

A Plain Distinction

Part One

“What is Modesty in God’s Eyes?”



“True Christians . . . avoid superfluity and display; but their clothing is modest, and arranged upon the person with order and taste.”

{CTBH 87.1}

Do We Need Dress Reform?

Does our church need a reformation in our dress standards? Is there any distinction between us and the world in our dress?



Introduction to Dress Reform



We have talked to many concerned SDAs who agree that there is a problem of immodesty in our church. However, few seem to agree where to draw the line between those fashions that are acceptable, and those that are not.



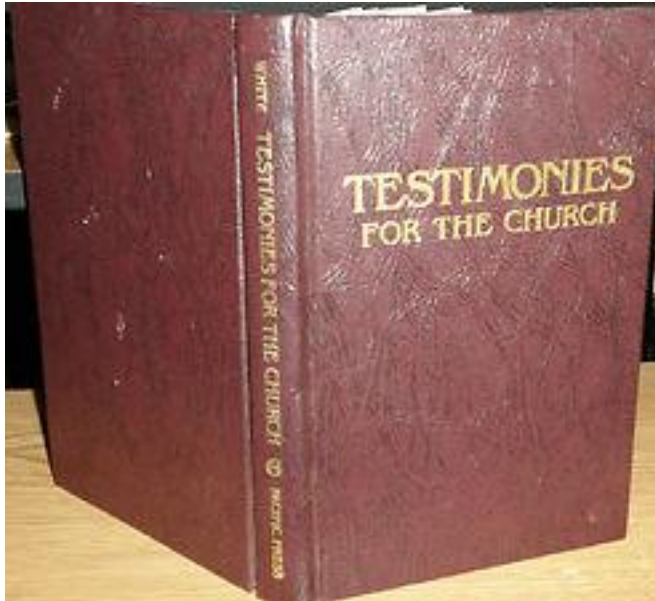
When everyone seems to have his or her own opinion, what can be done about the declining standards of modesty?



We have found that most leaders are not speaking on modesty because they are not aware of clear biblical principles that can be used to determine a standard for modesty. Members sit by, apparently helpless, wishing someone would say something, but not knowing what can be done.



Then, when someone has the courage to speak out, they are often labeled as legalistic, fanatical, judgmental and divisive.



While we certainly need to guard against fanaticism and legalism, we also need to beware lest we fall into the very last deception of Satan which will be to “make of none effect the testimony of the Spirit of God.” {1SM 48.3}



You may have heard the quote: “The dress question is not to be our present truth. To create an issue on this point now would please the enemy. He would be delighted to have minds diverted to any subject by which he might create division of sentiment and lead our people into controversy.”

From this, you most likely concluded that we are not to teach standards of modesty because it would create division and controversy. If so, then, it is the dress reformers that are the ones causing the trouble. But, is this what Ellen White meant by this statement?

In order to answer this question, we must understand the circumstances when Ellen White wrote this. Here is a brief history:

In the 1800's women's fashions were very displeasing to God for several reasons, all described in Testimonies for the Church, Volume 4, chapter 64: Simplicity in Dress.





First, their fashions were time consuming to study and prepare and expensive to have made. Second, they made an obvious divide between the rich and the poor. Third, they were extremely harmful to the health. Fourth, they were impractical to wear and time consuming to care for. Finally, they did not protect modesty, as the hoops required that the skirts often had to be raised, creating indecent exposure. God's people, who were following these worldly, demoralizing fashions, were in need of dress reform.



There was a worldly dress reform, led by the woman's rights movement which God's people were not to follow. (See Testimonies to the Church Volume 1, Chapter 83.) This style, the "so called reform dress" was first called the Bloomer outfit, then it was called the American Costume. It was distinguished by a "short dress" (from a little below the knee to a little above the knee) over pants.



An Adventist “reform dress” was designed that would not have any of the negative features either of the fashionable dress or the “so-called reform dress.” A pattern was created so that women could make a tasteful dress that would be healthy and yet attractive.



Difficulties arose as a response to this reform dress pattern. Many did not make the dress properly, with some only making a few alterations to their fashionable dress and others using no taste in making the dress. The first group cared too much about how they looked, still wanting to fit in with the world. They were resistant against giving up worldly fashions, so they made their reform dresses extravagant and showy.



The second group cared too little about how they looked, even apparently being proud of looking odd. They became fanatical and made a religion of their dress, trying to force it on others. This caused them to neglect the inward adorning God desires us to have.



New acceptable fashion

The many problems created by these two groups in response to the reform dress are also outlined in Testimonies for the Church, Volume 4, chapter 64: Simplicity in Dress. During this controversy in the church, dress reform had begun to catch on in the world, and a more affordable, simple, healthful, practical, and modest dress had become available for women to wear. This dress was longer than the reform dress and SDA women were much more willing to adopt this style, as they wouldn't stand out so much from the world. These were the reasons that this particular reform dress pattern was laid aside.



Yet, some women wanted to continue to push the reform dress on others, for the very reason that it created a separation between them and the world. They even desired to make it a test of salvation. The counsel not to create an issue of the “dress question” was directed at this group. It was actually an answer to a question from one of these overzealous dress reformers, as we can see at the very beginning of the letter:



“In answer to the questions that have recently come to me in regard to resuming the reform dress, I would say that those who have been agitating this subject may be assured that they have not been inspired by the Spirit of God. The Lord has not indicated that it is the duty of our sisters to go back to the reform dress.” *The Story of our Health Message*, 441.



Later in this letter she counseled, “I beg of our people to walk carefully and circumspectly before God. Follow the customs in dress as far as they conform to health principles. Let our sisters dress plainly, as many do, having the dress of good, desirable material, appropriate for this age *, and let not the dress question fill the mind. Our sisters should dress with simplicity. They should clothe themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety. Give to the world a living illustration of the inward adorning of the grace of God.” {3SM 242.4}



* Note: “This age” in the previous quotation refers to the age in which she was writing, where fashions were healthful, simple, and modest. It does not refer to any age that one may live, as fashions deemed “appropriate” for the previous age of hoops and corsets were not approved by God.



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The dresses during the time period that God approved of the fashions was approximately 1880 to 1900.

When the principles of healthful, simple, modest dress have been presented to the people, and all have been made aware and have been left to accept or reject the teaching, trying to then impose and enforce dress reform upon those who are unwilling only causes rebellion.



But in our current generation, the principles of dress reform have not been presented. Most of our people have no idea of God's standards of dress. There are some who would gladly follow them if they understood the inspired principles of modest and healthful dress.



But, some will never obey, no matter how clear inspiration.





“With all the light of the Word of God shining on their pathway, they will not obey His directions. They will follow their own tastes, and do as they please. These sisters give a wrong example to the youth, and to those who have newly come to the faith, for they see little difference between their apparel and that of the worldling. To those who are making self their idol nothing in the line of human tests should be presented, for it would only give them an excuse for making the final plunge into apostasy. Such do not know whom they are serving. Knowledge and power belong to God. *The ignorantly guilty must learn their condition.*” {SHM 443}



“Those who venture to disobey the plainest statements of Inspiration will not heed any human efforts made to induce them to wear a plain, neat, unadorned, proper dress, that will not in any way make them odd or singular. They will continue to expose themselves by hanging out their colors to the world.” {3SM 255}

She cautioned dress reformers, when encountering resistance,

“Therefore I say to my sisters, Enter into no controversy in regard to outward apparel, but be sure you have the inward adorning of a meek and quiet spirit.”
{SHM 444.3}



Dress reform has been lost sight of by our church. We need to start at the beginning, going back to the Bible. There is no consistent standard that is being upheld. Opinions of modesty abound, and yet nothing is authoritative.



We need to come to a united standard of modesty, based on a clear ‘Thus saith the Lord,’ not the varying opinions of men. “The Bible is our guide; study its teachings with a purpose to obey, and you need make no mistakes. Our dress should be in strict accordance with the character of our holy faith. [1 Timothy 2:9, 10; 1 Peter 3:3-5 quoted.] *There is need of putting more of the Bible precept into the dress*, as well as the inward adorning into the character.” {DG 158.2}



We are a mother and daughter team of dress reformers who want to take this truth to God's people with Christlike love and meekness.

We have created this presentation, especially for Seventh-day Adventists, summarizing the Biblical principles of modesty that we have discovered, backed up by inspired counsel in the Spirit of Prophecy.



Regarding dress reform, Ellen White states: *“I was directed to the following scriptures. Said the angel, ‘They are to instruct God's people.’”* She then quotes 1 Timothy 2:9, 10 and 1 Peter 3:3-5.

“Many look upon these injunctions as too old-fashioned to be worthy of notice; but He who gave them to His disciples understood the dangers from the love of dress in our time, and sent to us the note of warning. Will we heed the warning and be wise?” {CCh 181.5}

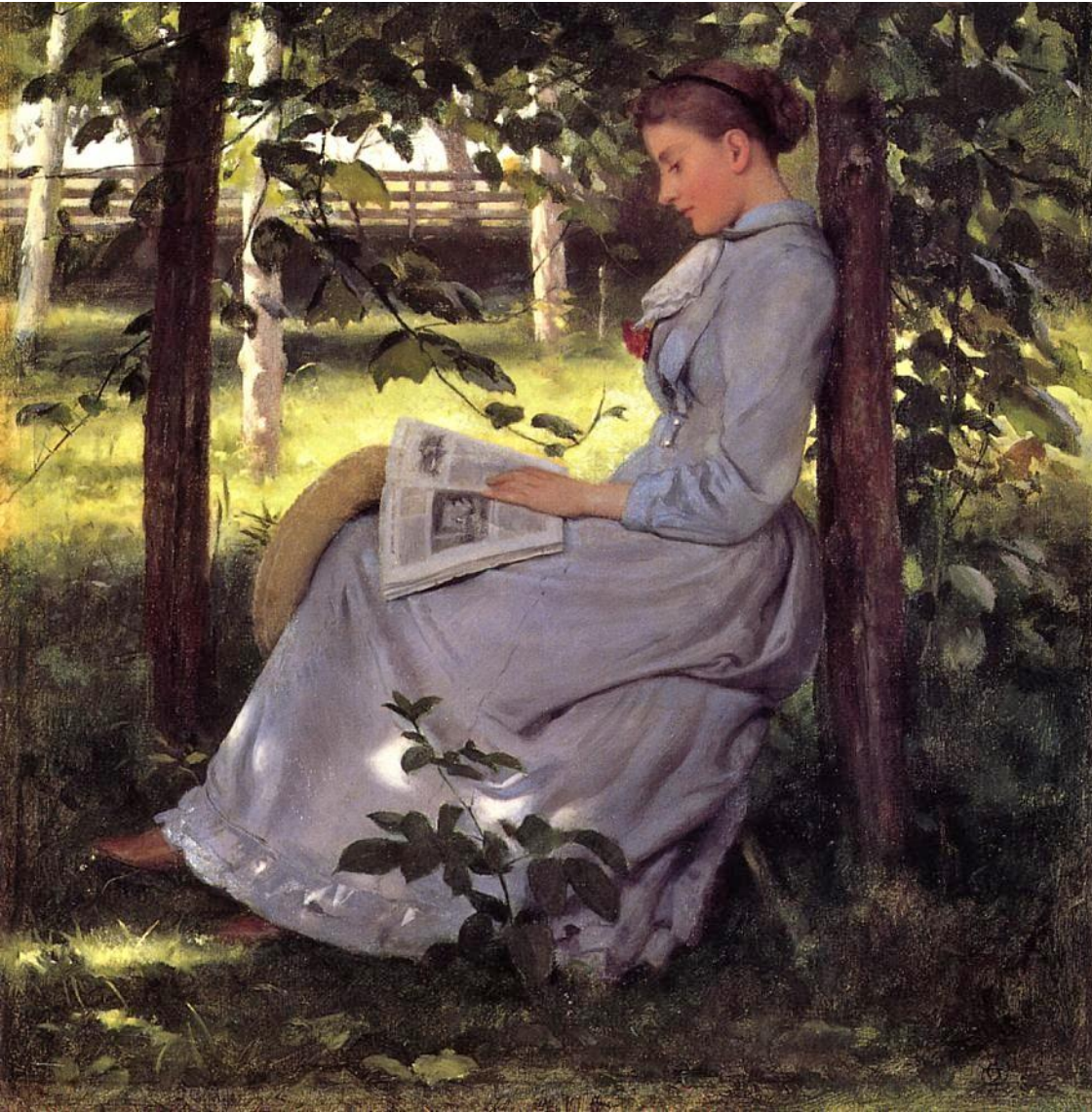




In another place, as she was writing about God's instruction on dress reform, she wrote, "*I was referred to Deuteronomy 22:5.*" and the verse is quoted. {1T 457.1}

God specifically pointed out these verses to her, so that she could teach us His foundational principles of dress contained therein. We need to consider these verses carefully, as well as her inspired counsel regarding dress reform.

Biblical Principles of Modesty



1 Timothy 2:9 says that women should “adorn themselves in **modest** apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety.” (KJV)

This passage reveals everything we need to know about how women ought to dress.

The Greek word that is translated as “modest” is “kosmios”, which means orderly, well-prepared, or well-arranged.



It comes from the word that is translated “cosmos” in English. The cosmos was arranged by God, and likewise a Christian woman’s clothing should be “well-arranged” and “well-prepared” according to God’s standards, not according to the world’s standards.



The need for clothing arose as a result of sin. Before the fall, Adam and Eve were naked, but not ashamed. After the fall, the thought of seeing God without clothes made them run and hide, and make clothes of fig leaves.



God's replacement for this inadequate covering were coats of skin. Ellen White reveals that "God clothed them with coats of skins to protect them from the sense of chilliness and then of heat to which they were exposed." {SR 46.1}



It is quite incredible that we have grown up with a picture of God's ideal dress for Eve after the fall being a one-shouldered mini dress. This is not well-prepared, proper, or modest. It would not serve the purpose of covering their bodies modestly or protecting them from the elements.



A godless fashion designer might think that the clothes he designs for women are “well-prepared,” and very feminine, but if they do not fit the purpose that God intended for women’s clothing, that is, to cover her appropriately, then they are not “well-prepared” or feminine according to Him.

*“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;” 1 Timothy 2:9*

It is significant that most of the Bible versions translate the word “kosmos” as “modest,” while the remaining versions use “becoming,” “proper,” “decent,” or “respectable” and “appropriate.” Clothing for women is proper and decent only when it is modest.



Women should “adorn themselves in modest apparel, **with shamefacedness** and sobriety.” 1 Timothy 2:9

The Greek word “aidos” that is translated as “with shamefacedness” means “a sense of shame.” A woman is not to have a *negative* attitude of shame towards her own body, but a *healthy* sense of shame attached with revealing her form to the view of others or drawing undue attention to her appearance.



This word carries with it the idea of the importance of discretion, showing that she understands the issues that make a garment either modest or immodest for a woman. Shamefacedness is the opposite of shameless pride of appearance.

Shamefaced modest



Shameless pride



Women should “adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and **sobriety**.” 1 Timothy 2:9



Prideful indulgence



Modest self-restraint

And the Greek word “sōphrosynēs” that is translated as “sobriety” means “self-control,” “soundness of mind” or “self-restraint.” Self-restraint is needed in order to bring into captivity the prideful attitudes of the flesh that lead women to disregard discretion, and to dress seductively or ostentatiously.



“Pride and extravagance in dress are sins to which woman is especially prone; hence these injunctions [*in 1 Timothy 2:9*] relate directly to her.” {CTBH 93.3}

An Introduction to Androgyny

God not only saw the need for clothing as a result of the fall, but for distinct clothing for men and women. “God designed that there should be a **plain** distinction between the dress of men and women” {1T 460.1}





From this principle we can deduce that the coats of skin He made for Adam and Eve were also distinctly different. (But **NOT** immodest, as shown here.)



God was the first clothing designer, and in the first designs He gave principles that His people would follow. The clothing of the patriarchs may have been based on the designs of the first coats given by God.



Many of the paintings of men and women in the Bible do not show any distinctions in their clothing. There also is no consistency in these artistic renderings in how the clothing is worn. They are not based on any archeological record, and cannot be used to determine how the clothing was designed.



Some try to say that men's and women's robes in Bible times were so similar that you couldn't tell them apart. They use pictures such as these to prove their point.

In reality, we don't know exactly what the Biblical costumes looked like.



The fact is clear that both men and women wore robes in Bible times. To say that they were so similar that they were indistinguishable is contrary to inspired principles.

Many low budget Bible dictionaries do not site any archeological proof either, and only can conjecture how the clothing was worn. In this presentation, we try to deduce, based on clear inspired principals, how Biblical clothing was likely worn. We use pictures as illustrations of what we are describing, not as historical evidence. What are the principals?





“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.”

{ 1T 460 }



The Spirit of Prophecy says "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." {1T 457.2} She referenced Deuteronomy 22:5



Deuteronomy 22:5 says “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.”



How can we know what “pertaineth unto a man” and what is a “woman’s garment?” Do we just follow the distinctions in our culture?



Pants were once thought to be men's wear.

Now most people would consider them appropriate for women.



Now, skirts and dresses, long considered to be women's wear, are being considered to be appropriate for men's wear by the latest fashion designers.



What happens when a culture deliberately removes distinctions? Androgynous fashion is becoming more common in our culture. Androgynous means “Partly male and partly female in appearance; of indeterminate sex.”



Clothing that is neither masculine nor feminine in appearance, because it has a blend of both features, is androgynous. The ideology that makes it a goal to blur the distinction between the sexes in appearance and behavior is called Androgyny.

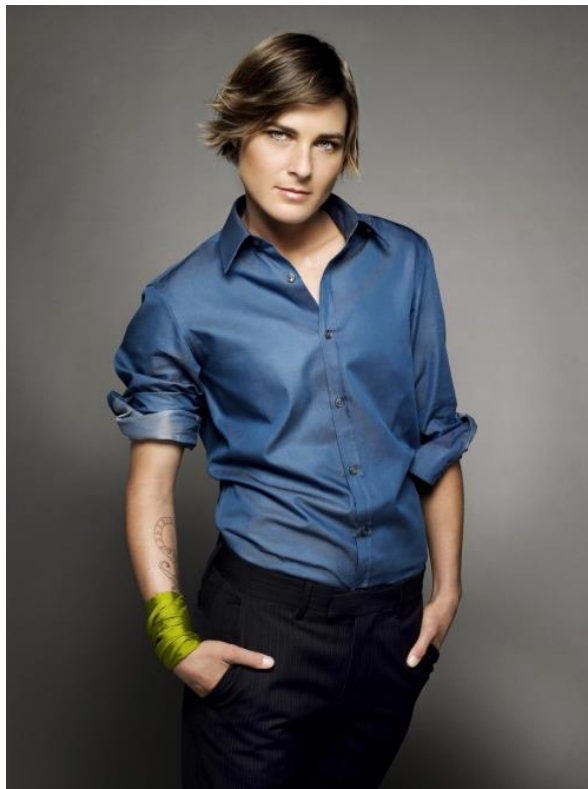


The goal of removing gender boundaries by the modeling and fashion industries is recognized by androgyny activists as a successful method to influence attitudes about gender roles and sexual orientation. The obliteration of distinctions in the appearance of sexes is viewed to be the way to remove discrimination against homosexuals, transsexuals, the intersexed and other gender non-conformists.



Andrej Pejec

Tove Hermanson describes the political success gained in this gender blurring process in his article, *Women, Pants and Politics*: “Adopting aspects of menswear had a direct relationship with the Women’s Movement, socially and politically....The good news is that as attitudes about gender have changed, and as women and homosexuals have won political and social freedoms we should’ve had all along, the rigid distinctions between clothing styles for men and women have blurred.”





Spiritualists believe that “when you make male and female into a single one, so that the male will not be male nor the female be female, then you will enter the kingdom of God.” –*Life Towards Tao*

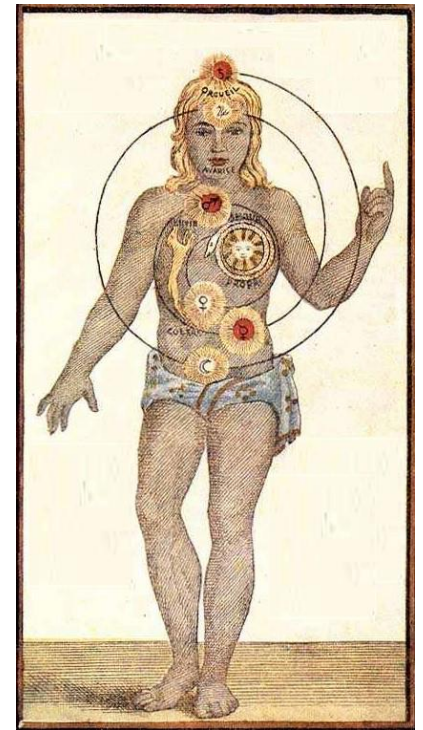
http://www.lifepositive.com/Mind/Life/Towards_Tao22007.asp

In its fullest sense, Androgyny is a religion that sets human ideas in place of God’s commands and created distinctions.

Androgyny rejects God-given differences between male and female.

Fashion blogger *Marina Rybak*, after praising historic gender benders like Marlene Dietrich, writes in a blog entitled *Sacred Androgyny*:

“Actually, what I am most interested in is the concept of sacred androgyny, which precedes the fashion statements. On the path to enlightenment it personifies the integration of male and female principles. In alchemy it is aligned with oneness, the fusion of intellect and intuition, a state when our Self is realizing its fullest potential and is experiencing the unconditional love and the wholeness of who we truly are.”



Androgyny is more than a fashion. It is a religion. It is spiritualism.



Distinctions between male and female fashions have been disappearing gradually and imperceptibly. Today, androgynous fashion is going mainstream.

Is God's command for men and women to wear gender-distinctive clothing relevant for us today?



Many Biblical scholars have considered the biblical injunction to dress distinctly as difficult to interpret or culturally irrelevant. But that leaves us without any inspired direction on this subject.



If we take the position that Deuteronomy 22:5 is not applicable and pertinent to us today, we leave the door wide open to whatever gender-blurring fashions come our way.

veer nyc: Actual Androgynous Clothing



<http://www.wearandrogyny.com/>



<http://www.wildfang.com/>



<http://androgynousfashion.com/>

coming soon
Androgynous Fashion
the debut collection



Several companies, owned or influenced by lesbians, have been recently formed for the purpose of providing androgynous clothing. They propose to “liberate menswear” for women’s use.



Is it not time to revisit this ancient command to consider what God's will is for us today?



“That which pertaineth to a man”



“A woman’s garment”

Biblical Principles of Gender Distinction

We will now take a closer look at this verse:

“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.” Deuteronomy 22:5



The word which is translated as “that which pertaineth to” in the KJV is the Greek word “keli.” In addition to clothing, this word refers often to men’s armor, instruments, and articles. The word for “man” is denoting a manly man, a strong man, or a warrior. In other words, a woman is not to put on anything that only men, especially strong men or warriors, should use, including his clothes. Men not only wore armor during battle, but also short robes that were considered immodest for a woman to wear.



Interestingly, female pagan worshipers sometimes would cross dress in mini skirts and armor in their ritualistic worship.



The command for the men in Deuteronomy 22:5 is far more revealing of gender distinctions in the clothing. Men are commanded not to put on a woman's "simlah." "It appears in some cases to have been a loose robe, but in most others, certainly, it was a large square piece of cloth, like a modern shawl, which could be wrapped around the person, with more or less taste and comfort."

reference: <http://www.bible-history.com/isbe/D/DRESS/>



Both men and women wore three basic garments: an inner robe which was worn next to the skin, an optional tunic worn over the inner robe (a long-sleeved coat), and a mantle worn as the outermost garment. A woman's mantle, or "simlah" had obvious differences in appearance to a man's mantle; otherwise God could not have restricted men from putting on a woman's mantle.



If the mantle was not being worn, but was hanging up on a hook, anyone would be able to tell if it was a man's or a woman's garment. Both genders wore robes, tunics and mantles, but we can deduce from this text that at least the mantles were distinctly different. Therefore, we can conclude that there is nothing wrong with men and woman's garments being the same basic format; nevertheless, there are to be features that distinguish the main outer articles as masculine or feminine.



This command requires the **clothing** to be distinct, not just the overall appearance. *Some claim that “as long as you can tell if you are a woman or a man, it really doesn’t matter what you wear, as long as it’s modest.”*



In other words, they believe that a woman could wear unisex pants and a T-shirt in her size as long as her shapely figure, feminine features, accessories, and hairstyle made her overall appearance look like a woman, while a man could wear the same style unisex pants and T-shirt in his size as long as his muscular figure, masculine features, accessories, and hairstyle made his overall appearance look like a man.



However, the distinction in clothing that God commanded in Deuteronomy 22:5 is independent of the shape of the body underneath, the length of the hair, or any other physical characteristic.

Neither does it require that certain signal accessories (like high heels) be worn in order to cue someone in to your sex.



Distinct roles are implied by distinct clothing. Most women could wear a man's business suit or a military uniform and still be identified as a woman.

At the time when women first put on these articles, they were solely considered men's attire.

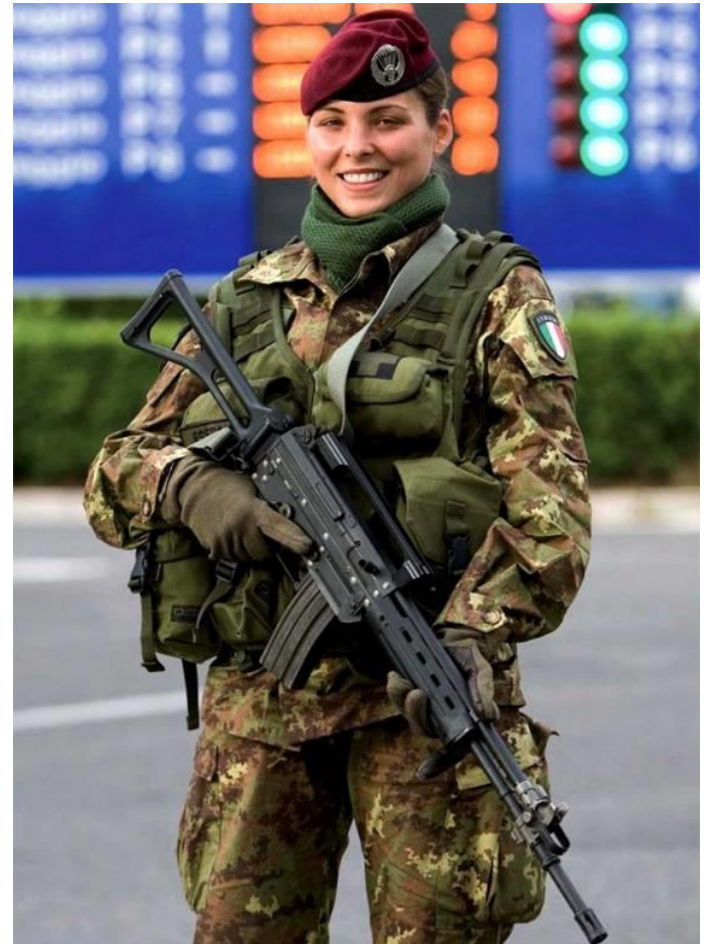


SOME OF THE COSTUMES OF THE LADIES
ON THE PLATFORM.

Women donned them in order to compete in men's roles.



They were rejecting their God-given roles, and usurping a man's place as provider and protector.





Most men could put on a woman's dress and still be identified as a man.

TIME

The woman
at work.
The man
at home.



Yet, doing so is a deliberate attempt to dress like a woman, symbolically relinquishing their role. The symbolism of switching gender distinct clothes is connected to role confusion so prevalent in our culture.

The Bible requires distinct clothing as well as distinct roles for men and women.





However, clothing also plays an important role in being able to tell men and women apart in all circumstances. Identifying some people as male or female is becoming harder to do.





When you have a masculine-looking female or a feminine-looking male in androgynous clothing, this lack of distinction in the clothing causes a lot of confusion.



The distinction,
according to
Deuteronomy 22:5
should not only be
in the features or the
physique of the man
or woman, but in
the articles of
clothing.



That way, a person may not have the most feminine or masculine features, but you could determine their sex simply by the gender distinct clothing he or she is wearing. We need this kind of distinction in our clothing, so we don't have to depend on the facial features and body shape to be distinct.



With a feminine hairstyle and clothes, the woman pictured on the left wouldn't look like a man. A woman with a boyish figure, and a man with curves could still be distinct with the right clothing.



In Deuteronomy 22:5, neither the specific shape nor design of the garments of men or women are described. There are no pictorial records of the dress of the Hebrews except in those of the nations who held them captive, and we do not have any records corresponding to the time period in which this command was given. Therefore, we cannot get an inspired standard for proper distinctions from this passage alone.



We can only see that there should be a distinct difference in the most visible articles of clothing and that the two genders should not interchange the clothing that has these distinct differences. Men and women can both wear pants, robes, dresses, or skirts and shirts, however, these need to have consistently obvious distinction. We will explain the principles in the Part Two of this presentation.