

UNCHANGING PRINCIPLES OF DRESS FOR A CHANGING WORLD

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try climes. God has given us clothes for protection, and anyone who because of pride, bondage to style, or plain indifference, causes injury to his body is guilty of great wrong. Modern style in civilized America generally dresses boys warmer than girls. In defense of such an action it is said that girls do not need as much protection against cold as boys do. But scientific experiments have demonstrated that men and women dressed alike respond, on the average exactly the same to given weather conditions. God cannot be pleased if we fail to care for our bodies, simply because of the whims of style. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God—if any man destroyeth the temple of God, him shall God destroy."

The third of these fundamental principles is economy. Paul warns against dressing in "costly array." This does not mean that one must always buy the lowest priced articles. Often economy rides in the medium priced carriages, sometimes in the higher priced. Clothes that are most useful and enduring should be sought. Certainly, however, it is not Christian practice to spend money for an extensive, costly wardrobe, only to discard it for another, with the changing styles. Much less should one spend God's money to deck himself with "gold or pearls" or other costly adornings. "Ye are not your own." All we have belongs to God. We are only stewards. We have no right to waste God's money on style or costly garments and furnishings. Our Church Discipline sums up the matter thus: "We should not on any account spend what the Lord has put into our hands, as stewards, to be used for His glory in expensive wearing apparel, when thousands are suffering for food and raiment and millions perishing for the Word of life—Let the strictest economy be used in these respects."

Our fourth rock principle of dress is humility. This is the central thought in Peter's words (1 Peter 3:3, 4): "Whose adorning, let it not be the outward adorning of braiding the hair, and of wearing jewels of gold or of putting on apparel, but let it be the hidden man of the heart in the incorruptible apparel of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." Why do you dress as you do dress? Is it to show off? to make a stunning appearance? to attract to yourself the applause of a vain, pompous world? Is your dress motivated by a meek and quiet spirit or by a proud, carnal nature? True it is that plain dress will not make a proud heart humble—only the power of God can do that, but even one who does not yet have complete victory over the carnal mind must outwardly conform to God's law—and if one is sincere he will do thus—while he seeks the crucifixion of the old man.

Humility will lead one to dress inconspicuously. Sometimes it is not humility but pride which causes people to dress in unusual styles. Some people are actually proud of their plain dress—proud of their humility. There is no merit in being out of style merely for the sake of being different. In fact, conformity to general custom may be preferable, so long as that custom does not violate these established principles of modesty, meekness, economy, and health. But when the fashion becomes wrong and displeasing to God, Christians must be different from the world, a separate and distinct people, even to the extent of being painfully conspicuous and drawing upon themselves the scorn and disdain of the world. Do not seek plainness as an end in itself but rather because the vain pomp and glory of this evil age is at war against the simple, holy

appearance of a meek and quiet Christian pilgrim. The devil's old scarecrow—what will people think?—must never be allowed to deter the Christian pilgrim from the path along which God calls. In the strength of a clear conscience and in the assurance that God is pleased, the Christian marches straight forward with his eye on Christ alone and with his ears tuned only to the sweet voice of Jesus.

The fifth great principle of dress is modesty—defined for our present purpose as that which demands a covering. Whether some mysterious changes took place about the bodies of the first pair when they sinned may be a question. But certain it is that they suddenly developed a sense of shame because they were naked. This instinctive embarrassment on finding oneself unclothed in a mixed group has been universal among morally upright normal adults from that time to this. God has not chosen to tell us how much of the body must be covered. Why then should any man attempt to make specific legislation for all people on this subject? On viewing the whole world one finds reasons to believe that local conditions and public sentiment may affect the matter. Among the old orthodox Mohammedans no decent woman would dare appear before men outside her own family without first covering her face as well as all the rest of her body. In modern America groups of men and women of the highest society appear at bathing beaches dressed only in excuses. Both of these are extremes. The Christian way lies between, and, I think, nearer the Mohammedan way. The present tendency toward nudity is certainly in a dangerous direction. Sincere and devout Christians will yield some personal rights and go the second mile in their willingness to avoid the dangers of immodest dress.

I should exhort you to distinguish between that which is mere style and that which has moral quality. God has not set the fashions, and any style which conforms to the moral principles of dress is permissible. Unfortunately there are some good people who insist that everyone must conform to their fashion—a sort of religious style. But that can become as enslaving as Paris fashions. If somebody insists that you must dress just like grandmother, you might ask why grandmother did not dress like Mary of Nazareth. And if you could go back 1900 years to visit that lovely woman in her Nazareth home I am sure you would find a model of simplicity, humility and modesty, yet how different her style from grandmother's. You must learn to distinguish between that which is innocent style and that which is morally wrong.

In this I am speaking of the individual's general rights. I do not deny the rights of certain organizations like the Salvation Army to set styles for their members if they choose. Schools also have a right to require certain forms of dress. This is not a restriction of Christian liberty any more than a rule about classes or examinations. If one does not like the rules, he could exercise his Christian liberty elsewhere.

I have not time to talk on a hundred practical questions about clothes, ornaments, and other matters of personal appearance, but if with unprejudiced mind and willing heart you will pray over your problem in the light of the above principles I am sure God will cause you to see your way clearly. There are many confusing voices calling to you. You yourselves need not be confused. Listen only to Jesus. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world (the evil spirit of this age) the love of the Father is not in him." "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."—Wesleyan Methodist.

GOSSIP TOWN

Have you heard of Gossip Town, on the shore
of Falsehood Bay?
Where Old Dame Rumor, with rustling gown,
is going the livelong day?

It isn't far to Gossip Town, for people who
want to go;
The Idleness Train will take you down in just
an hour or so.

The Thoughtless Road is a popular route, and
most folk start that way;
But it's steep down grade—if you don't look
out 'twill land you in Falsehood Bay.

You glide through the valley of Vicious Talk,
turn into the Tunnel of Hate,
Then, crossing the Add-to Bridge, you walk
right into the city gate.

The principal street is called They Say, and
I've heard at the public well,
And the breezes that blow from Falsehood Bay
are laden with Don't You Tell.

In the midst of the town is Telltale Park;
you're never quite safe when there,
For its owner is Madame Suspicious Remark,
who lives on the street Don't Care.

Just back of the Park is Slanderer's Row; 'twas
there that Good Name died,
Pierced with a shaft from Jealousy's bow, in
the hands of Envious Pride.

From Gossip Town Peace long since fled, but
trouble and grief and woe
And sorrow and care you'll find instead, if ever
you chance to go.

But it's not healthy in Gossip Town, and I'll
not follow you there;
I would rather live on Thanksgiving Street in
the house that is called All Prayer.

—Author Unknown

CORRESPONDENCE

Beals, Maine

Dear Friends of The Highway:

We wish to report victory in our own soul, and God's blessing on the work here in this corner of the vineyard. We are grateful for the spirit of unity that prevails and believe that here as elsewhere, if God's people will hold steady during these trying days, He will bless the work of His own hands and establish it.

We had Brother G. A. DeLong with us in revival services during February. The Church received much benefit through his labors and a few were at the altar for definite help. We feel to thank God for young men who preach the truth with the anointing of the Spirit upon their souls. Brother DeLong proved himself to be an excellent evangelist.

We expect to take up work on a new field of labor this year.

We feel to acknowledge the many kindnesses of God's people here during the period of our work as their pastor.

We covet the prayers of all that God's blessing may rest upon our labors in the days to come.

Yours in His glad service,

F. A. WATSON