

This is a portion of a larger book. In this version, the Bible texts have been modified into modern English, the punctuation improved, headings and emphasis may have been added, and some sentences realigned.

The Ministry of Healing

Chap. 22 – Dress

The Bible teaches modesty in dress. “In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel”. 1 Timothy 2:9. This forbids display in dress, gaudy colors, profuse ornamentation. Any device designed to attract attention to the wearer or to excite admiration, is excluded from the modest apparel which God's word enjoins.

Our dress is to be inexpensive – not with “gold, or pearls, or costly array”. Verse 9.

Money is a trust from God. It is not ours to expend for the gratification of pride or ambition. In the hands of God's children it is food for the hungry, and clothing for the naked. It is a defense to the oppressed, a means of health to the sick, a means of preaching the gospel to the poor. You could bring happiness to many hearts by using wisely the means that is now spent for show. Consider the life of Christ. Study His character, and be partakers with Him in His self-denial.

In the professed Christian world enough is expended for jewels and needlessly expensive dress to feed all the hungry and to clothe the naked. Fashion and display absorb the means that might comfort the poor and the suffering. They rob the world of the gospel of the Saviour's love. Missions languish. Multitudes perish for want of Christian teaching. Beside our own doors and in foreign lands the heathen are untaught and unsaved. While God has laden the earth with His bounties and filled its storehouses with the comforts of life, while He has so freely given to us a saving knowledge of His truth, what excuse can we offer for permitting the cries of the widow and the fatherless, the sick and the suffering, the untaught and the unsaved, to ascend to heaven? In the day of God, when brought face to face with Him who gave His life for these needy ones, what excuse will those offer who are spending their time and money upon indulgences that God has forbidden? To such will not Christ say, “I was an hungered, and you gave Me no meat: I was thirsty, and you gave Me no drink . . . naked, and you clothed Me not: sick, and in prison, and you visited Me not”? Matthew 25:42, 43.

But our clothing, while modest and simple, should be of good quality, of becoming colors, and suited for service. It should be chosen for durability rather than display. It should provide warmth and proper protection. The wise woman described in the Proverbs “is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with double garments”. Proverbs 31:21, margin.

Our dress should be cleanly. Uncleanliness in dress is unhealthful, and thus defiling to the body and to the soul. “You are the temple of God . . . If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy”. 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17.

In all respects the dress should be healthful. “Above all things,” God desires us to “be in health” – health of body and of soul. And we are to be workers together with Him for the health of both soul and body. Both are promoted by healthful dress.

It 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. He pointed to the flowers of the field, to the lily unfolding in its purity, and said, “Even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these”. Matthew 6:29. Thus by the things of nature Christ illustrates the beauty that heaven values, the modest grace, the simplicity, the purity, the appropriateness, that would make our attire pleasing to Him.

The most beautiful dress He bids us wear upon the soul. No outward adorning can compare in value or loveliness with that “meek and quiet spirit” which in His sight is “of great price”. 1 Peter 3:4.

To those who make the Saviour's principles their guide, how precious His words of promise: “Why are you anxious concerning raiment? . . . If God does so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you? . . . Be not therefore anxious, saying, . . . Wherewithal shall we be clothed? . . . For your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things. But seek you first His kingdom, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you”. Matthew 6:28-33, R.V.

“You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You: because he trusts in You”. Isaiah 26:3.

What a contrast is this to the weariness, the unrest, the disease and wretchedness, that result from the rule of fashion! How contrary to the principles given in the

Scriptures are many of the modes of dress that fashion prescribes! Think of the styles that have prevailed for the last few hundreds of years or even for the last few decades. How many of them, when not in fashion, would be declared immodest; how many would be pronounced inappropriate for a refined, God-fearing, self-respecting woman.

The making of changes in apparel for the sake of fashion merely is not sanctioned by the word of God. Changing styles and elaborate, costly ornamentation squander the time and means of the rich, and lay waste the energies of mind and soul. They impose a heavy burden on the middle and poorer classes. Many who can hardly earn a livelihood, and who with simple modes might make their own clothing, are compelled to resort to the dressmaker in order to be in fashion. Many a poor girl, for the sake of a stylish gown, has deprived herself of warm underwear, and paid the penalty with her life. Many another, coveting the display and elegance of the rich, has been enticed into paths of dishonesty and shame. Many a home is deprived of comforts, many a man is driven to embezzlement or bankruptcy, to satisfy the extravagant demands of the wife or children.

Many a woman, forced to prepare for herself or her children the stylish costumes demanded by fashion, is doomed to ceaseless drudgery. Many a mother with throbbing nerves and trembling fingers toils far into the night to add to her children's clothing ornamentation that contributes nothing to healthfulness, comfort, or real beauty. For the sake of fashion she sacrifices health and that calmness of spirit so essential to the right guidance of her children. The culture of mind and heart is neglected. The soul is dwarfed.

The mother has no time to study the principles of physical development, that she may know how to care for the health of her children. She has no time for ministering to their mental or spiritual needs, no time to sympathize with them in their little disappointments and trials, or to share in their interests and pursuits.

Almost as soon as they come into the world the children are subjected to fashion's influence. They hear more of dress than of their Saviour. They see their mothers consulting the fashion plates more earnestly than the Bible. The display of dress is treated as of greater importance than the development of character. Parents and children are robbed of that which is best and sweetest and truest in life. For fashion's sake they are cheated out of a preparation for the life to come.

It was the adversary of all good who instigated the invention of the ever-changing fashions. He desires nothing so much as to bring grief and dishonor to God by

working the misery and ruin of human beings. One of the means by which he most effectually accomplishes this is the devices of fashion that weaken the body as well as enfeeble the mind and belittle the soul.

Women are subject to serious maladies, and their sufferings are greatly increased by their manner of dress. Instead of preserving their health for the trying emergencies that are sure to come, they by their wrong habits too often sacrifice not only health but life, and leave to their children a legacy of woe in a ruined constitution, perverted habits, and false ideas of life.

One of fashion's wasteful and mischievous devices is the skirt that sweeps the ground. Uncleanly, uncomfortable, inconvenient, unhealthful – all this and more is true of the trailing skirt. It is extravagant, both because of the superfluous material required and because of the needless wear on account of its length. And whoever has seen a woman in a trailing skirt, with hands filled with parcels, attempt to go up or down stairs, to enter a streetcar, to walk through a crowd, to walk in the rain or on a muddy road, needs no other proof of its inconvenience and discomfort.

Another serious evil is the wearing of skirts so that their weight must be sustained by the hips. This heavy weight, pressing upon the internal organs, drags them downward and causes weakness of the stomach and a feeling of lassitude, inclining the wearer to stoop, which further cramps the lungs, making correct breathing more difficult.

Of late years the dangers resulting from compression of the waist have been so fully discussed that few can be ignorant in regard to them; yet so great is the power of fashion that the evil continues. By this practice, women and young girls are doing themselves untold harm. It is essential to health that the chest have room to expand to its fullest extent in order that the lungs may be enabled to take full inspiration. When the lungs are restricted, the quantity of oxygen received into them is lessened. The blood is not properly vitalized, and the waste, poisonous matter which should be thrown off through the lungs is retained. In addition to this the circulation is hindered, and the internal organs are so cramped and crowded out of place that they cannot perform their work properly.

Tight lacing does not improve the form. One of the chief elements in physical beauty is symmetry, the harmonious proportion of parts. And the correct model for physical development is to be found, not in the figures displayed by French modistes, but in the human form as developed according to the laws of God in

nature. God is the author of all beauty, and only as we conform to His ideal shall we approach the standard of true beauty.

Another evil which custom fosters is the unequal distribution of the clothing, so that while some parts of the body have more than is required, others are insufficiently clad. The feet and limbs, being remote from the vital organs, should be especially guarded from cold by abundant clothing. It is impossible to have health when the extremities are habitually cold; for if there is too little blood in them there will be too much in other portions of the body. Perfect health requires a perfect circulation; but this cannot be had while three or four times as much clothing is worn upon the body, where the vital organs are situated, as upon the feet and limbs.

A multitude of women are nervous and careworn because they deprive themselves of the pure air that would make pure blood, and of the freedom of motion that would send the blood bounding through the veins, giving life, health, and energy. Many women have become confirmed invalids when they might have enjoyed health, and many have died of consumption and other diseases when they might have lived their allotted term of life had they dressed in accordance with health principles and exercised freely in the open air.

In order to secure the most healthful clothing, the needs of every part of the body must be carefully studied. The character of the climate, the surroundings, the condition of health, the age, and the occupation must all be considered. Every article of dress should fit easily, obstructing neither the circulation of the blood nor a free, full, natural respiration. Everything worn should be so loose that when the arms are raised the clothing will be correspondingly lifted.

Women who are in failing health can do much for themselves by sensible dressing and exercise. When suitably dressed for outdoor enjoyment, let them exercise in the open air, carefully at first, but increasing the amount of exercise as they can endure it. By taking this course, many might regain health and live to take their share in the world's work.

Independent of Fashion

Let women themselves, instead of struggling to meet the demands of fashion, have the courage to dress healthfully and simply. Instead of sinking into a mere household drudge, let the wife and mother take time to read, to keep herself well informed, to be a companion to her husband, and to keep in touch with the

developing minds of her children. Let her use wisely the opportunities now hers to influence her dear ones for the higher life. Let her take time to make the dear Saviour a daily companion and familiar friend. Let her take time for the study of His word, take time to go with the children into the fields, and learn of God through the beauty of His works.

Let her keep cheerful and buoyant. Instead of spending every moment in endless sewing, make the evening a pleasant social season, a family reunion after the day's duties. Many a man would thus be led to choose the society of his home before that of the clubhouse or the saloon. Many a boy would be kept from the street or the corner grocery. Many a girl would be saved from frivolous, misleading associations. The influence of the home would be to parents and children what God designed it should be, a lifelong blessing.

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