

Counsel Corner

Conducted by the Missionary Volunteer Department of the General Conference

Questions concerning young people's problems are answered in this column under the direction of the Young People's Department. Answers are not to be taken as a denominational pronouncement, but rather as good advice in harmony with the principles and practices of the church. While each answer appears over the signature of an individual, it has been carefully considered and approved by the Counsel Corner Committee. You are daily invited to write the Counsel Corner regarding your problems. When writing, give full name and address, so that a full answer may be given if in our judgment the question should not be printed. Names and initials will be attached to answers appearing in print, and any confidence fully respected. Address all questions to Counsel Corner, in care of the Youth's Cross, Takoma Park, Washington, D.C.

You give us enlightenment regarding the term "artificial" as employed by Mrs. E. G. White, and the effect of its use in the time in which she lived against their being worn for display. Does it refer to artificial flowers?

The word is used, so far as the writer knows, in only one instance in the Testimonies for the Church. The passage in which it occurs was first published in 1875. It reads as follows:

Among youth, a disposition in you to conform to the fashion, and to wear lace, and gold, and artificial flowers, will not recommend to others the religion or the truth that you profess.—"Testimonies," Vol. III, p. 376.

Whatever is here referred to as "artificial" was evidently related to "the fashion," and to things "worn for display." It was, moreover, of such a nature as to attract the attention of others, and was marked as to be considered by others as inconsistent with the profession of a Christian.

During the decade in which this was written, Mrs. White wrote a number of articles for the *Health Reformer*, our denominational health journal. In none of these articles we find the word "artificial" used adjectively, and in only one instance the term "artificial" as a noun.

In each instance the term in question refers to one particular fashion of the time. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that the same term used in the testimony of that period would be understood by those to whom the impression was written, as applying to that fashion.

Following are these passages, all that have been found in a somewhat exhaustive examination of Mrs. White's writings of that time. The emphasis on certain words is ours.

Fashion binds upon the heads of women needless appendages. It requires a sacrifice the natural form and shape of the head for artificial deformities. These have a direct tendency to draw blood to the brain, because they are made of artificial braids of hair, or jute."—*Health Reformer*, 1874.

2. Reference is made to a woman who "stated that the artificial arrangements upon her head were most uncomfortable, and that she had heat and pain in her head nearly all the time."—*Id.*, January, 1872.

3. "The artificial paddings over the chest and the large appendages upon the back of the head and upon the small of the back, made these girls appear anything but attractive."—*Id.*, November, 1871.

4. "Many in order to keep pace with absurd fashion lose their taste for natural simplicity, and are charmed with the artificial."—*Id.*, April, 1872.

5. "Fashion loads the heads of some women with artificial braids and pads, which do not add to their beauty, but give an unnatural shape to the head. The hair is strained and forced into unnatural positions, and it is not possible for the heads of these fashionable ladies to be comfortable. The artificial hair and pads covering the base of the brain heat and excite the spinal nerves centering in the brain. The head should ever be kept cool. The heat caused by these artificials induces the blood to the brain."—*Id.*, October, 1871.

This unnatural and ridiculous hair dressing was the subject of an action, first by the Battle Creek church, and then by the General Conference of 1866. A resolution was passed, as follows:

"We believe that the extravagant dressing and ornamenting of the hair, so common at this time, is condemned by the apostle (1 Tim. 2:9); and that the various beaded and spangled networks, such as are used to contain these artificial deformities called 'waterfalls,' 'water wheels,' etc., are the 'cauls' of Isaiah 3:18 (margin), which God has threatened to take away in the day of His anger."—*Review and Herald*, May 8, 1866.

A brief and terse statement from *Cornhill Magazine* gives a mental picture of this style of that period: "Heads are loaded with false hair stuck about with lace, feathers, flowers, and colored glass."—*Quoted in Health Reformer*, July, 1874.

Another writer in the *Independent* speaks of the ridiculous hats of the period, and adds:

"To make this unbecoming headgear still more ungraceful, there descends from it something called by the flowing name of waterfall, but which in fact looks more like a cabbage in a net, tricked out with beads and wampum."—*Quoted in Review and Herald*, Sept. 12, 1865.

So far as we are able to learn, there is no passage in any of Mrs. White's writings in which "flowers," or any other item of dress, is condemned, merely because of its being "artificial." This fact may be noted without in any wise minimizing her earnest and solemn warnings against the manifestation of pride and

display in dress and in sinful following of immodest, ultrastylish, or expensive clothing.

Although, as stated, Mrs. White did not specify flowers as an item of dress to be condemned, it is of interest to note that at the General Conference of 1866, in certain resolutions passed regarding dress, mention is made of flowers on the bonnets. We quote herewith a few of these resolutions, as they help to give an understanding of the extreme styles of that period, and of the frills and furbelows that, because of their display and expensiveness, and the time taken in making the garments on which they were used, were so justly condemned in the Testimonies.

"We regard plumes, feathers, flowers, and all superfluous bonnet ornaments as only the outward index of a vain heart, and as such they are not to be tolerated in any of our members."

"Trimming of Dresses.—We hold that flounces, loops,* and a profuseness of the ribbons, cording, braid, embroidery, buttons, etc., in dress trimming, are vanities condemned by the Bible." (Footnote.—"* By 'loops' we mean the custom of wearing long dresses and then hooking up the skirt at intervals.")—*Review and Herald*, May 8, 1866.

Another resolution, accompanying the foregoing, contains wise counsel that might well be followed today:

"We believe that the people of God should be slow to adopt new fashions of whatever sort they may be; for if not useful, we ought never to adopt them; if they are, it will be time enough for us to take them after they have been tested, and the excitement of their introduction has passed away; and having found that which is neat, modest, and convenient, let us be slow to change."—*Idem*.

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