

PART FOUR

DRESS OF WOMEN

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| Please see the endnote on page six. |
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CHRISTIAN AND UN-CHRISTIAN DRESSBy D. G. Hunt¹

- I. God has ordered the dress of women. (1 Tim. 2:9,10; I Peter 3:3-5; Gen. 3:7, 21)
- A. For the purpose of being modest.
 - B. To be in keeping with her Christian spirit.
 - C. To reinforce her Christian testimony.

II. Testimony from world-observers:

A. Case Number One:

A girl became incensed because a man spoke to her disrespectfully. Her mother was disturbed and referred the matter to her husband, Instead of blaming the man, the father talked to the girl reprovngly, as follows:

Daughter, you are not an immoral girl; but let me tell you a few things that may help you to look differently at this matter. You are young and attractive, and your dress is such that it displays all your charms of face and figure. Your arms are bare almost to the shoulder, your waist is cut so low that a good portion of your shoulders and breast are exposed to view; your skirt is scant and narrow, and the slit in the front, with your bright, short petticoat and your silk stockings, displays your limbs almost to the knees; your dress is so cut that every line of your figure is seen in bold relief.

He is a stranger here, and did not know that you were a moral girl, for he would not think so by your appearance. I'm sorry that this has occurred, but daughter, YOU ARE AS MUCH TO BLAME AS HE.

B. Case Number Two:

A young man and a young woman stood before a Milwaukee Judge. The young man was charged with immoral conduct, and the young woman was there to support the charge. The young man pleaded guilty and was asked to say whatsoever he thought would clarify his case. He spoke as follows:

I would appreciate the privilege, your Honor, of saying I was raised by as wonderful and godly a mother as a boy ever had. She brought me up to bigger, better and finer things than this of which I now plead guilty. Your Honor, I met this young lady in a lonely, secluded spot on a country lane, She was so immodestly attired that the moment my eyes fell upon her my lust feasted upon her. Had she not so aroused those unholy desires within me, I would never have been guilty of this dastardly deed. I ask the court, ought she not to share my blame? Did she not contribute to my downfall?

The Judge said to the young man, Go and sin no more. But, he kept the girl there and gave her a lecture on the way to dress in public.

¹ Donald G.Hunt is married to Margaret, daughter of the writer of the lesson series.

C. Number Three:

Short skirts and flimsy waists have increased the cases in the court. Why? Because the girls thus use flamboyant sex attractions and men make special efforts to pursue them. I'm in favor of punishing girls for contributing to boys' delinquency. It's often the girl's fault these days. (Mrs. Anna L. Davern, eleven years a juvenile court officer in Chicago.)

D. Case Number Four: From *Listen* -by Elsie Robinson - a woman.

Forty attacks on white women by Hawaiian hoodlums--so the rumor goes. One attack of such outrageous viciousness that it resulted in murder. The whole country rocks with horror.

Yet any big-city police blotter could have revealed equally revolting facts during the last few years.

Consider one big city in the Middle West. Ninety-seven women in that city were attacked during the last month. The latest victims were two girls, one 20 and the other 21 years old. They were taken for a wild automobile ride, frightfully beaten, threatened with death by drowning and shooting when they attempted to resist.

Atrocious - Yes Sickens you, doesn't it? Suppose it had been your sister--your sweetheart or wife--your little girl? You'd have done almost anything. So would I. What decent citizen wouldn't? And yet--

(Wonder if I have the nerve to write what I want to say. Will any editor have the courage to print it? Will any reader be fair enough to read it calmly, consider it squarely? Don't know. But somebody should say it. We'll never rid our self of such horror unless somebody does say it. So here goes for a try--)

Even while I'm feeling as you do--

Even though I would probably have done just what that mother is accused of doing, had my little girl been attacked-

Still I'm wondering--

ARE THE MEN ALONE TO BLAME?

ISN'T THERE SOME CONNECTION BETWEEN THE WAY MANY MODERN GIRLS ARE ACTING AND DRESSING AND THESE ATROCITIES?

I do not know the unfortunate young wife in Honolulu--not any of the mistreated women in that Middle Western City. I am not intimating that any of them transgressed the proprieties by the slightest act. The report states that they were all innocent and pitiful victims of male brutality-

But were they the victims of men, alone?

OR WERE THEY ALSO VICTIMS OF THE LAXITY AND LAWLESSNESS OF THEIR OWN SEX?

I have never seen any of these young women who were attacked - BUT I HAVE SEEN HUNDREDS--THOUSANDS - - YOUNG WOMEN WHO OPENLY INVITED ATTACK BY THEIR DRESS AND MANNERS!

And it seems to me that if we wish to stop this outbreak of violence we must study all the conditions which are accountable for that violence. If we are to track down and punish the brutality of men, we should also recognize and curb the conditions which arouse the brutality. And women, themselves, are responsible for many of these conditions. (Elsie Robinson, in *Listen, World*, King Features Syndicate.)

E. Case Number Five:

Another puzzlement in Hawaii is the muumuu, a billowy and shapeless nightgown that passes for a dress. At evening parties women often wear it as a kind of tribute to old Hawaii. But I have seen some 2,000 women wearing those tents and I have never seen one at which you would look twice. I was told that the muumuu had been devised by missionaries to kill all sense of sex. NO MORAL EXPERIMENT WAS EVER MORE COMPLETELY SUCCESSFUL. (James A. Michener in *Hawaii: A State of Happiness*, August 1953, *The Reader's Digest*).

III. Subtle dangers of immodest dress, and of a conforming to the world. (Romans 12:1-2)

- A. It is prompted by the spirit of this world, and is at war with the Spirit of God. (Galatians 5:16-17; Romans 8:5-9; Ephesians 2:1-3; 1 Peter 1:13-16)
1. A conformity to the world is contrary to conversion for therein, God's people were supposed to have renounced the spirit that promotes the vanities of the world. Solomon--Eccl. 12: 13-14
 2. A conformity to the world is a manifest concession to the spirit of the world.
- B. It is a manifestation of evil affections. (1 John 2:15,17).
1. A love for the world, thus, becomes the actuating principle of both so-called Christian and non-Christian.
 2. A love for the praise of men is also manifest (John 12:42,43; Luke 16:13-15). Pride motivates the effort to appear pleasing to men.
 3. A good reputation among worldlings becomes an idol.
- C. It is a manifold temptation.
1. To yourself.
Like a man, converted, who surrounds himself with cigarettes, beer, and whiskey, taking only a little now and then, when the crowd makes a little of it popular.
 2. To others.
Man is responsible for his influence. The other may not stop where you stop (1 Cor. 8:1-13; Rom. 14:1-14; 1 John 2:10; Matt. 18:7, 9).
 3. To the world.
It encourages the world to live as it does. To them, there is little, or no difference between Christians and non-Christians.
 4. To Satan.
It is an open invitation to Satan, because these are avenues of temptations to broader living. (James 1:13-15).²

Some of you may recognize this from the Dear Abby column of *The Oregonian*:

My 19-year-old son has been dating a beautiful 17-year-old girl, yesterday he brought her over here and she was wearing the briefest of shorts and only one of those old-time red 'kerchiefs tied around her top. I was shocked to think a mother would let her daughter go out looking like that.

The next day the girl's mother called me and told me that her daughter never had such a roughing up in her life. And for me to tell my son never to come over there again.

² This appears to be the end of the Hunt portion and what follows is in Mrs. Word's style.

Abby, don't you think that when a girl goes around like that she is asking for trouble? I'm not making up excuses for my son, but he is only human.

Signed, A MOTHER.

DEAR MOTHER: A young man who's had the proper moral upbringing would not go out with a girl who was not respectably clothed--much less rough her up. On the other hand, a mother who wants her daughter to be treated like a young lady should see that she dresses like one. It's always the peach that is easy to reach that winds up in the jam.

This article also appeared in the *Oregonian* on June 25, 1957, proving that to be nicely dressed is not necessarily expensive:

Britons chuckled Monday over the revelation that Betty Garrett, who works in a fish shop, outsmarted top fashion designers at the Ascot race meet with a \$28 ensemble. Mrs. Garrett was picked as the best dressed woman at Ascot by a panel of television fashion commentators. The selection was made unofficially as the camera probed through the crowd, including many peers and the royal family.

She was among women wearing fabulously expensive outfits by some of the world's top designers.

Her winning ensemble was:

A straight navy blue suit, \$13.

Imitation pearls, 25 cents.

Black court style shoes, \$10.

White and blue spotted gloves, 75 cents.

A year-old pouch-shaped white handbag, \$2.

A baker boy style blue hat, \$2.

The live telecast picked out Mrs. Garrett as the most sophisticated lady of the day.

Viewers saw a head and shoulders closeup while Ace Commentator Roma Fairley described the outfit.

Mrs. Garrett did not know she had been such a hit until a customer walked into her Twickenham fish shop to buy some kippers and said:

You looked lovely on television yesterday.

We could make a long list of needed improvements in women's clothes of today: Sweaters and skirts are too tight, skirts too short, shorts too short, slacks with no slack, bathing suits too nearly nothing, etc. The list I composed a few years ago does not fit today and many new things could be added. Dress designs have, in some cases, gone from bad to worse, and in ten years hence, what! However, there are always patterns and attractive styles for those who will desire to dress modestly. Let us strive to keep our appearance acceptable to God and pleasing to God's people. Let us adorn the gospel by our looks as well as by our deeds. Let us be neither the glamorous, worldly one spending more time, thought and money on dress than on spirit or character; nor the careless, unkempt, unattractive, neglected person who is repulsive to people of the world; but let us be clean, modest, attractive Christians who recommend Christ to others and are adorned with a meek and quiet spirit.

Sometimes it seems that glamour has taken the place of true beauty and attractiveness of face and appearance of our girls today. The natural beauty of shiny-clean, luxuriant hair, and the smooth naturally-tinted complexion of a teen-age girl is very hard to improve. TOO often glamour is expressed in distorted facial features

(especially eyes and mouth) and hair dulled from lack of natural oils and the application of dyes. Fresh, natural charm is lost in the effort to become sophisticated, and appear adult. The result is a hard, worldly-wise expressionless face; clothes immodest and revealing; an imitator of Hollywood productions. Have we lost completely the naturally attractive, sweetly feminine, well-groomed, loveable girls? The most beautiful of God's creation. Have you ever tried to imagine the beauty of face and form that must have been Eve's? She was created perfect. There was not a touch of the artificial, which has so often completely covered today, all the charm that is natural, wholesome and refreshing. Cleanliness of mind and body, nourishing food, proper amounts of sleep, plenty of water to drink, exercise, nails well-cared for, hair that shines because it is clean and brushed, and is attractively arranged, and modest clothing makes a girl far more beautiful than all the arts and devices of a Hollywood studio. May God give us the ability to inspire our girls to desire not only the good, not only the better, but the best for both outward and inward adorning.

I quote from *God's Woman* by C. R. Nichol beginning with page 63:

It has been said: Beauty is a duty. We live in a beautiful world. The gorgeous colors of the sunset, with the blending of the delicate tints is more beautiful than any picture ever spread on the canvas by the hand of man. The grace of the flower, with its wondrous beauty is not closely imitated by the brush of the artist. The gorgeous, awe-inspiring entrancing landscape with its heart-appeal must be no more than a prefiguring of our eternal home.

I regret to see the irregular face, the marred countenance, or the malformation of a body. I delight to see the well-groomed man; the attractively robed, beautiful woman; but a soul marred by sin, a character stained by iniquity, a person made hideous by wickedness is too revolting for words and too sad for tears.

An unkempt, dowdy, slovenly woman; a dirty, slouchy, vulgar man is disgusting to right-thinking people!

Sister, make yourself as attractive as you can, physically, and adorn yourself with the jewels of Christian character, and then you can be of the greatest influence in the uplift of humanity.

Men cannot buy their way into heaven with gold; nor can a woman open the gates of pearl with physical beauty and attractive ornaments made by artisans in jewelry. The rich man can use his wealth to extend the kingdom of God, and the beautiful woman can be a great asset in saving souls, if she will.

FROM DES MOINES TRIBUNE --

HERE'S WHAT MEN THINK OF YOU

By Josephine Lowman

Some time ago I wrote a column about feminine characteristics men like and do not like. I invited the men to tell me more about the subject. Here are a few of their comments:

I believe that most men like make-up if it is not overdone. Some women look as though they had accidentally gotten in front of a spraying machine.

I Simply hate those shoes women have been wearing. They are homely, and look more like canoes than shoes.

We like women who are good company, but dislike one who is loud. We love that soft feminine voice.

I like a feminine girl who does not try to compete with men, but is satisfied with being herself.

A loud voice is good for a hog-caller, but not for a woman who wants to appeal to men.

Many young men like anything that wears skirts. More mature, sophisticated men want a woman to be a really feminine woman just like a woman wants a man to be a real man.

Most of us men like to accord a woman the little courtesies we were taught to perform from childhood, We are embarrassed and made to feel awkward if we are thwarted in such matters.

A woman who spends her time talking about other women is usually spiteful, and the good Lord help her husband.

Very long nails are for scratching.

I like a woman who makes me feel at ease and seems able to fit in with almost any group without calling attention to herself.

If we read these comments thoughtfully, it is more profitable than a course in how to be popular with the opposite sex would be.

Note from the 1998 editor:

More than 40 years have passed since this was written and the moral problems of America have grown steadily worse. Date rape is now a major criminal and social problem. Most churches have at least one unwed mother.

Concern about modesty is not limited to our century. The writers in the second century addressed the same problem. Those who dismiss this teaching as attempts at rule-making by small-minded people need to consider the views of the great warriors of early centuries.

Those with access to the World Wide Web of the Internet may want review Cyprian's **24 chapters** on *The Dress of Virgins!* It is located at:

<http://listserv.american.edu/catholic/church/fathers/cyprian/cyp-drss.txt>

Or consider Tertullian's **13 chapters** on *The Apparel of Women* at:

<http://listserv.american.edu/catholic/church/fathers/tertullian/ter-appl.txt>