

Reform

Habitat

Clothing

Cleanliness

Food

Thoughts

Steward-
ship

Language


Work

Time
management

Exercise

Partnership

Contact
with others

A black silhouette of a family consisting of a man, a woman, and a small child, all holding hands and walking towards the right. The man is on the left, the child is in the middle, and the woman is on the right. Their shadows are cast on the ground below them, appearing as grey silhouettes.

The Principles of Reform

Part 4

Dignity and Grace

The dignity of a human being is a fundamental right that God has given us. "And God said, Let us make man in our image..." *Genesis* 1:26. We are made in the image of God in that we are given the ability, right, and duty, to make decisions and bear responsibility. God wants us to see ourselves as intelligent beings, and He wants us to respect ourselves. If we do not respect ourselves, we will not respect God or anyone else either.

Dignity should not be confused with pride. God does not want us to think that our standard alone is sufficient. We are not the source, we are only dependent creatures. "For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?" *1Corinthians* 4:7. We belong to God both by creation and by redemption, and therefore we should consider ourselves children of the Highest, and behave accordingly. Our Father is a King, and the king's children honor their Father by their outward appearance and their conduct. For, in God's kingdom external things are not just a trained pattern of behavior, but a natural expression of the heart's convictions.

"The most careful cultivation of the outward proprieties of life is not sufficient to shut out all fretfulness, harsh judgment, and unbecoming speech. True refinement will never be revealed so long as self is considered as the supreme object. Love must dwell in the heart. A thoroughgoing Christian draws his motives of action from his deep heart love for his Master. Up through the roots of his affection for Christ springs an unselfish interest in his brethren. Love imparts to its possessor grace, propriety, and comeliness of deportment. It illuminates the countenance and subdues the voice; it refines and elevates the whole being."

The Ministry of Healing, 490.1.

Dignity means to be aware of the fact that we

- are individuals who can think for themselves
- have the duty to make decisions
- bear responsibility for ourselves before God and our fellows
- take up our place of duty in society

When Jesus lived on this earth people were often impressed by His dignity and natural grace. He lived what He taught, and He bore the responsibility for everything that He did and said. His obedience to God the Father was perfect, because He obeyed willingly as an independently thinking person. He bore the responsibility for His ministry to others. Even when He carried out requests from others, He still bore the responsibility for His own actions. In the workshop He filled His place as faithfully as He did in society, in healing, preaching, and on the cross. Aware of His dignity, He revealed the grace of a quiet, meek spirit.

Of His childhood we read, "He spoke and acted with the wisdom of a child and not of a man, honoring His parents and carrying out their wishes in helpful ways, according to the ability of a child. But at each stage of His development He was perfect, with the simple, natural grace of a sinless life." *Christ's Object Lessons*, 82.3.

Grace is manifested in friendliness, frankness, and modesty. "One of the characteristics that should be especially cherished and cultivated in every child is that self-forgetfulness which imparts to the life such an unconscious grace. Of all excellences of character this is one of the most beautiful, and for every true lifework it is one of the qualifications most essential." *Education*, 237.2.

Grace and selfishness are opposing principles. "But instead of grace, meekness, lowliness of mind, kindness, gentleness, and love shining in his life, self, important self, appears everywhere." *Testimonies for the Church* 5:74.3. Those who are interested only in themselves stifle the tender plant of grace.

The essence of Jesus' teachings and life is selflessness. As a Man, Jesus revealed in His own character a grace that stood out distinctively from the background of gray everyday life. And He has the same goal for us. "As a flower turns to the sun, that the bright rays may touch it with tints of beauty, so will the soul turn to the Sun of Righteousness,

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that heaven's light may beautify the character with the graces of the character of Christ." *The Desire of Ages*, 468.2.

Do we understand what grace really means? If we have grace we spread a certain atmosphere that is comely, decent, tactful, and proper. Grace also means charming, which implies beautiful, pleasant, and attractive. Grace is a sweetness of disposition which reveals a natural, meek nature. Children, for example, possess natural grace - a loving nature that uplifts and brings joy to others. Unfortunately, this characteristic is lost all too quickly as the result of unwise attention, flattery and praise. In the animal kingdom the word "grace" is often applied to animals such as the gazelle, deer, or giraffe, that impress us with their harmonious, easy movements, but which also possess a certain shyness. Grace is not anxiety, but reverence and respect. A young girl who quietly lets others have the first place appears pleasant and attractive to us.

It is God's purpose that the dignity which He has given us be expressed in the grace of a meek and quiet spirit.

Solomon said to his son, "And have joy of the wife of your youth, your lovely hind, your graceful



"We judge of a person's character by the style of dress worn. A modest, godly woman will dress modestly. A refined taste, a cultivated mind, will be revealed in the choice of a simple, appropriate attire.... How charming, how interesting, is simplicity in dress, which in comeliness [grace] can be compared with the flowers of the field."

Child Guidance, 413.5.

doe. Her love will invigorate you always, through her love you will flourish continually." *Proverbs* 5:18, 19 (NAB).

Our grace is seen in our entire behavior and in our clothing, hairstyle, and face. Therefore it is written "It [clothing] should have the grace, the beauty, the appropriateness of natural simplicity. Christ has warned us against the pride of life, but not against its grace and natural beauty." *The Ministry of Healing*, 289.1.

"Of how little value are gold or pearls or costly array in comparison with the loveliness of Christ. Natural loveliness [grace] consists in symmetry, or the harmonious proportion of parts, each with the other; but spiritual loveliness [grace] consists in the harmony or likeness of our souls to Jesus." *Child Guidance*, 423.5.

In this text spiritual and physical grace are compared. Indeed, our spiritual life is reflected in our outward appearance more than we may realize or admit. Whatever is within us will be revealed. Therefore each of us should watch over our heart carefully so that it will be a pure spring from which the water of life spreads to others. (Compare with *John* 4:14 ff.) Our words, our glances, and our gestures are just as much vessels to preach the gospel as our outward appearance. But of course, we can only preach the treasure we ourselves have within. It is God's purpose that the dignity which He has given us be expressed in the grace of a meek and quiet spirit.

"Created to be 'the image and glory of God' (1 Corinthians 11:7), Adam and Eve had received endowments not unworthy of their high destiny. Graceful and symmetrical in form, regular and beautiful in feature, their countenances glowing with the tint of health and the light of joy and hope, they bore in outward resemblance the likeness of their Maker. Nor was this likeness manifest in the physical nature only. Every faculty of mind and soul reflected the Creator's glory." *Education*, 20.2.

"I was informed that the inhabitants of earth had been degenerating, losing their strength and comeliness. Satan has the power of disease and death, and with every age the effects of the curse have been more visible, and the power of Satan more plainly seen. Those who lived in the days of Noah and Abraham resembled the angels in form, comeliness, and strength. But every succeeding generation have been growing weaker and more subject to disease, and their life has been of shorter duration. Satan has been learning how to annoy and enfeeble the race." *Early Writings*, 184.2.

"Teach the children that because of God's great love their natures may be changed and brought into harmony with His. Teach them that He would have their lives beautiful with the graces of the flowers. Teach them, as they gather the sweet blossoms, that He who made the flowers is more beautiful than they. Thus the tendrils of their hearts will be entwined about Him. He who is 'altogether lovely' will become to them as a daily companion and familiar friend, and their lives will be transformed into the image of His purity." *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, 98.1.



Men's and Woman's Clothing

As we have seen, God gave His followers on earth a special order in dress. He directed them to make a difference between men's and women's clothing. "A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment, for all who do so are an abomination to the LORD your God." *Deuteronomy* 22:5. This text does not describe what men's and women's clothing comprises, it merely says that

they should be different from each other, and that a disregard of this command would rule out any fellowship with God.

We may wonder whether this command applied only to Biblical times and if it is not outdated in these modern times of emancipation. It is true that circumstances and relationships change, but God's thoughts and feelings do not change, and His actions are always the same. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning." *James 1:17*. Therefore we really need to understand why God places so much value on a differentiation between men's and women's clothing.

When God created humanity He created both a man and a woman (see *Genesis 1:27*.) In doing so He had specific thoughts, goals, and purposes. Adam was created as the originator of the human race. His task was to rule the earth, the animal and plant world, and the following generations, in the same way that God is ruler of the universe and His creatures. In order to make the copy of the original complete, God gave him a helper, just as He had a Helper in the work of creation (see *Hebrews 1:2*). Eve was taken from Adam's body, and was therefore a part of him. At the same time she was an individual with rights and duties, abilities and responsibilities. She had an understanding which she was to use in judging and making decisions, just as Adam did. She was a copy of Adam (see *1 Corinthians 11:7*), but she had different tasks. She was created to help Adam in his lifework, to enrich him and the whole earth with her ministry, to spread joy, and to be an equal with Adam.

Adam and Eve were happy and fully contented in their different roles until sin found an entrance. Then pride and arrogance arose. Their unity was broken up, which resulted in distrust, fear, and strife.

Eve was created to

- help Adam in his lifework
- enrich him and all the earth with her existence
- spread joy
- be an equal with Adam

God had a solution ready to resolve this crisis - He created an order which was to restore the original picture. Woman was placed a little lower

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than man, so that it was clear whom God wanted to lead the family (see *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 58.3). This new order revealed the humiliation of Christ, who, because of sin, became a Man and humbled Himself even to death on the cross. "Who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross." *Philippians* 2:6-8.

Woman, who had been created as a helper to her husband and who, unfortunately, "helped" him into sin, was happily given a new opportunity for service. What a privilege - to be able to represent the exalted ministry of Christ! God demonstrated His trust in her by providing the possibility of developing wisdom, self-denial, humility, and responsibility in her relationship to man! What an opportunity God gave her in molding the character of her husband's children in the image of God!

Woman was not degraded to the level of a mere automat, but in humility and modesty she was to complement man in order to enable him to fulfill his original task. Man had failed as a ruler of the earth and had given his sovereignty to Satan. He too was given a second opportunity to learn the divine art of rulership. He was to exercise patience in toil and work, exercise his office as shepherd with consideration and dedication, and learn to forget self completely in his ministry to others. He was to be the head of the wife just as Christ is Head of the church. "For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body." *Ephesians* 5:23.

Both before and after sin, God had made the happiness of humanity dependent on their understanding and faithful fulfillment of their mutual service. Men were to learn to rule in the right way mindless of self. Adam fell because he neglected his responsibility, choosing his own advantage instead. He did not want to lose Eve, who had given him so much joy, but in clinging to her, he forgot his duty to his Creator. (See *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 56.2.) It is impossible to secure a blessing by holding on to it with all one's might.

For her part, Eve needed to learn to submit and to serve selflessly. She fell because she trusted more in her own wisdom than in the word of God and her husband through whom God would have protected her. (See *Pa-*

triarchs and Prophets, 53.5.) Woman is to reveal sincerity and faithfulness in a quiet, meek way. She can make her life an enrichment for all by obedience rather than by loud self-assertion.

	Adam	Eva
What did they have to learn?	As a husband he was to learn to rule in the right way and forget himself	Eve was to learn to submit and to serve with self-denial
Why did they have to learn this?	He had neglected his responsibility in favor of his own advantage	She had relied more on her own works than the Word and her husband

The different roles of male and female, both of whom point to Christ’s character and work, should not be swapped. God has given each of us the ability to do our work, but not to do the work of another. If the roles are changed it will invariably lead to more discord and suffering. The truth of this can easily be seen in our society today.

Similarly, an abuse of the roles also leads to suffering, as the examples of slavery and the oppression of the Middle Ages show. In such instances men misuse their roles and degrade women by the use of force to become their powerless servants with no will of their own. In an effort to correct such misuse, our society has tried to place women in the same roles as men. But misuse of roles cannot be corrected by swapping the roles. Both of these evils bear bad fruit.

From God’s perspective, men and women are already equal in terms of rights, duties, intelligence, and freedom of decision. Both men and women are independent personalities whose decisions, actions, words, and work are their own responsibility. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." *Galatians* 3:28. But equality in the sense of emancipation, which excludes any submission, and which rejects any dis-

The misuse of roles cannot be corrected by swapping the roles.

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tion in roles and responsibilities, eventually leads to a tragic loss of respect. As a result, every form of communication becomes more difficult and there is inevitably strife and fighting for the supremacy. And it is just such a spirit as this that excludes us from communion with God.

When God said, "A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment, for all who do so are an abomination to the LORD your God" (*Deuteronomy 22:5*), He was speaking about this harmful swapping of roles. He was not concerned so much with the external clothes, as with the principles that lay at the root of this problem, for the outward appearance of a person is only an expression of their inner attitude. When a woman strives to take the role of a man and gives up her own God-given role, as is often the case in today's society, it is not surprising that she chooses her clothing according to the style of a man's clothing.

"Nevertheless, neither is man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the Lord."
1 Corinthians 11:11.

"Eve had been perfectly happy by her husband's side in her Eden home; but, like restless modern Eves, she was flattered with the hope of entering a higher sphere than that which God had assigned her. In attempting to rise above her original position, she fell far below it. A similar result will be reached by all who are unwilling to take up cheerfully their life duties in accordance with God's plan. In their efforts to reach positions for which He has not fitted them, many are leaving vacant the place where they might be a blessing. In their desire for a higher sphere, many have sacrificed true womanly dignity and nobility of character, and have left undone the very work that Heaven appointed them."
Patriarchs and Prophets, 59.1.

"There is still another style of dress which will be adopted by a class of so-called dress reformers. They will imitate the opposite sex, as nearly as possible. They will wear the cap, pants, vest, coat, and boots, the last of

which is the most sensible part of the costume. Those who adopt and advocate this style of dress, are carrying the so-called dress reform to very objectionable lengths. Confusion will be the result. Some who adopt this costume may be correct in their views in general upon the health question, and they could be instrumental in accomplishing vastly more good if they did not carry the matter of dress to such extremes.

"In this style of dress God's order has been reversed, and his special directions disregarded. Deut. xxii, 5. 'The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment for all that do so are abomination unto the LORD thy God.' This style of dress, God would not have his people adopt. It is not modest apparel, and is not at all fitting for modest, humble females who profess to be Christ's followers. God's prohibitions are lightly regarded by all who would advocate the doing away of the distinction of dress between males and females. The extreme positions taken by some dress-reformers upon this subject cripple their influence." *Selected Messages* 2:477.7, 8.

"There is an increasing tendency to have women in their dress and appearance as near like the other sex as possible, and to fashion their dress very much like that of men, but God pronounces it abomination. 'In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety.' 1 Timothy 2:9." *Testimonies for the Church* 1:457.2.

"God designed that there should be a plain distinction between the dress of men and women, and has considered the matter of sufficient importance to give explicit directions in regard to it; for the same dress worn by both sexes would cause confusion and great increase of crime. Were the apostle Paul alive, and should he behold women professing godliness with this style of dress, he would utter a rebuke. 'In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.' The mass of professed Christians utterly disregard the teachings of the apostles, and wear gold, pearls, and costly array." *Testimonies for the Church* 1:460.1.

During Ellen White's time, dress reform was especially concerned with freeing women from the unhealthy and impractical dress of their day.

A woman who wears men's clothing is an abhorrence to the Lord because she preaches the enemy's message and declares God's order to be unimportant.

Instead, the aim of dress reform was to clothe women sensibly, even if this meant a change in the fashions of that time. Ellen White was a reformer who saw the importance of the health aspect and worked to create a new style that was suitable for the tasks of a woman. To this end she supported the development of a reform dress that countered the prevalent fashions. The health aspect was important, but this was not the only criterion. The dress should also be becoming, orderly, clean, fitting, practical, and respectable. These considerations brought dress reform into harmony with the moral and mental aspects.

Ellen White considered God's order and pointed to the moral aspect, which is important in our relationship to God and the opposite sex. Copying the clothing of the other sex causes confusion, and when the clear distinction between the sexes becomes vague it damages interpersonal relationships. And if we become so used to taking the place of someone else that we no longer know our role in our relationship to God, then the damage increases immeasurably.

A worker in a business does not dress like the boss, and so avoids unpleasant mistakes. At the court of a king, his dress makes it apparent that he is the ruler. No one else dresses or acts like the king. Daniel, for example, remained ever faithful in his role as prime minister to the king. And even when Nebuchadnezzar was too sick to fulfil his role, Daniel acted in his stead for seven years as though it were the king himself, while keeping the king's place free for his return. This spirit of selfless service in Daniel helped the proud ruler to understand God's role better and led him to humble himself and submit to God.

The Hebrews' Clothing

In order to gain a better understanding of the differences between men's and women's clothing, we will take a closer look at the clothes the Hebrews wore. A typical outfit consisted of an under garment, an outer garment, which in some cases was somewhat longer, shoes, a belt, and a cloak.

The Under Garment

Next to the body an under garment was worn - a kind of shirt made from wool or linen that reached to the knees. (See *Mark* 14:51; *Leviticus* 13:47.) In later times it was sometimes made of very fine linen. (See *Ezekiel* 16:13.) In the home, at work, and at other times, this was the only piece of clothing. Whoever wore only an under garment was referred to as "naked."

- "Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, 'It is the Lord!' Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment (for he had removed it), and plunged into the sea." *John* 21:7.
- "Then David returned to bless his household. And Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said, 'How glorious was the king of Israel today, uncovering himself today in the eyes of the maids of his servants, as one of the base fellows shamelessly uncovers himself!' *2Samuel* 6:20.
- Prisoners were stripped of their outer garments and led "naked," that is, dressed only in their under garment, into prison. Jewish prisoners are so represented in Assyrian pictures.
- "Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; when you see the naked, that you cover him, and not hide yourself from your own flesh? *Isaiah* 58:7.



The Outer Garment (Tunic)

Sometimes a second, longer garment was worn which reached down to the ankles. (See *1Samuel* 2:19; 24:5.) Both garments, or else only the under garment, were fastened by a belt.

The Cloak

The cloak was made up of a strong, almost square piece of material. It was so large that it could also be used for carrying all kinds of things. (See *Exodus* 12:34; *2Kings* 4:39.) The poor used it as a protection from the cold by day and by night. This was why it was not permitted to withhold the cloak as a pledge (see *Exodus* 22:25 ff). Jesus instructed His followers "If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also." *Matthew* 5:40.

When a man went to work, or the cloak hindered him, he usually removed it.

- Jesus "rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself." *John* 13:4.
- "And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes." *Matthew* 24:18.
- "They threw him out of the city, and began to stone him. The witnesses laid down their cloaks at the feet of a young man named Saul." *Acts* 7:58 (NAB).
- "Then the angel said to him, 'Put on your clothes and sandals.' And Peter did so. 'Wrap your cloak around you and follow me,' the angel told him." *Acts* 12:8.
- "A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road." *Matthew* 21:8 (NIV).

Tassels were attached with a blue string to the corners of the cloak. These were to remind the wearer of God's commands (see *Numbers* 15:38, 39; *Deuteronomy* 22:12). The Pharisees liked to wear these especially long (see *Matthew* 23:5).



"They were unable to present Him with costly gifts, but they spread their outer garments as a carpet in His path, and they also strewed the leafy branches of the olive and the palm in the way." *The Desire of Ages*, 570.1

"Speak to the children of Israel: Tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to put a blue thread in the tassels of the corners. And you shall have the tassel, that you may look upon it and remember all the commandments of the Lord and do them, and that you may not follow the harlotry to which your own heart and your own eyes are inclined." *Numbers* 15:38, 39.

"In place of the one coarse garment which was their covering by day, and their blanket at night, they hoped that Christ would give them the rich and costly robes of their conquerors." *The Desire of Ages*, 299.2.

Hebrew Women's Clothing

The women's clothing was similar to the men's, but nonetheless had some unmistakable differences. It was longer and wider, and made of finer material. The outer garment had sleeves that reached to the wrist. Unlike the men, the women also wore their hair long, and under certain conditions they wore a veil or a headscarf, which was often very long. (See *Genesis* 24:65; *Jeremiah* 2:32; *Ezekiel* 16:10.) Even from a distance it was easy to identify whether a person coming towards one was a man or a woman.



Of course, it is not our purpose to adopt the Hebrew's mode of dress in our times. We are not interested in copying a certain style, but we do want to understand the underlying principles and apply them. Every age and each society has their own style as well as their distinctive features. As believers, we are not interested in being different without a reason. We do not want to be unpleasantly conspicuous, nor to stand out because of some unnecessary peculiarity. But when the society we live in, which we want to serve with all



our heart, makes demands of us that would damage both ourselves as well as them, then we cannot concur.

It is our duty to find a style of clothing that is appropriate today, but does not share in the sinfulness of our times. In other words, we need a vessel that will bring us as close as possible to others, but without sinning. (See *2Corinthians* 4:7.) Only close communion with God that leads us to think and feel as He does can enable us to impart a message of life to our surroundings - especially through the difference between men's and women's clothing. Let us love our fellow men, and be true servants to them, for Christ has died for them as well as for us. "We love Him be-

Vain woman of the Past

In the question of clothing there is not only the problem of changing the roles but also of over-emphasis. While the Lord abhors men wearing women's clothing and vice versa, He is also not pleased when clothing is misused to arouse sexual excitement in others. He wants to protect us from impure thoughts and their evil results, and therefore He gives us counsel that will save us much suffering if we follow it.

Isaiah wrote about the professing female believers of his time who were immoral. "Next he will judge the haughty Jewish women, who mince along, noses in the air, tinkling bracelets on their ankles, with wanton eyes that rove among the crowds to catch the glances of the men. The Lord will send a plague of scabs to ornament their heads! He will expose their nakedness for all to see. No longer shall they tinkle with self-assurance as they walk. For the Lord will strip away their artful beauty and their ornaments, their necklaces and bracelets and veils of shimmering gauze. Gone shall be their scarves and ankle chains, headbands, earrings, and perfumes; their rings, jewels, party clothes, negligees, capes, ornate combs, and purses; their mirrors, lovely lingerie, beautiful dresses, and veils. Instead of smelling of sweet perfume, they'll stink; for sashes they'll use ropes; their well-set hair will all fall out; they'll wear sacks instead of robes. All their beauty will be gone; all that will be left to them is

shame and disgrace. Their husbands shall die in battle; the women, ravaged, shall sit crying on the ground." *Isaiah 3:16-25 (The Living Bible)*.

In this scripture the prophet directs our attention to the connection between the decorated appearance of the women and the death of the men. We might ask why the men have to die when it is the women who are so vain. But God is not unrighteous. He has given the man the task of being the head, which means the man has to decide what he will permit and what he will forbid. Man is responsible for the leadership, whether he is passively or actively involved. Isaiah describes the fall of female dignity and the death of the men as a result of sins which both partook in. Obviously the men liked the provocative behavior of the women and enjoyed going along with the "game." Through their make-up and provocative conduct, these women aroused the attention and passions of the men. The whole situation became immoral and finally led not only to moral destruction but also physical ruin.

We need to draw parallels with the things in our day which awaken the attention and passions. Isaiah mentions scarves, rings and jewels on arms, hands, feet, and ears, perfume, shimmering veils and party clothes. The fashion designers of today are similarly interested in displaying the woman's body and her soft lines, either directly or by suggestion. It is not a question of healthy, well-fitting, beautiful, practical and morally correct clothing. Society craves excitement, new fashions, dreams, and ideas - which should be stimulated by a woman's outward appearance.

Men also appear in more and more provocative clothing. People try to dress in a way that places ever more emphasis on their feelings. They have lost all understanding of what morality and immorality really are. They have also lost all sense of true dignity. Society accepts that sexual partnerships should begin as early as possible and be changed as often as necessary. People often think it is necessary to gain "experience," but they do not notice that they are becoming increasingly primitive. Sexuality has slipped to a level below that of the animal kingdom. Modern society is not far from what was on the earth just before the flood (see *Matthew 24:37-39*), or at the time prior to the birth of Christ. "Sin had become a science, and vice was consecrated as a part of religion." *The Desire of Ages*, 37.1.

"The same sins that brought judgments upon the world in the days of Noah, exist in our day. Men and women now carry their eating and drinking so far that it ends in gluttony and drunkenness. This prevailing sin, the indulgence of perverted appetite, inflamed the passions of men in the days of Noah, and led to widespread corruption. Violence and sin reached to heaven. This moral pollution was finally swept from the earth by means of the Flood." *Temperance*, 227.1.

"Some men and women professing godliness debase their own bodies through the indulgence of the corrupt passions, which lowers them beneath the brute creation." *A Solemn Appeal*, 171.1.

In many of today's fashions, special care is taken to choose thin material and close cuts in women's clothing. This means that the woman reveals herself with every movement. Tops and skirts are cut so short that the naked body is visible when bending or stretching. Sleeveless tops are cut in such a way that the trunk and breasts can be seen from a side view. Short-sleeves, which cover the arms, are not popular. Necklines are cut to reveal the cleavage and the body beneath, and straps of the underclothes are often visible. Thin, close-fitting, stretchy tops accentuate the female form which, since it cannot be shown naked, is made to be as well-defined as possible. So-called "women's trousers" are also made to fit so tightly that the hips, buttocks, and pelvis are clearly delineated. And skirts are often transparent enough to show the form beneath, or so tight that the viewer can easily imagine the rest. Legs must be slim and long, so to emphasize this unhealthy high-heeled shoes are worn. The whole picture, from head to toe, is immoral, provocative, and undignified in every way. Any man knows what the message behind this kind of clothing is, whether the wearer is conscious of it or not. The woman who puts herself on display in this way thereby makes herself terribly guilty.

But the men who desire such a message are also responsible! They are really dishonoring themselves, just as the woman is, when they follow their desires and feelings instead of employing their reason and concentrating on the real duties of life. By so doing, they make themselves inca-

For further study:

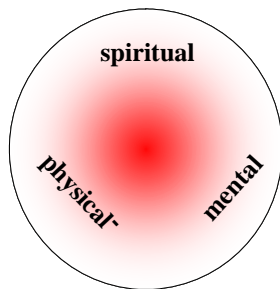
Study the whole story of Samson.

pable of leading and bearing responsibility. One example of this was Samson who, despite several proofs of his partner's deceitfulness, could not flee from her spell. "Day by day Delilah urged him, until 'his soul was vexed unto death;' yet a subtle power kept him by her side." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 566.1.

Such men are not capable of living their lives according to God's will, nor of guiding their families with consistent reason. Men like this act as if they are still children, and are puppets without self-control - a lack which is expressed in various ways. Many different addictions are the result.

Playing with desires, which are expressed by the clothing, has developed to such an extent that people can no longer bring them under control. Feelings and fashions have become people's gods, "Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, ... For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.... who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them." *Romans* 1:24, 26, 27, 32. Such emphasis on passion is not found even in the animal world. There is no doubt that the forbidden fruit of sensuality leads to the death of man - the death of his dignity, his reason, and finally of the whole person.

Clothing has an immeasurable influence on the society in which we live. At the same time, it is also an expression of the prevailing philosophy of life. As believers, it is our duty, our privilege, our task, and our opportunity to give a witness of the high standard of morality that God has planned for humanity. One feature of Jesus' faithful followers is ministry for others. Jesus says, "I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me." *Matthew* 25:36. This means more than just clothing a person outwardly. It means to clothe them in the right way so that they can understand the image of God. As



Trousers

The question as to whether it is right for a woman to wear trousers is one that is often posed, because trousers were intended for men. But perhaps we should ask the question another way:

- What style of clothing is acceptable today (although not necessarily high fashion) and best suited to express the difference between men and women?
- Which clothing is suited to show grace, modesty, submission, and love for God's principles?
- Which clothing is most appropriate for the various tasks that a woman may have to do, so that it is decent, practical, and advantageous, in terms of health, dignity, and morality?

Each of us has to use our own judgment in deciding the answers to these questions. In so doing we should consider the standard of God's church - that in her appearance and behavior a woman should not try to be a man, and vice versa. These questions will reveal the spirit the believer truly has within.

"All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any." *1Corinthians 6:12*. According to this rule a believing sister who has God's principles in her heart is free to dress as seems reasonable to her. But in choosing her dress, she need to be careful that she does not lose her freedom by coming into the bondage of feelings, fashion, or superficiality.

For instance, if a believer is a female sports teacher, or maybe a physiotherapist who has to teach gymnastics to others every day, it would be very impractical, and even indecent, to wear a dress. Her occupation would therefore require her to wear pants or trousers. But she can choose whether the pants she wears are skin-tight pants or looser and becoming. Similarly, she can also decide whether the top she wears is cropped or whether it covers the hips. She should use her imagination to find work clothes that are practical, suitable, and decent. And God will certainly

bless such efforts. However, if she has the desire to be like the world but doesn't want to admit it, she will use her circumstances as an excuse to justify the wearing of immodest clothing.

To be continued...

Uta Dura

"All things are lawful for me,
but all things are not helpful.
All things are lawful for me,
but I will not be brought under the power of any."
1 Corinthians 6:12.

"There should be no carelessness in dress. Teach the young converts that dress is a talent. For Christ's sake, whose property we are, we should seek to make the best of our appearance. In the tabernacle service, God specified every detail concerning the garments of those who ministered before Him. Thus we are taught that the Lord has a preference in regard to the dress of those who serve Him. Very particular were the directions given in regard to Aaron's robes, for his dress was symbolical. So the dress of Christ's followers should be symbolical. In all things we are to be representatives of Him. Good taste should be exercised in the selection of appropriate colors. Our dress should be tidy and well fitting. The hair should be carefully arranged. Our appearance in every respect should be characterized by neatness, modesty, and purity. But the word of God gives us no sanction in making changes in our apparel merely for the sake of fashion, - that we may appear like the world. When the desire for display in dress absorbs the mind, vanity is manifested. All this must be put away." *Bible Training School*, May 1, 1908 par. 2.

"Will the followers of Christ seek to obtain the inward adorning, the meek and quiet spirit which God pronounces of great price, or will they squander the few short hours of probation in needless labor for display? The Lord would have woman seek constantly to improve both in mind and heart, gaining intellectual and moral

Reform

strength that she may lead a useful and happy life, - a blessing to the world and an honor to her Creator." *Messages to Young People*, 356.1.

"Girls should be taught that the true charm of womanliness is not alone in beauty of form or feature, nor in the possession of accomplishments; but in a meek and quiet spirit, in patience, generosity, kindness, and a willingness to do and suffer for others. They should be taught to work, to study to some purpose, to live for some object, to trust in God and fear Him, and to respect their parents. Then as they advance in years, they will grow more pure-minded, self-reliant, and beloved. It will be impossible to degrade such a woman. She will escape the temptations and trials that have been the ruin of so many." *Child Guidance*, 140.1.

Submission

"Submitting to one another in the fear of God." *Ephesians* 5:21. Submission is a term that is often despised in our day. In general it is understood to imply a forced, rigid condition that reminds one of slavery rather than freedom.

But what does God mean when He speaks of submission, subjection, obedience, devotion, and so on? "Self-surrender is the substance of the teachings of Christ." *The Desire of Ages*, 523.3. Heaven is built on the principle of that submission which has its root in love. Every living being in God's kingdom is happy to submit. Even God submits to the principles of righteousness. In fact, He is the embodiment of this principle of submission.

In heaven it does not matter who has which task, or how many tasks anyone has - each has the duty and privilege of submitting to the other, and all carry out God's will as if it were their own. Submission in heaven is understood as a voluntary attitude which enables one to serve.

But on this earth, sin has dulled our understanding of submission. People imagine it means either a forced subservience to the commands of a

superior, as in slavery, or they see it as a necessary compromise in order to achieve a common goal. In the case of the latter though, those submitting know where the limits of this compromise are and how to protect their rights.

But in God's church on earth such an attitude is inappropriate. "But Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, 'You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all.'" *Mark 10:42-44*.

Submission means to serve God before we serve our fellows. "But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: 'We ought to obey God rather than men.'" *Acts 5:29*. Of course, this can only work when we appreciate the gifts of God, and love the Giver more than everything else. To obey God rather than men also means to obey God rather than myself, because I am a person too. The Holy Spirit speaks to us with a quiet, consistent voice, and it is up to us to decide whether we shall obey Him rather than our own wishes, preferences, fears, and doubts.

It is a fact that in the challenges of life, we will only know where we should obey God rather than other people when we have learnt to obey Him rather than self at our own personal level.

Uta Dura

"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand." *John 10:27-28*.



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