing what trouble he makes the worldly crowd! They soon kick him out and get a man who is more sane and pliable. If you can read your Bible, Old Testament and New, and fail to see that real holiness demands separation from the world and from all sin, that it is praiseful and rejoicing and hilarious, in all those that have it in reality, that such make a real army that fights not with carnal weapons, but with those of spiritual might, then you must have spiritual astigmatism. A man was talking to me recently and when I told him what God requires of His follower, he replied "if that is Christianity, then I don't want it." He told the truth. He smelled as if he didn't want it—more like a polecat than a child of God.

Some think if you make holiness beautiful enough everybody will want it. Well, Jesus came as the "Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley," and when the self-righteous Pharisees saw Him, there was no beauty in him that they should desire him. They not only saw no beauty, but they were disgusted. Worse than that, they were incensed and filled with the hatred of hell. They followed the blessed Jesus with that bitterness of spirit that knew no cessation till they saw Him nailed to the tree. O some say, "if you love people they will love you in return." Did it work with the Pharisees? Did it work with the Jews in their attitude towards Paul? Did it work with the Episcopalians in their attitude towards John Wesley? The opposition to all these was only their opposition to God and His holiness. They would have blessed and endorsed a compromising, sanctimonious, man-pleasing religion; but one that uncovered the hidden sins and exposed the inmost recesses of the heart, such a holiness was hateful to them. And this is what makes the way too narrow. It demands a too conspicuous discipleship. It involves renunciation of sin, self and the world, and the bearing of ignominy and shame. It means filling up behind the sufferings of Christ. You can buy a cheaper kind as sold by Worldly Wiseman who did a good business back in the time that Bunyan lived, and has opened up branch stores all over the world, that are served by up-to-date and modernistic pastors, who will guarantee their commodities excellent. You will have to take your guarantee to that one who often comes as an "angel of light." When we know that today the average church member lives in the world and is of the world, we are not surprised that the way of true holiness is not popular; that few there be that find it. They call that holiness beautiful that will let them have all their carnal passions and indulgences and take

them home to heaven at last. They take that way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof is the way of death.

So much for these few preliminary words. But there is another side to this question. We must confess that holiness has had a poor chance because it has been too poorly advertised. Too often it has been misrepresented and caricatured by those cults that have said holiness was their ideal. First, there were the Mystics, who had such wonderful inner revelations of the Spirit, that they no longer had need of the Word of God to instruct and direct them. They had visions and ecstasies and dreams which they regarded as much inspired as the epistles of Paul. These and the Pietists departed from the authority of the Scriptures and of course ran into great error and excesses.

We are frank to admit that there is a wonderful mystical element in all true religious experience. "There is joy unspeakable and full of glory." The early church and the early Methodists had it in marked degree; but no more so than the truly sanctified have it today. Holy Ghost religion is two-thirds emotion,—peace and joy ultimating in righteousness. But the Mystics were more ardent in cultivating mere emotional experiences than they were in making it fruit in ethical deportment. There may be a highly emotional experience that is born of a heated imagination and a corrupt heart, but there can be no ethical conduct of the highest kind, which does not spring from a life that is begotten of the Holy Ghost. The Wesleyan revival had excesses that Wesley deplored and they grew out of the perversion of the experience of heart holiness as taught by him. He was strong and holy enough to strike at the perversion, and to do all in his power to rectify the evils wrought, without throwing overboard the doctrine and experience which he believed to be a special depositum committed to the people called Methodists, by the Holy Ghost. Quietism crept in on the societies, and many thought they had reached the climax of holiness by sitting still and doing nothing by way of prayer or testimony. How Wesley punctured that delusion! He said, "If you don't feel like praying, pray till you do; if you don't feel like giving, give till you do. Use the means of grace, not as trusting in them but as an inspiration to your faith." This was the advice of Wesley. Along with his confidence in the wonderful power of God to justify and sanctify wholly, solely on the condition of faith, he maintained the necessity of the inner experience being judged by the outward life that flowed therefrom. Wesley's practical interpretation of Scripture, and his practical test of experience, made him the safe and incomparable leader, whose instruction is most applicable to Christian living today. He had a true vision without being visionary; he had a true mystical devotion but avoided the errors of the Mystics.

Again, Asceticism has done great injury to holiness. This had its origin in Egypt, where have sprung many errors. The Ascetics saw the world hopelessly corrupt, and to cultivate holiness of heart and life one must get out of the world and have no contact with it in commercial, social or religious life. The Ascetics clad themselves in coarse clothing and sought the dens and the caves and the deserts of the earth. They went in for the annihilation of all their physical appetites and passions. They saw sin as existing in the body, and the more they flagellated their bodies and ground them down, the holier they became. We see this in the extreme in India today, in the so-called holy men who have abandoned all prac-