

Temperance in Dress

A REFORM LESS FOLLOWED

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Temperance is defined as avoiding excess or extravagance in that which is good and abstinence from anything injurious to the physical, mental, and moral health. Temperance can well be applied to matters of dress and its twin sister, adornment.

Dress from a Biblical Viewpoint

When God created our first parents. He clothed their bodies with a glorious covering. "And they were both naked, the man and the wife, and were not ashamed" (Genesis 2:25). This covering was patterned after heaven's adorning. "O Lord my God, Thou art very great; Thou art clothed with honour and majesty. Who coverest Thyself with light as with a garment" (Psalm 104: 1, 2). One immediate consequence of Adam and Eve's disobedience to God's commands was the removal of this glorious garment. Once again, their compassionate Creator provided clothing-now tailored for the harsher climate of a sinful world. "Unto Adam and also his wife did the lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them" (Genesis 3:21).

When God brought the Israelites out of Egypt, He designated a distinctive design for their clothing. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that put upon the fringe ... a ribbon of blue" (Numbers 15:37,38). This blue cord or ribbon was to be a reminder not only of God's commands, but also of their high calling to be a sanctified or holy people. "And it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the Lord. and do them ... and be holy unto your God" (Numbers 15:39:40).

John the Baptist, a reformer and herald of Christ's first advent, wore clothing which harmonized with his mission. "And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins" (Mark 1:6). "The simplicity of his dress, a garment woven of camel's hair, was a standing rebuke to the extravagance and display of the Jewish priests, and of the people generally." 1.

Dress for God's End-time People

Like John the Baptist, God's end-time people have been given a message to prepare the way for Christ's second advent – the grand climax ending 6,000 years of sin and rebellion in this world. Temperance in all things is to be connected with the giving of this message. It is God's design that the temperate lifestyle and attire of His people will attract the attention of the public mind. The purpose of the health and dress reform is to prepare a people for the coming of the Lord!

Ellen G. White, God's end-time prophet, received her first health-reform vision in 1863. The following year she began to write on the subject of dress reform. During that time period, healthful dress reform was already receiving some public attention in America. The deleterious effect of worldly fashions upon spiritual health was not a totally new concept, either. God was calling attention to the issue of dress reform in order to shield His people from the increasingly immodest, unhealthful, and expensive fashions of the degenerate age. This purpose is best summarized in the following words penned more than a century ago, yet of amplified relevance today: *"To protect the people of God from the corrupting*

influence of the world, as well as to promote physical and moral health, the dress reform was introduced among us ... It would distinguish God's people from the world, and thus serve as a barrier against its fashions and follies. He who knows the end from the beginning, who understands our nature and our needs ... saw our dangers and difficulties, and condescended to give us timely warning and instruction concerning our habits of life, even in the proper selection of food and clothing." 2.

While clothing is something no one is born with, we all learn very early in life to consider it as an extension of our being. Dress impacts all facets of life – physical, mental, social and spiritual. Temperate Christian dress, designed for the health of both body and soul, has the following Qualities: 3.

- Modest and simple in design
- Possessing a graceful, natural beauty
- Material of good Quality, durable
- Providing warmth and protection
- Clean and neat
- Becoming colors
- Appropriate for age and occupation
- Promoting wise stewardship of time and money

Principles of healthful clothing are included in Solomon's eulogy of the virtuous woman. "She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet (the best). She maketh herself coverings: and she shall rejoice in time to come" (Proverbs 31:21-22, 25).

Dress Impacts Physical Health

The concept that dress has a significant impact on the physical health has been largely ignored by the medical profession and rarely addressed by the general public. Through the pen of inspiration, God granted unprecedented insight into the enormity of the impact of the dress on disease as seen in the following statements:

"Half the diseases of women are caused by unhealthful dress." 4.

"I do not speak unadvisedly when I say that the way in which women clothe themselves, together with their indulgence of appetite, is the greatest cause of their present feeble, diseased condition." 5.

"The amount of physical suffering created by unnatural and unhealthful dress cannot be estimated . . . displacements and deformities, cancers and other terrible diseases, are among the evils resulting from fashionable dress." 6.

A key concept of God's health reform message is that clothing affects the Circulatory system to a far greater degree than generally realized. Good health depends on two basic principles of proper dress: (1) Clothing must be evenly distributed over the entire body in such a way that the extremities are as warm as the central portions of the body. (2) Clothing must be *loose fitting*. There should be no restriction or bands tight enough to leave a mark on the skin.

Clothing Distribution

God's health reform messenger said it best: "Perfect health depends upon perfect circulation. Special attention should be given to the extremities, that they may be as thoroughly clothed as the chest and the region over the heart, where is the greatest amount of heat." Again, with the practical application of physiological principles brought to a lucid and logical conclusion, we read: "The limbs were not formed by our Creator to endure exposure, as was the face. The Lord provided the face with immense

circulation, because it must be exposed. He provided also large veins and nerves for the limbs and feet, to contain a large amount of the current of human life, that the limbs might be uniformly as warm as the body." 7

Unfortunately, these basic physiological tenants have not only been ignored by modern medicine, they have been largely unheeded *by* God's end-time people as noted by the following declaration: "There is but one woman in a thousand who clothes her limbs as she should." 8. It does not take an astute observer to recognize that this statement is as true today as when it was first penned.

Conditions Associated with Chilled Extremities: Compiled from Ellen G. White:

- Upper airway inflammation
- Croup, Influenza
- Tuberculous Lymph nodes
- Headaches, Brain Congestion
- Nosebleeds
- Chest Congestion and disease
- Heart palpitation
- Digestive disturbances
- Habitually cold hands and feet
- Failure to thrive - infants
- A vast amount of disease
- Premature death!

Restrictive Clothing

Tight-fitting clothing acts like a shell, forcing the soft body tissues to conform to certain shapes and dimensions. However, a human being is not a snail! When we wear restrictive clothing, we change more than our appearance. We also change the way our body functions, resulting in many health problems. Tight shirt collars and ties potentially interfere with the blood flow to the brain. Knee-high hose and elastic topped socks encourage the development of the varicose veins. Tight pants contribute to stomach cramps, chest pain and heart burn. Tight bands are implicated in male infertility as sperm needs to be kept below body temperature to stay fully functional. Nylon panties are associated with yeast infections in women. Snug, narrow bra straps cause neck, shoulder and arm pain in women. Tight shoes – especially narrow toes and high heels – can cause back and hip problems, poor circulation, corns, bunions, and hammertoes – to say nothing of the hazards of tripping and falling. Corsets, popular from the seventeenth century until the early twentieth century, simply did to the female body what tight shoes do to the feet.

Chronically constrictive clothing handicaps the circulatory system. Consisting of the heart, arteries, capillaries, and veins – the bloodstream's highway must be kept wide open in order to service every cell of the body. For peak performance, cell functions require a freely flowing bloodstream to deliver oxygen, nutrients, and other compounds vital to cell health. Equally important to the cell's vitality is the efficient removal of waste products of cell metabolisms, toxins, invading germs, and other unwanted materials which must be transported to the body's circulating waste disposal system comprising the liver, kidneys, lungs, and skin.

The lymphatic system – a specialized component of the Circulatory system – is even more vulnerable to the deleterious effects of constrictive garments. The lymphatic system consists of the following components:

Lymph – the clear fluid residing in the spaces between the body cells. It contains cell nutrients as well as waste products of cell metabolism.

Lymphatics – small, blindly-ending vessels found in many body tissues. The debris-laden lymph collects in these walled vessels which are lined with many little valves which keep the lymph flowing toward the heart for disposal.

Lymph Nodes – small clusters of specialized cells which filter out some of the lymph debris such as bacteria, toxins, and cancer cells. Lymph nodes are also manufacturing sites for white blood cells and antibodies.

Unlike the circulatory system, the lymph is not pumped by the heart. The thin walled lymphatic vessels are extremely sensitive to pressure. The lymph is propelled along by rhythmical compression such as contraction and relaxation of the muscles during exercise or massage, diaphragmatic movements from deep breathing or singing, and pulse pressure from arteries lying near the lymphatic vessels.

If the lymphatics are functioning properly, the body tissues serviced by the lymphatic system will be cleansed from toxins and other undesirable compounds. On the other hand, if the lymphatic function is compromised by a relatively constant pressure on the thin, easily collapsible vessel walls, the lymph will accumulate in the body tissues leading to congestion and swelling of the involved body part. If fat-soluble toxins and other potentially cancer causing compounds are present in the lymph, this will result in tissues with a relatively higher toxin exposure than those tissues with freely draining lymph.

Environmental toxins, along with other risk factors such as: genetic predisposition, stress, poor diet, lack of exercise, drugs, alcohol, caffeine, and tobacco all play a role in the host of degenerative diseases that plague mankind today – including cancer. Could the chronic constrictive clothing syndrome promote cancer? This hypothesis was tested in the Bra and Breast Cancer Study conducted by Sydney Ross Singer and his wife Soma Grismaijer. To quote the authors: "If anything were to constrict the flow of lymph from the breast, there would be poor drainage of the breast tissue. How severe must this constriction be to impede drainage? When it comes to lymph vessels, it doesn't take much to affect flow. Slight pressure, such as a soft tissue compression, can influence the flow within the vessels. Now what do you suppose a bra can do to that lymphatic flow?" 9.

Over 4,500 women were interviewed regarding their use of the bra – about half of whom had breast cancer – in five major cities across the United States. The results of this study yielded some surprises, perhaps not so shocking when the basic physiology of breast lymph drainage is kept in mind.

Women who wore their bras 24 hours a day had a 113-fold increase in breast cancer incidences when compared with women who wore their bras less than 12 hours a day. When women who wore their bras 24 hours a day were compared with women who wore no bra at all, there were 125-fold greater incidences of breast cancer in the bra wearers!

Just how significant are these statistics? The authors compared these findings with the incidence of lung cancer in smokers and nonsmokers. To quote the authors: "In the Bra and Breast Cancer Study, we learned that women who wear bras twenty-four hours a day have a 125-fold greater chance of getting breast cancer than do women who do not wear bras at all, and a 113-fold greater chance of getting breast cancer than do women who wear bras less than twelve hours daily. *This is anywhere from 4 to 21 times greater in Significance than the connection between cigarette smoking and lung cancer!*" 10.

Many women assume that in order to look well-dressed they need to wear an appearance-enhancing, unhealthful bra. This is because they have chosen a fashion that emphasizes the breasts. The authors conclude: "The best solution, then, may be to change the fashion focus to one that still looks stylish, but

does not spotlight the bust." 11. The authors then consulted the fashion experts as to how to make clothing selections that de-emphasize the breasts. Here are some suggestions:

- Choose a blouse made with thicker, less clingy material.
- Choose darker, solid colors rather than lighter colors and prints.
- Avoid blouses with low or extremely high necklines. A low neckline draws attention to the breasts, while a very high neckline makes less firm breasts seem even lower.
- Allow the blouse to be as loose-fitting as possible. Do not tuck it in too tightly.
- When possible, wear a loose-fitting sweater, scarf, jacket or blazer whose lapels draw the eye away from the bust line, or loose-fitting jumper with a rounded neck line.
- Choose low-heeled shoes. High-heeled shoes tend to throw the body off balance, producing a lordotic posture which accentuates the breasts.

I work closely with many women in our near-by Amish communities. Amish women do not wear bras, yet their dress style is always discrete, without drawing attention to the breasts. This is remarkable considering that many women spend much of their married life either pregnant or breast feeding – physiological states in which the breast tissue is the most developed.

Can the same principles supported by the Bra and Breast Cancer Study be applied to other clothing and cancers? The authors comment: "While the tissue-cleansing role of the lymphatics is already understood by modern medicine, this clothing-constriction model has never been studied, although the facts presented above make the validity of this model highly probable. From this we can postulate the possible damage to health that other constrictive garments may cause." 12.

Could tight belts, corsets, or any other constrictive garments over the pelvic area contribute to the development of prostate, uterine, ovarian, bladder, colon or rectal cancer? Through the gift of prophecy, God's end-time people have been given heavenly insight that has proven to be at the forefront of medical research. From the compilations of God's end-time prophet on the ailments resulting from the use of restrictive clothing, we read tomorrow's medical headlines.

Conditions Associated with Restrictive Clothing

- Organ displacement and deformity
- Spinal deformity
- Hindrances to digestion
- Fatigue or lassitude
- Obstruction of proper circulation of the blood
- Impaired lung function
- Irritability and fretfulness of infants
- Improper removal of metabolic wastes
- Cancer

Dress Impacts Spiritual Health

It is God's plan that the clothing most conducive to physical health also promotes mental, social, and spiritual health – both of the wearer and the beholder.

New Testament writers addressed the fundamental differences between Christian attire and the worldly fashions of their day. "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shame-facedness and sobriety: not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works" (II Timothy 2:9.10). "Paul's admonition to dress in a modest orderly, and becoming way is most relevant for Christian men and women today,

when modesty is out and exposure is in ... It reminds us that what we wear not only reflects our tastes and moral values, but also affects our demeanor and conduct. Appropriate dress tends to encourage appropriate deportment. 13. The Apostle Peter writes: "Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God a great price" (II Peter 3:3, 4). 'This is the adorning of a calm temper, a contented mind, and a heart free from the pride, vanity, and agitation of those who seek recognition through external adorning. "This is the adorning that will commend a woman of God to her husband, and to others. This is the adorning which is not lipstick-deep, nor skin-deep, but soul-deep." 14.

John Wesley, the renowned reformer, gave a sermon in which he presented six Biblical principles supporting modest attire which have stood the test of time. He pointed out that extravagant dress and adornment extinguish spirituality in the following ways:

- Engenders or increases pride
Breeds or increases vanity
- Promotes turbulent passions and restlessness
– the opposite of inner calmness and peace
- Creates and inflames lust
- Encourages irresponsible stewardship
- Undermines the development of inward holiness.

"One cannot help but admire Wesley not only for his forthright preaching on the sensitive subject of dress, but also for his insights on how outward adorning affects the inward work of the Holy Spirit." 15.

God's end-time messenger clearly delineated the disastrous effect of fashionable dress on the mental and spiritual well-being. "Fashion is deteriorating the intellect and eating out the spirituality of our people. Obedience to fashion is pervading our Seventh-day Adventist churches and is doing more than any other power to separate our people from God." 16. Imagine that! Of the many things that can adversely affect our spiritual life, fashion "is doing more than any other power."

In Ellen G. White's time, the American costume, as this worldly reform dress was called, consisted of pants, vest, and a radically short dress resembling a coat which extended to mid-thigh. God's end-time messenger condemned this dress style on the basis of sound principles that need to be studied today. These principles include:

Lack of modesty – "God would not have His people adopt the so-called reform dress. It is immodest apparel, wholly unfitted for the modest, humble followers of Christ."17.

Fashioned like Men's Clothing – "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." 18. God's admonition to the Israelites on this matter remains relevant today: "The women 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" (Deuteronomy 22:5). "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 direction in regard to it: for the same dress worn by both sexes would cause confusion and great increase of crime." 19. While the Hebrews were not allowed to wear same-sex clothing, a few articles of female clothing carried somewhat the same name and basic patterns as the men's clothing. "Yet there was always sufficient difference in embossing, embroidery, and needlework and color so that in appearance the line of demarcation between men and women could be readily detected." 20

Destroys spiritual influence – "With so-called dress reform there goes a spirit of levity and boldness just in keeping with the dress ... Let the sisters adopt the American costume and they would destroy their own influence and that of their husbands ... Our Savior says: 'Ye are the light of the world.' 'Let your light so shine before men, that they *may* see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.' There is a great work for us to do in the world, and God would not have us take a course to lessen or destroy our influence in the world."21.

The Reform Dress

During this time, Ellen G. White was given a divinely-inspired dress pattern designed to replace the American costume. She wrote: "In my article on dress, in *How to Live*, I tried to present a healthful, convenient, economical, yet modest and becoming style of dress for Christian women to wear, if they should choose so to do." 22. Its purpose was to distinguish God's people today just as the ribbon of blue was to designate the Israelites of old as His people. "God would now have His people adopt the reform dress, not only to distinguish them from the world as His 'peculiar people', but because a reform in dress is *essential to physical and mental health* ." 23

God's reform dress comprised the following features that were unique for that time, yet appropriate for today's world:

- A naturally flowing skirt – free of hoops or extra underskirts that gave dresses their popular distended look. The skirt length was approximately nine inches off the ground – shorter than the traditional dress which swept the streets and longer than the American costume.
- A tastefully tailored pant – worn under the dress and comprising the same material and color as the skirt.

Ellen G. White not only wore the dress herself, but wrote extensively on what constituted a correct, tasteful style. She pleaded: "I beg of you, sisters, not to form your patterns after your own particular ideas. While there are correct patterns and good tastes, there are also incorrect patterns and bad tastes." 24. She knew the proper style because she had seen it in vision. "I must contend that I am the best judge of the things which have been presented before me in vision: and none need fear that I shall by my life contradict my own testimony, or that I shall fail to notice any real contradictions in the views given me." 25.

Sadly this reform dress was thought by many women of that era as too simple and humbling. It came with a cross to bear. "God's end-time prophet addressed this issue in a pointed manner: "God's people have, to a great extent, lost their peculiarity, and have in many respects become like them. This is displeasing to God."

On the other hand, by accepting the cross of humility, we will be hated by the world who also hated Christ. She continued: "If we pass along without receiving censure or frowns from the world we may be alarmed, for it is our conformity to the world which makes us so much like them that there is nothing to arouse their envy or malice: there is no collision of spirits. The world despises the cross." 26.

In preparing this little study, I came to realize that Ellen G. White's counsel on temperate attire is more for our time than for her day. We comprise the generation that God will use to garner in earth's final harvest of souls, before probation is forever closed. This time is just before us! Like Enoch and Elijah, God's end-time people will be stepping directly from earth into heaven. This final generation of saints will need to discard their trust and faith in *all* earthly possessions—including cherished articles of dress and adornment.

This concept is beautifully illustrated in Ellen G. White's very impressive dream as recounted by Julius Gilbert White's little book, 'A Syllabus for Holy Living'.

"There was a company of people journeying to a better country. They started with wagons heavily loaded with earthly possessions in which they trusted more or less."

As the way became progressively more steep and narrow, wagons, luggage, and even horses had to be discarded. As the danger of falling over the deep precipice increased, a small cord was let down from above for each person to grasp and steady himself. "Soon they could carry no luggage, and the last earthly possession in which they had trusted was discarded, and the cord from above grew larger and would sustain some of their weight. ... At length the path ended at a wide chasm; their entire reliance must be on the cords which had now increased in size until thick were as large as their bodies... On the other side of the chasm was a beautiful field of green grass on which there fell a soft light like silver and gold. They hesitated in great perplexity. Presently they said, "The cord is our only hope: it has helped us all the way; it will not fail us now... Then, one by one, they held to the cord and swung over the abyss into the lovely field and were safe and happy.

What was the cord which was let down from above? It was faith in God which became so strong it would wholly sustain them without trusting in any earthly thing. Such is to be the faith of the people who complete the journey in the midst of trials, trouble and hardships of the last days."27

The Christian's Heavenly Attire

No discussion of the Christian's attire would be complete without mentioning the one garment we shall all take with us to our heavenly home. God's last church is depicted in dire need of this item: "I counsel thee to buy of me ... white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear" (Revelation 3:18). All who attend the marriage supper of the Lamb will be wearing this garment. "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready. And to her is granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints" (Revelation 19:7, 8).

The prophet Isaiah joyfully anticipated this time: "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, *my* soul shall be joyful in my God: for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels" (Isaiah 61:10).

This spotless covering, the robe of Christ's own righteousness, is His character which He puts on every repenting, believing soul. "When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him: we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness." 28.

Where does this robe of Christ's perfect character receive expression? We find the answer in the following passages: "For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our heart, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6). When Christ's character abides in His people today, their faces will reflect His glory. Just as Jesus reflected His Father's glory. "Christ in you the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27).

"The beauty of mind, the purity of the soul, revealed in the countenance, will have more power to attract and exert an influence upon hearts than any outward adorning." 29. While the world deifies fashion, the Christian's spiritual attire takes center stage in the theater of life. True temperate Christian dress will be but a reflection of this great objective.

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