

## SOME THOUGHTS ON DRESS

By Rev. W. Edmund Smith

After preaching forty-four years I have yet to preach my first sermon on dress. This is my first article specifying on the subject. Then why should I be called an extremist on this question? I have touched on the matter incidentally because I firmly believe the following of the lewd and indecent fashions, that for the most part come from immoral Paris, denotes a spirit far from that of Christ, who taught purity, simplicity and humility in every phase of conduct. Then pray bear with me while I in a short article, endeavor to express some conviction on this important subject.

We have often said, "get people wholly sanctified and the externals will take care of themselves." The incoming new life will push off the last and least remains of the carnal worldly life that manifests itself in fashionable and gaudy attire, that gains the attention and admiration of the crowd. Someone has said: "Don't try to pick feathers; give the hens the proper remedy and they will do their own moulting." All this is true. But when we hear people trying to profess entire sanctification, clad in attire that contradicts their testimony, we are compelled to quote with modification the old adage: "The way you look speaks so loud I can't hear what you say." When we read the third of Isaiah and also what Peter said about plaiting the hair, the wearing of gold, and the putting on of apparel, meaning of course costly and showy raiment, we must conclude that the beauty parlor is no innovation, and that pride in a woman's heart has ever been the same. She wants to make herself attractive to the male of the species, and so makes a display of her beauty natural or artificial. The corruption and degeneracy of an age, has always manifested itself in woman's attire and if this be the case, we must be living nearer Sodom than to the heavenly Jerusalem. And the worst of it is, those who profess absolute devotion to Christ and holiness as Christ's own peculiar treasure, often look more like HOLLYWOOD than holiness; hence if we were to judge by the outside we must conclude these creatures of fashion are not fond of the teachings of Isaiah, Paul and Peter but still can sing, "I've lost the world and the world's lost me," and yet dress like the world.

Is it not strange that we hear so little on this subject from the pulpit? The reason is many preachers have regarded the situation as hopeless and slide over the whole matter. The thing has gone on until we are not shocked or surprised at anything. I well remember when a young lad visiting the little city near my home, to have pointed out to me one of the inmates of a house of ill-fame. Her distinguishing characteristics were a great wide rimmed hat loaded with ostrich feathers, her highly colored cheeks and an air of recklessness. But her body was not exposed. If some of our Christian (?) girls of today had, with their emasculated skirts and sleeveless dresses and low bosoms, walked down the streets of that little city, they would have made even the inmates of Wilmot's Alley stare with surprise, and the hand of the law would have been laid upon them. The thing has come on gradually until nudism is being advocated and followed by many who call themselves cultured and refined. Time has changed the fashions but has it changed God?

We have been informed that in the State of Massachusetts, an old property has been pur-

chased by some families belonging to professional classes, noted for their culture and their morality (?), for the purpose of establishing a nudist colony. Let anyone protest and he is denounced as low-minded and vile of heart. This is all in the interests of health and morality (?). We all know that when heathens get converted the first thing they do is to hide their nakedness in becoming attire. And this nudist fad only shows how easy it is for people to revert to heathenism when they are not controlled by the Spirit of God. The sad fact is that children are brought up to this thing and are strangers to the spirit of modesty that prompts them to regard their bodies as sacred. The crimes against little girls by married men is appalling. One officer said: "For every crime that is brought to light ten are never exposed." He urged, "Mothers to safeguard their little girls and see that they are decently clad." This came from a police officer of high rank. The same spirit that dominates the immoral beaches and watering places has invaded our streets especially in the hot weather. We are more heathen than Christian, and the dress of women-kind as nothing else, proclaims this condition.

You may go into some so-called holiness churches and on the front row of the choir may see young ladies all members of the church, with arms bare nearly to the shoulder and dresses well to the knees. They may be singing songs of the deepest devotion to Christ but they do not look happy. Do I say they are bad girls? Not at all. They are only in style, that is all, and little is thought of it. But wouldn't the male members of that choir look strange with trousers to the knee and arms bare to the shoulder? People would be horrified. But the sad thing is that such young ladies can imagine that they are the possessors of the grace that purifies the heart from all pride and inbred sin.

While leading a young people's meeting one night I took this position that "Holiness is the most sensible and reasonable thing to teach for it assures of health and comeliness as far as possible. God beautifies his saints with salvation the King's daughter is all-glorious within." Get wholly sanctified and it will regulate your attire, young woman, even to the heels of your shoes. Medical men cry out against those toothpick heels, and say they are most injurious to the back, and threaten the ankle by a misstep. So when I see a woman who professes holiness wearing those silly shoes, mincing along, I am compelled to say she may have some grace in her heart, but she has little in her head. Get holiness and you can wear your dress as low as you want to or as high as you want to; you will seek modesty and becoming attire." Was this outlandish and vile talk? Yet one who is a leader and a preacher at that charged me with rant and lewdness of expression. The explanation is that when he preaches on dress it is always to excuse the fashions and to make the discipline of his own church on the matter of dress a joke. How ridiculous vanity can make folks! It manifests itself in little children and it is sad when parents foster that spirit in them. When only a small boy I can well remember the admiration I had for a young man who had been over to Maine for a number of months and came back with a flashy suit of clothes, a big chain across his breast, a big ring on his finger, tie and stickpin to match the whole, hat on the side of his head and a feather in the side of his hat, handkerchief in breast pocket—this all made me dream when

I might have a similar outfit some day. Yes, and I lived to get it and was just as proud of it as was he. The hat on the side of the head was the only proper way for a young dude to wear his hat. We now laugh at the poor silly little head and heart that could dote on those things. And we have to laugh and mourn when we see a religious worker, a sister, come into the church with a little hat over her ear at an angle of 45 degrees. If the poor girl had lost an ear it might be excusable, but it was done to make her becoming. It just ruined her looks and her influence too.

I see the women are now putting something that looks like a piece cut out of a screen door, over their hats; they call it a veil I think. Some women evidently think it adds to their attractiveness. Such poor souls would be more attractive if they cut a piece out of a bed quilt and put it over their hats and then we could not see the face at all, and what a lot of anguish it would save those who have to stand the look!

Yes! and young preachers are crimping their hair and stretching their gold chains across their breasts, and some are putting on the ring and parting their hair in the middle. This may give them good balance. They are more careful to carry a comb and a mirror along with them than they are to have a New Testament, and use them more. These may be foolish little notions seen in embryonic preachers but a handkerchief in the breast-pocket always reminds me of the days of foolish boyhood. When we become men we put away childish things. Holiness does create true spiritual manhood and womanhood. O yes, one says we get so big that these little things you are prating about are too small for our notice. I have not said half as much as did Isaiah and Peter and Paul. If you get offended at this it is because you are a spiritual babe. God's grace will make us peculiar without making us odd. Why do God's children make themselves ridiculous by ostentatious dress and grasping at the fads that come along? When they do this they need another dip.

## DANGEROUS GROUND

The great danger that is threatening the cause of holiness at this present time is our absorption in business and the home cares. The legitimate concerns of life are allowed to go beyond their proper limit in our effort to meet our financial needs—or proper wants—so we absorb the time and energy that should be devoted to the service of God. Peter said, "casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you," must surely have included the business and home cares. There is a greater danger of truly sanctified going too far in their care and effort on these lines than not being sufficiently diligent. Occasionally one may neglect these things, but the cases are rare, but our people justify themselves in this over absorption because they make a good use of their money, but forget part of the text they quote, "Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord"; the last part is really the more important. Souls that they may help are of more value than the extra work done, or the extra dollars earned, as material things must perish, while the souls live on whether saved or not. It is said that the ox was for sacrifice or service, but we should be ready to sacrifice and serve. "Trust in the Lord and do good so shall ye dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed."—From King's Highway, 1904, by the late Rev. S. A. Baker.