

American Decency Association

PO Box 202, Fremont, MI 49412 231-924-4050 www.americandecency.org

Encouraging Christians to guard their hearts

March 2008

When Unclothed is Unfitting



Jonathan Edwards once said that godly people can smell the depravity of an act before they can explain why it is evil. There is a spiritual sense that something is amiss. It does not fit in a world permeated with God. Ephesians 5:3 says that some things are not "fitting among saints." Fittingness is not always easy to justify with arguments. You discern it before you can defend it, which is good because we have to make hundreds of choices every day with little time for extended reflection.

From time to time, however, we need to pause and give rational, biblical expression to why something is not fitting. Some years ago

I came to that point when, week after week, a local newspaper put scantily clad women on the second page of the first section in order to sell underclothes. I wrote a letter to the editors with nine reasons why they should stop using this kind of advertising. Perhaps my reflections will help you deal with the hundreds of abuses of God's good gift of sexuality in our culture. Here is what I wrote.

As a fourteen-year subscriber and reader of your newspaper, I am writing to express the persuasion that your sexually explicit ads that often turn up in Section A are increasingly offensive and socially irresponsible. The effectiveness of catching people's attention by picturing a woman in her

underclothes does not justify the ads. The detrimental effects of such mercenary misuse of the females body are not insignificant. The harm I have in mind is described in the following nine persuasions.

1. This woman could not go out in public dressed like that without being shamed or being mentally aberrant. Yet you thrust her out, even in front of those of us who feel shame for her.

2. This portrayal of a woman sitting in her underclothes at a table with a cup of tea disposes men to think of women not as persons but mainly in terms of their bodies. It stimulates young boys to dwell on unclothed women's bodies and thus lames their ability to deal

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***"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own;"
1 Corinthians 6:19 (NIV)***

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***"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own;"
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with women as dignified persons. I have four sons.

3. The ad stimulates sexual desire which in thousands of men has no legitimate or wholesome outlet through marriage. In other words, it feeds a corporate, community lust that bears no good fruit outside marriage, but in fact many ills.

4. The ad makes sensibilities callous so that fewer and fewer offenses against good taste feel unacceptable, which spells the collapse of precious and delicate aspects of personhood and relationships.

5. The ad makes thousands of women subconsciously measure their attractiveness and worth by the standard of rarefied, unrealistic models, leading to an unhealthy and discouraging preoccupation with outward looks.

6. The ad feeds the prurient fantasies of ordinary men, lodging a sexual image in their minds for the day which can rob them of the ability to think about things greater and nobler than skin.

7. The ad condones the proclivity of males to men-

tally unclothe women by reminding them what they would see if they did, and it suggests that there are women who want to be unclothed publicly in this way. This reminder and this suggestion support habits and stereotypes that weaken personal virtue and jeopardize decorous relationships.

8. The ad encourages young girls to put excessive focus on their bodies and how they will be seen, adding to the epidemic of depression and eating disorders.

9. The ad contributes to dissatisfaction in men whose wives can't produce that body and thus adds to the instability of marriage and homes.

I realize that the bottom line is big bucks for page 2 and lots of attention for the department store, but please know that at least one assessment of your standards of fitness for print is that it is part of a tragic loss of modesty and decency that may, for now, feel like mature liberation, but in generations to come will reap a whirlwind of misery for all of us.

If you love God's gift of sexuality, take a stand for treating it like precious

gems rather than common gravel. Guard it in the velvet-lined safe of steel commitment. Don't strew it on the street or in the press.

John Piper

[Excerpted from **A Godward Life** © 1997 by Desiring God Foundation. Used by permission of WaterBrook Multnomah Publishing Group, a division of Random House, Inc.]

"But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people."

Ephesians 5:3

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