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The search for identity

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In some cultures and religions, it's considered a sign of modesty for women to cover their bodies in loose fitting clothes and their head, neck, and even face with a veil. Muslim women aren't the only ones to promote modest attire. Last summer while vacationing at Gulf Shores, Alabama, we noted a Catholic nun enjoying the sun and sand while fully covered in a flowing habit. Only her face and hands were exposed. Hindu women in saris, Amish women in ankle length skirts and bonnets and many other Christian denominations encourage modesty in women's dress.

While Muslims criticize Western fashions as provocative and inappropriate, many people who are part of Western culture also disapprove of exposing the body in public in a way that invites sensuality. Both Western and Eastern cultures, Muslim and Christian, can unite in a rejection of sensuality.

Sensuality that exploits and causes individuals to lose control is often accepted as normal and even unavoidable. The implication is that female bodies attract men who are incapable of exercising self-control. The animal nature is believed to be stronger than a person's moral and spiritual nature. Yet the man of God's creating is not weak but physically, morally, and spiritually strong. In Genesis the Bible says that man and woman are created in God's image and given "dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle: and over all the earth" (Gen.1:26). To me this indicates that God gave men and women power and authority over animal impulses. God created man and woman strong, not weak.

This includes moral strength. And because men and women are morally strong, they have control over their thoughts and actions. We aren't slaves to sensuality. We have God-given dominion and self-control.

Living in obedience to God's moral laws, including abstinence from sex outside of marriage, men and women increase their spirituality. Spirituality reflects God's power while sensuality is human weakness. It's not man who is weak, but sensuality. It's not woman who is the tempter or temptation, but sensuality. Replacing sensuality with spirituality frees both men and women. This would truly "lift the veil" to reveal the real nature of men and women.

Whatever hides woman's and man's spiritual and Godlike nature - beauty, happiness, grace, dignity, intelligence, all the qualities of God - needs to be removed. Instead of leading people into temptation and sin, this more spiritual view can guide each one into heightened Godliness and spirituality.

Some years ago I began receiving obscene phone calls. These calls were so upsetting that I unplugged the phone. In a way, I was hiding under a veil. If he couldn't call me, then I didn't have to deal with the situation. But in this case I couldn't keep the phone unplugged forever. I realized I had to lift this veil and see the real man of God's creating. I began by reading two testimonies in the Christian Science Sentinel of people who resolved similar circumstances. One testifier was a man, the other a woman. Both people healed the problem the same way, by uplifting their thought to see the spiritual nature of the caller, that he was created by God and was spiritual, not sensual.

I prayed for several hours until I could see this stranger as the child of God, created in His image and likeness. Then I plugged in the phone. Almost immediately it rang. It was the obscene caller. Before he finished his first sentence, I spoke to him and told him something about his real, spiritual nature as God's beloved child. He was silent a minute and then hung up. He never called again. We both were freed from the imposition of sensuality, freed to see and experience something of our real spiritual identity.

Regardless of cultural or religious requirements, we can right now strive to see the spiritual nature of each individual. This spiritual view will strengthen us individually and collectively.

“For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.”

I Corinthians 13:12