

The Dress Code of Holy Christian Women

By

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Introduction:

The Creator designed the first functional clothes for man after sin entered man's world and the wearing of clothes became a necessity. But how has man approached his dressing culture since then? Has man continued to look to God to dress right since He made the first clothes for him?

The answer is an awful indictment on man's subsequent relationship with the Creator. A new fashion designer is on the scene, and he's making his impact most felt in the area of women's clothing.

What does the Holy Scriptures say about women's dressing? Is it a teaching to be followed today? If yes, will there be any consequences for one's salvation if not followed?

The Biblical answer shockingly flies in the face of the standard policy on dressing in the majority of today's Churches. But then, "let God be true but every man a lie" (Rom. 3:4). The Lord has prescribed in black and white the kind of dressing becoming of His obedient daughters, and it's part of His "words of eternal life" (John 6:68) that should be followed in this end time. "I am the LORD, I change not" (Mal. 3:16).

Heaven has been crowded out of the Fashion Business

"And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them" (Gen. 3:21 *ESV*).

God designed and made the first clothes for man as an inferior substitute for the spiritual, divine covering man lost when he sinned. Physical covering had become inevitable because nakedness had lost its pre-Fall innocence and purity; clothing was needed to conceal shame and control lust:

"Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths" (Gen. 3:7 *ESV*).

Earlier, the scriptural report was that, Adam and Eve were “both naked and were not ashamed” (Gen. 2:25). “But as soon as human rebellion and self-assertiveness reared their ugly heads, shame, guilt and self-consciousness took over. Pathetic attempts at self-concealment (Gen. 3:7) are replaced by God’s own provision of covering (Gen. 3:21). Henceforth nakedness was unnatural. Clothing is God’s covering, His gracious response to human rebellion. Being unclothed thus becomes a metaphor for being exposed to the judgment of God” (“Naked, Nakedness”, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois 1998, p.582).

Clothing is an absolute necessity. Man himself realized that need immediately he fell into transgression and lost the covering of the divine glory (Rom. 3:23), and God improved on his crude attempts at covering himself by making for them garments of skin.

God has a big say in HOW we clothe ourselves. Adam and Eve’s loincloths of fig leaves were not good enough; they fell short of the divine standard.

But how much influence does God Almighty still wield over people’s dressing?

The fashion industry is today a multimillion, globalized business. It spans across national borders and cultures to the extent that a global fashion culture has evolved; almost all the world dresses alike.

But how did all begin?

The online encyclopedia *Wikipedia* explains:

The fashion industry is a product of the modern age. Prior to the mid-19th century, most clothing was custom made. It was handmade for individuals, either as home production or on order from dressmakers and tailors. By the beginning of the 20th century—with the rise of new technologies such as the sewing machine, the rise of global capitalism and the development of the factory system of production, and the proliferation of retail outlets such as department stores—clothing had increasingly come to be mass-produced in standard sizes and sold at fixed prices. Although the fashion industry developed first in Europe and America, today it is an international and highly globalized industry, with clothing often designed in one country, manufactured in another, and sold world-wide. For example, an American fashion company might source fabric in China and have the clothes manufactured in Vietnam, finished in Italy, and shipped to a warehouse in the United States for distribution to retail outlets internationally. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fashion>).

Looking fashionable is the done thing. Hence people the world over put more trust in fashion designers to ‘dress up’ than in themselves. God’s will as to the proper way to dress hardly counts.

And why not?

Fashion designers invent and dictate clothing styles, and in a world that is infatuated with the 'latest fashion', the pressure to conform is always strong. But who inspires the fashion designers to come up with the styles they come up with?

Since the whole unsaved world lies under control of the evil one (1 John 5:19; Rev. 12:9), it goes without saying that the inspiration behind most of the world's fashion designs and clothing styles is Satan, "the god of this world" (2 Cor. 4:4; John 12:31), "the prince of the power of the air"! This is evidenced by the fact that most of the clothing styles churned out and sold WORLDWIDE are designed to engender LUST in both wearer and observer—exactly what God's Word warns us against:

"Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

"For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

"And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (1 John 2:15-17; see also Jam. 4:4-5).

In Ephesians 2 the Apostle Paul uncovers "lust" as the main instrument by which Satan controls unregenerate humanity:

"And you *hath* He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;

"Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

"Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others" (Eph. 2:1-3).

In other words, the way or "course of this world" by which all unregenerate humanity live is inspired by "the prince of the power of the air" who is a "spirit". His evil influence is actively at work in "people who disobey God" (*GNB*), manifesting his otherwise unseen cosmic operations. But in what specific way does the devil exercise his evil influence over people's behaviour? Satan's evil influence over people reveals itself in "the lusts of the flesh" which involve gratifying "the desires of the flesh and of the mind", both of which serve the will of the devil as far as carnal man is concerned (Rom. 8:7; Gal. 5:19-21). Fleshly "lusts" then constitute the remote-control device of the devil whereby he holds people captive to his will (see 2 Tim. 2:26).

As already pointed out, one area Satan uses his 'remote-control of lusts' to great effect is clothing. And the mainstay of the lust-inducing designs is the feminine dress. Although some men's clothes may be classified as suggestive too, the truth of the matter is that garments which fully cover women are steadily going out of fashion. What is in vogue is the semi-nude style: A low-cut neckline exposing the breasts; a skimpy blouse exposing the navel and midriff; a mini-skirt exposing the thighs; a V-shaped dress exposing the chest and part of the breasts; a pair of tight-fitting jeans accentuating the back parts; a topless dress exposing the upper part of the body; a see-through dress meant to tease and titillate the opposite sex. Collectively these styles constitute what the Bible calls "the attire of an

harlot": "And, behold, there met him a woman *with* the attire of an harlot, and subtil of heart" (Prov. 7:10).

Like our first parents freshly caught in the web of satanic deception, mankind under the influence of Satan still do not know decent and proper dressing. Thus the majority of modern women prefer the skimpy dress of "fig leaves" to God's "garments of skin" which cover the body well. But who will you choose as your fashion designer? God or Satan?

If your desire is to be an obedient child of God, you have no option but to reject the lust-promoting designs of Satan:

"As children of obedience, not fashioning yourselves to your former lusts in your ignorance, but according to the Holy One who has called you, you also become holy in all conduct; because it has been written, 'Be holy, because I am holy'" (1 Pet. 1:14-16 *LITV*).

As the scriptures make us understand, the "former lusts" pertain to all the evil desires the devil arouses in the carnal nature (the flesh and the mind) but which comes to man as if he were freely doing his own will when in reality he was the devil's puppet (see Jam. 1:14). But the more alarming part is that all those evil desires or lusts are directly opposed to God's will for man. The simple solution is to become holy in all our conduct so we will be holy like God. That touches our speech to the clothes we wear!

You are what You Wear—either Holy or Unholy!

But, first, let's get this straight: many are those who think that dress and ornaments are not a salvation issue. But then, can anything which God deems important enough to reveal His express will about be said to be unimportant for salvation?

As Dr Sameule Bacchiocchi (Ph. D), Professor of church history and theology, notes in his excellent article "Dress And Ornaments in Christian History", clothes are not just an outward covering but reveal something core within us:

... dress and appearance are an important index of Christian character. Clothes and appearance are most powerful nonverbal communicators not only of our socioeconomic status, but also of our moral values. We are what we wear. This means that the outward appearance is an important index of Christian character. It serves as a frame to reveal the picture of Christ whom we serve. The Bible recognizes the importance of dress and ornaments as indicated by the numerous stories, allegories, and admonitions regarding appropriate and inappropriate adorning (p.2).

And Dr Bacchiocchi discloses in his article that almost all eras of the Christian Church from the apostolic age down have witnessed calls for a return to godliness and modesty in dressing as called for in the Bible. Apparently it's only in the 21st century that such calls appear far and few between!

For example under the subtitle "Exhortations to Modesty", he writes:

*The New Testament dress code of modesty and simplicity taught by the apostles was enforced by church leaders in early Christianity. For example, in 202 Tertullian wrote a treatise *On the Apparel of Women*, in which he urges women to wear nice, becoming dresses and giving attention to their hair and skin. But, he condemned seductive clothes and ornaments designed to attract attention.⁶*

*Similar denunciations of extravagant dress and ornaments are found in the writings of Clement of Alexandria (150-215), a contemporary of Tertullian who headed the catechetical (baptismal) school of Alexandria from 190 to 202. In his treatise, *The Instructor*, Clement went into great detail to describe the luxurious clothes, the sandals with golden ornaments, the elaborate hairstyles, and the multitude of ornaments worn by women. He lists the following array of female ornaments: "Snoods, fillets, natron, and steel; pumice-stone, band, back-band, back-veil, paint, necklaces, paint for the eyes . . . Ear-pendants, jewelry, earrings; mallow-colored cluster-shaped anklets; buckles, clasps, necklets, fetters, seals, chains, rings, powders, bosses, bands, olisbi, Sardian stones, fans, helicters."⁷*

Clement wondered "how those who bear such a burden are not worried to death. O foolish trouble! O silly craze for display! To these the Spirit prophesies by Zephaniah: "And their silver and their gold shall not be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's anger.' But for those women who have been trained under Christ, it is suitable to adorn themselves not with gold, but with the Word, through whom alone the gold comes to light."⁸

According to Clement, Christians should not say, "I possess, and possess in abundance: why then should I not enjoy?" but rather they should say, "I have: why should I not give to those who need?"⁹ Continuing, he expounded on the principle of responsible stewardship: "It is monstrous for one to live in luxury, while many are in want. How much more glorious is to do good to many, than to live sumptuously! How much wiser to spend the money on human beings, than on jewels and gold! How much more useful to acquire decorous friends, than lifeless ornaments!"¹⁰

*Similar exhortations are found in the writings of Cyprian (died 258), who served as church leader in Carthage, North Africa. In his small treatise, *On the Dress of Virgins*, he urged women to be modest and becoming in their appearance. He maintained that an immodest woman cannot rightfully claim to belong to Christ. "Having put on silk and purple, they cannot put on Christ; adorned with gold, and pearls, and necklaces, they have lost the ornaments of the heart and spirit."¹¹*

In a fatherly fashion Cyprian appealed to women saying: "Let your countenance remain in you incorrupt, your neck unadorned, your figure simple; let not wounds be made in your ears, not let the precious chain of bracelets and necklaces circle your arms or your neck; let your feet be free from golden bands, your hair stained with no dye, your eyes worthy of beholding God."¹² (p.6).

Clothing styles are not morally neutral. The type of clothes you wear advertizes what you believe in.

So, how exactly does God want His redeemed daughters to dress as revealed in the scriptures?

Godliness is the Adornment of Holy Christian Women, not Worldly Jewelry

A number of scriptures combine to give us God's aggregate will on the matter. However, the most comprehensive statement of scripture which defines both the spirit and manner of dressing expected of holy Christian women is found in 1 Tim. 2:9-10:

"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; "But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works" (1 Tim. 2:9-10).

In this scripture, as part of his exhortation on the godly manner of public prayer in which men should lift up "holy hands, without wrath and doubting" (vv. 1-4, 8), the Apostle Paul urges Christian ladies to "adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety". But how do they do that? It's by avoiding "braided [i.e. plaited] hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly apparel" and rather putting on the adornment of "good works" as fitting for godly women. Many interpreters tend to water down the apostle's instruction by saying that he did not mean to forbid all ornamentation, but that he merely decried the excesses. But it's quite clear from a careful reading of the scripture that dressing "modestly with shamefacedness and sobriety" corresponds to not braiding the hair or wearing of gold or pearls or costly apparel. You cannot braid the hair or wear gold and the rest and still be "modest"!

The *Contemporary English Version (CEV)* renders the text in more understandable language:

"I would like for women to wear modest and sensible clothes. They should not have fancy hairdos, or wear expensive clothes, or put on jewelry made of gold or pearls".

It's an emphatic statement, "They SHOULD NOT!"

But by "modest apparel" what exactly did the apostle mean? What image of clothing did he conjure up in the minds of his first-century readers?

John Gill explains in his commentary:

that women adorn themselves in modest apparel: the word rendered "apparel" signifies a long robe, which reaches down to the feet; and the word translated "modest" signifies that which is clean, neat, and decent, yea, beautiful and ornamental; and the sense of the apostle is, that he would not have them to come to public worship in rags, and in dirty and filthy garments, but that their bodies should be covered with clean and decent raiment; so the Israelites washed their clothes that they might be ready to meet the Lord at Mount Sinai, [Exo 19:14](#). The Jews always appeared in their best clothes on the sabbath day; this is one of their rules: (n).

"for the honour of the sabbath, every man must be clothed, כסות נקייה, "with clean or neat apparel" and clothing on the weekday must not be as clothing on the sabbath day; and if a man can make no change, he must let down his talith (or upper garment, his cloak); so that his clothing may not be as the clothing of the weekdays, when that was girt up about him." (John Gill's Exposition on the Entire Bible, e-Sword).

As to dressing "with shamefacedness and sobriety" and "not with braided hair", *The People's New Testament* commentary observes as follows:

With shamefacedness. *A shrinking from all that is indelicate.*

Sobriety. *Self-restraint; not yielding to vain impulses.*

Not with braided hair. *The Gentile women were much given to arranging the hair in plaits over the head, with bands of gold. Such vain and idle show at worship is forbidden, as well as the wearing of pearls, or costly array. At the house of God a display is not comely. (e-Sword version).*

At this stage in the history of the Christian Church, the Gospel of Yeshua, the Nazarene, having initial followers among His own kith and kin, the Jews, had expanded beyond the confines of its Judean birthplace into the Gentile Roman world. While the Jews knew the basics of God's will, the same could not be said of the Gentile converts to the faith. They had to be taught to UNLEARN their immodest and ungodly way of life in exchange for the holy life of simplicity in Christ. In respect of dressing, the wanton extravagance and vanity which prevailed in the Roman world was simply outrageous. Dr Samuele Bacchiocchi explains more under the subhead "Dress and Ornaments in the Early Church":

Christianity arose during the golden age of the Roman Empire. In 31 B. C. Emperor Augustus unified the empire by defeating his eastern competitors, Anthony and Cleopatra, and ushered in a period of unprecedented peace and prosperity. The wealth accumulated from the booty of wars gave rise to a new middle class that displayed its wealth through luxurious attire and ornaments. The ancient Roman virtue of modesty had disintegrated under the ravishment of imported Eastern luxury, and the emperors themselves led in the procession of debauchery. The extravagant luxury of the time was condemned by Roman moralists such as Cato, Seneca, Quintillian, Epictetus, and Lucius Valerius.¹

For example, the famous Roman orator Quintillian commented on the extravagant fashion of the time, saying: "A tasteful and magnificent dress lends added dignity to the wearer: but effeminate and luxurious apparel fails to adorn the body, and only reveals the sordidness of the mind."² Adorning the body was a laborious and expensive process. A wealthy matron possessed several slaves trained as hairdressers who would work on her with heated steel pincers and tongs. Hair was dressed in different ways with hairbands and pins and braided with gold and gems. Wigs were worn, especially blond. The favorite color for clothes was purple, which was extremely expensive.

"Diamonds, emeralds, topazes, opals, and sardonyx were favorite stones. . . . Pearls were loved most of all. Julius Caesar bought for Servilia a pearl which cost him 21,250 [about \$80,000]. Earrings were made of pearls, and Seneca spoke of women with two or three

fortunes in their ears. Slippers were encrusted with them; Nero even had a room whose walls were covered with them. Pliny saw Lollia Paulina, wife of Caligula, wearing a dress so covered with pearls and emeralds that it had cost 450,000 [about \$1,600,000].¹³

Silk was regarded as the most potent weapon of seduction, because it was made into a fine, transparent, clinging material that could arouse interest at a time when low neck line did not exist. The effect of silk clothes may be judged by Seneca's outraged reaction: "There I see silken cloths, if they can be called cloths, which protect neither a woman's body nor her modesty, and in which she cannot truthfully declare that she is not naked. These are bought for huge sums of money . . . so that our women may show as much of themselves to the world at large as they show to their lovers in the bedroom."⁴ (*Dress and Ornaments in Christian History*, pp. 6&7).

Little wonder the Apostle Peter, like his counterpart Paul, had occasion to also exhort the Christian women of his time to modest and godly dressing:

"Likewise, ye wives, *be* in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives;

"While they behold your chaste conversation *coupled* with fear.

"Whose adorning let it not be that outward *adorning* of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel;

"But *let it be* the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, *even the ornament* of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

"For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands" (1 Pet. 3:1-5).

While the apostle gave his instruction in the context of godly wifely behaviour meant to reduce marital tensions between believing wives and their unbelieving husbands, he nevertheless had a distinct message on dressing for Christian women: "Do not let your ornaments be those of the body such as dressing [braiding] of the hair, or putting on of jewels of gold or fair clothing" (1 Pet. 3:3 *The Bible in Basic English BBE* 1965).

And it was a highly appropriate call. Like most women of today, the ladies of first-century Roman society were intensely passionate about their hairstyles to the extent of bordering on idolatry. In his book *Manners & Customs of the Bible* James M. Freeman describes some of the highly elaborate and fanciful hairstyles of the time:

The Oriental ladies are exceeding fond of golden ornaments and of costly array. Especial attention is paid to the hair. Long hair is greatly prized. See 1 Cor. Xi, 15. Great care is taken in dressing the hair. Costly ointments are used. The tresses are carefully braided. The custom of plaiting the hair is very ancient. The Egyptians practiced it, and some specimens of old plaited hair are yet to be seen in museums on the heads of mummies. The women of other nations were not behind them. 'In the daily use of cosmetics they bestowed the most astonishing pains in arranging their long hair; sometimes twisting it round on the crown of the head, where, and at the temples, by the aid of gum, which they knew as well as the modern belles, they wrought it into a variety of elegant and fanciful devices—figures of coronets, harps, wreaths, diadems, emblems of public temples and conquered cities, being formed by the mimic skill of the ancient friseur; or else, plaiting it into an incredible number of tresses, which hung down the back, and which, when necessary, were lengthened by

ribbons so as to reach to the ground, and were kept at full stretch by the weight of various wreaths of pearls and gold fastened at intervals down to the extremity’ (p. 468).

What a fuss! The ungodly ancient ladies really made much of their hair—consumed by pure vanity and excessive pride in their looks. Such a life was unbecoming of godly women.

But does it mean that the command to dress modestly without worldly jewelry applied to just the Christian ladies of the apostle’s time and not to Christian women of all time everywhere they may be?

As far as “All scripture is God-breathed and profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, so that the man [or woman] of God may be perfected, being fully furnished for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17 *LITV*), the command to dress godly and modestly devoid of ornaments does apply to Christian women of this age. The Word of God abides forever unaffected by so-called ‘modern trends’:

Matt. 24:35

“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away”.

Ps 100:5

“For the LORD *is* good; His mercy *is* everlasting; and His truth *endureth* to all generations”.

Ps 199:89

“Forever, O LORD, Thy word is settled in heaven”.

With more traps set for end-time believers by the evil one, the teaching on godly dressing might be even more urgent in our day. There is (video) evidence that the commercial human hair used by many of the fashionable ladies of today for the popular rasta hairdo, known as *mesh*, are first offered to Asian idols like Buddha before sold to factories where chemicals are added to improve on their texture and general quality. So indirectly Christian ladies who, despite the Biblical ban on worldly hairdressing, use some of these commercial human hairs as add-ons to their naturally grown hair are having fellowship with the unclean spirits to whom the hairs were first offered by their devout worshippers as sacrifices. The Almighty warns us in the following scriptures:

“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

“And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel [unbeliever]?

“And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people” (2 Cor. 6:14-16).

“But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils [demons], and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.

“Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord’s table, and of the table of devils.

“Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He?” (1 Cor. 10:20-22).

In his explanatory notes on 1 Pet. 3:3, Methodist church founder John Wesley stated forthrightly: “Three things are here expressly forbidden: curling the hair, wearing gold, (by way of ornament,) and putting on costly or gay apparel. These, therefore, ought never to be allowed, much less defended, by Christians” (*John Wesley’s Explanatory Notes*, e-Sword).

In a much more extensive treatment of the subject, John Wesley, in a sermon, gave six solid reasons why Christians should not wear “gold or pearls or costly array”. Dr Bacchiocchi, a Seventh-Day Adventist, found it worthwhile to reproduce the sermon in a condensed form in his article “Dress and Adornments in Christian History”:

John Wesley stands out among the many Pietists and Puritans who made the question of extravagant dress and adornment a pressing moral issue. His clear and compelling teachings on dress served as the basis for early American Methodist policies on the matter. In fact, his teachings had a considerable influence on the dress reform adopted by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, since several of our pioneers, including Ellen White, came from a Methodist background.

Early Adventists greatly respected Wesley's teachings on dress and adornments. This is indicated, for example, by the publication of the article, "On Dress, From Mr. Wesley's Advice to the People Called Methodists," in the July 10, 1855, issue of Review and Herald, the official Adventist church paper. In this article, Wesley appeals to Methodists to observe plainness and neatness in dress, avoiding gold or pearls or costly apparel.

In a sermon, "On Dress," delivered on December 30, 1786, John Wesley presents six specific reasons why Christian Methodists should not adorn themselves "with gold, or pearls, or costly array."²⁹ I will briefly summarize these reasons because they are still relevant for us today.

Wesley's first reason is that wearing luxurious clothes and ornaments "engenders pride, and where it is already, increases it. . . . Nothing is more natural than to think ourselves better because we are dressed in better clothes." Wesley illustrates this point by pointing to the many thousands of people in England, not only lords, but also "honest tradesmen," who infer "the superior value of their persons from the value of their clothes."³⁰

Wesley's second reason is that "costly apparel tends to breed and to increase vanity. By vanity I here mean the love and desire of being admired and praised. . . . The more you indulge this foolish desire, the more it grows upon you. You have vanity enough by nature, but by thus indulging it you increase it a hundredfold. O stop! Aim at pleasing God alone, and all these ornaments will drop off."³¹

Wesley's third reason is that "costly apparel naturally tends to beget anger, and every turbulent and uneasy passion. And it is on this very account that the Apostle places this 'outward adorning' in direct opposition to 'the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit.'" By "anger" Wesley apparently means inner tension, for he explains that the "outward adorning" makes it impossible to experience the "inward quietness of spirit."³²

Wesley's fourth reason is that "costly apparel tends to create and inflame lust." Apparently Wesley is thinking of immodest dress, which can inflame "base appetite." "You kindle a flame which at the same time consumes both yourself and your admirers."³³

Wesley's fifth reason may be called irresponsible stewardship. The money spent to buy costly adornments cannot be used to adorn oneself with such good works as clothing the naked. To those who argued, "I may be as humble in cloth of gold as in sackcloth," Wesley responded, "If you could be as humble when you choose costly as when you choose plain apparel (which I flatly deny), yet you could not be as beneficent, as plenteous in good works. Every shilling which you save from your own apparel you may expend in clothing the naked, and relieving the various necessities of the poor."³⁴

Wesley's sixth reason is that outward adorning undermines "the whole nature of inward holiness." "All the time you are studying this 'outward adorning,' the whole inward work of the Holy Spirit stands still; or rather goes back, though by very gentle and almost imperceptible degrees. Instead of growing more heavenly-minded, you are more and more earthly-minded. If you once had fellowship with the Father and the Son, it now gradually declines; and you insensibly sink deeper and deeper into the spirit of the world, into foolish and hurtful desires, and groveling appetites. All these evils, and a thousand more, spring from one root-indulging yourself in costly apparel."³⁵

One cannot help but admire Wesley not only for his forthright preaching on the sensitive subject of dress, but also for his insights on how the outward adorning affects the inward work of the Holy Spirit. The influence of Wesley's powerful preaching was felt not only in England, but also in America. Wesley himself tells us that during his brief sojourn in Savannah, Georgia, he ministered to a congregation that was as well adorned with gold and costly apparel as those he had seen in London. But as a result of his powerful preaching on the gospel of plainness, a radical change occurred. "All the time that I afterward ministered in Savannah, I saw neither gold in the church, nor costly apparel; but the congregation in general was almost constantly clothed in plain, clean linen or woollen."³⁶ (pp. 16-18).

A cogent and hard-hitting presentation of the truth, but the sad reality is that such injunctions to holiness and decency in Christian dressing rarely, if ever, comes from the pulpits of modern churches. That sort of preaching has long stopped. Even in Wesley's own Church. Dr Bacchiocchi laments the regrettable development:

Unfortunately, the contributions to dress reform made by revivalists like John Wesley have been largely forgotten. Most of the evangelical churches which trace their roots to these pioneers no longer uphold the standard of modesty in dress taught by their founders. They no longer regard outward appearance as being an important index of Christian character. This change of attitude can be seen by comparing older church manuals with newer ones.

For example, the 1856 edition of The Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church has the following section on dress: "Question: Should we insist on the rules concerning dress? Answer: By all means. This is no time to encourage superfluity in dress. Therefore, let all our people be exhorted to conform [to] the spirit of the apostolic precept, 'not to adorn themselves with gold, and pearls, and costly array' (1 Tim 2:9)."³⁷ The same statement is repeated and expanded in the 1880 edition of The Discipline of the Wesleyan Methodist Connection of America. The additional sentence reads: "Therefore let

none be received into the Church until they have left off the wearing of gold and superfluous ornaments."³⁸

No such statements are found in the editions of these church manuals published since the 1940s.³⁹ In fact the section on dress found in the nineteenth century editions is omitted altogether in the recent manuals. I asked some Methodist ministers the reason for the abandonment of their church policy on dress and ornaments. They told me that the omission reflects the process of cultural accommodation affecting not only Methodists but Christian churches in general. The result of this trend is that more and more Christians today adorn their bodies with extravagant dresses and costly jewelry, without realizing the damaging effect of these things on their own inward spirituality, as well as on their outward witness for Christ to others (pp. 18-19).

Is the Master and Saviour of the Apostles and other past anointed Christian leaders different from the Master and Saviour of contemporary Christianity? If not, are we to take it that His standards change with the times?

The Bible itself has the answer:

Heb. 13:8

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever".

Mal. 3:6

"I *am* the LORD, I CHANGE NOT; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed".

Jam. 1:17

"Every gift which is good, and every perfect boon, is from above, and comes down from the Father, who is the source of all Light. In Him there is no variation nor the slightest suggestion of change" (*Weymouth New Testament*, 1912).

Accordingly, "as the holy women of old adorned themselves" with "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit", instead of with worldly jewelry, so He wants His daughters of every age to adorn themselves (1 Pet. 3:5).

Why Earrings should not be Worn—God's Daughters are not Bondwomen!

It's obvious that the worldly jewelry holy Christian women are Biblically forbidden to wear would include earrings. Still, the wearing of earrings comes with extra 'complications' of its own. For instance, ancient history shows that the practice of wearing earrings originated in the pagan practice of wearing amulets in the ear and therefore would automatically offend God. In an article titled "Body Piercing History", the website www.painfulpleasures.com notes with 'pride': "Ears were probably first pierced for magical purposes; very many primitive tribes believe that demons can enter the body through the ear, [and] because demons and spirits are supposed to be repelled by metal, ear-piercing prevents them [from] entering the body".

Similarly, the *Holman's Illustrated Bible Dictionary* states: "The earrings buried by Jacob under the oak near Shechem may have been amulets (Gen. 35:4). Such amulets were violations of the commandment not to make graven images" (2003, p. 915).

In the Gen. 35 account, Jacob had returned to Canaan after an absence of some twenty years, and the LORD now reminded him to redeem the vow He made to Him at Bethel (Gen. 28:16-22) as he fled from Esau, his brother, to Laban his uncle:

"And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother. "Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that *were* with him, Put away the strange gods that *are* among you, and be clean, and change your garments:

"And let us arise, and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went.

"And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which *were* in their hand, and *all their* earrings which *were* in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which *was* by Shechem" (Gen. 35:1-4).

Jacob and his household, all of whom had pagan backgrounds, were bound for Bethel, the House of God, and earrings which functioned as amulets or charms (see Gen. 31:30-35) would not be admitted to the holy Presence of God.

Earrings belonged more 'naturally' to idolaters like the ancient Ishmaelites. We read in the book of Judges:

"Then the men of Israel said unto Gideon, Rule thou over us, both thou, and thy son, and thy son's son also: for thou hast delivered us from the hand of Midian.

"And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the LORD shall rule over you.

"And Gideon said unto them, I would desire a request of you, that ye would give me every man the earrings of his prey [or booty]. (For they [the enemies] had golden earrings, because they *were* Ishmaelites.)

"And they answered, We will willingly give *them*. And they spread a garment, and did cast therein every man the earrings of his prey.

"And the weight of the golden earrings that he requested was a thousand and seven hundred *shekels* of gold; beside ornaments, and collars, and purple raiment that *was* on the kings of Midian, and beside the chains that *were* about their camels' necks.

"And Gideon made an ephod thereof, and put it in his city, *even* in Ophrah: and all Israel went thither a whoring after it: which thing became a snare unto Gideon, and to his house" (Judges 8:22-27).

The wearing of golden earrings was peculiar to the Ishmaelites; it was their identity badge. And the Midianites, a branch of the Ishmaelites (see Gen. 37:25-28) whom Gideon and his 300-member ragtag had miraculously army defeated in battle (chapters 6-8), were no exception. One only had to notice the golden earrings in their ears to identify who they were!

Who says a person's style of dressing doesn't communicate a thing?

As it turned out, the booty of earrings which the Israelites handed over to Gideon became a snare to him and to his family when he made them into an idol and the Israelites traded the living God, Yahweh, for it.

The wearing of earrings does not draw people closer to God but seems to alienate them from Him. This is exactly the point the LORD Himself sought to put across when He ordered the Israelites to put off their ornaments so that He might know what to do with them (Ex. 33:5-6). This was after the Israelites had given their golden earrings to Aaron to be fashioned into a "golden calf" (Ex. 32:1-4) while Moses was on top of Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments from God. Even before the LORD gave the order, the people had taken off their ornaments voluntarily as a sign of sorrow at the word of the LORD that He would not personally accompany them on the journey to the Promised Land because of their stubborn nature:

"And the LORD said unto Moses, Depart, *and* go up hence, thou and the people which thou hast brought up out of the land of Egypt, unto the land which I swore unto Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, Unto thy seed will I give it:

"And I will send an angel before thee; and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite:

"Unto a land flowing with milk and honey: for I will not go up in the midst of thee; for thou *art* a stiffnecked people: lest I consume thee in the way.

"And when the people heard these evil tidings, they mourned: and no man did put on him his ornaments" (Ex. 33:1-4).

But what is really the problem with ornaments as far as our relationship with God is concerned?

The *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* explains: "When the natural human impulse to beautify by means of jewelry becomes excessive, it's an index of materialistic and misguided values, and as such it is the object of God's judgment. Thus Isaiah 3:18-23 is a catalog of jewels and finery that God will take away in His judgment against a spiritually bankrupt nation preoccupied with false values" (p. 451).

In other words, ornaments take attention away from God causing people to focus on vain human looks which do not glorify God but may even arouse sensuous desires. The opposite however is the case when we avoid the scripturally forbidden worldly ornaments: we draw attention away from ourselves to God, making Him the centre of attention. Our 'jealous' God will have no rival, not least when it's a relic of paganism!

So my dear sister, why persist in the wearing of ornaments when it can endanger your relationship with God?

Another reason why God's daughters should feel disquiet about wearing earrings is that they God's free children and not bondwomen who are required to wear tokens of slavery!

Apart from their pagan origins, ear boring and earrings also functioned as tokens of slavery in the time of Moses. If a man or woman had their ear pierced, it amounted to a legal declaration by them to serve their master till death (Deut. 15:12-17; Ex. 21:1-6). So how saintly will the wearing of earrings ever get?

God's Holy Daughters Cover their Hair

In addition to avoiding ornaments, holy women are supposed to cover their heads "because of the angels". We read in 1 Cor. 11:3-16:

"But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman *is* the man; and the head of Christ *is* God.

"Every man praying or prophesying, having *his* head covered, dishonoureth his head.

"But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with *her* head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven.

"For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered.

"For a man indeed ought not to cover *his* head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man.

"For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man.

"Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man.

"For this cause ought the woman to have power on *her* head because of the angels.

"Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord.

"For as the woman *is* of the man, even so *is* the man also by the woman; but all things of God.

"Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered?

"Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him?

"But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for *her* hair is given her for a covering.

"But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God".

Here the Apostle Paul sets out logically and methodically the reasons why Christian men ought not to cover their heads but Christian women ought to. The fundamental reason or premise is rooted in the divine order of authority: "the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman *is* the man; and the head of Christ *is* God" (v.3). For this reason, if a man covers his head while at prayer he dishonours Christ his head, and if a woman uncovers her head she dishonours her head, the man, unless she is shorn (vv. 4-6).

The Apostle's particular concern about women's hair covering was apparently born of the tendency of some of the sisters at Corinth to forgo the veil while prophesying or praying under divine inspiration. Whenever they came under the influence of the Spirit, these sisters would regard themselves as freed from the obligation to put on a veil as a symbol of their inferior rank to men in the divine order. But the Apostle said that should not be.

Pagan history shows that it was a standard practice in the pagan temples for the priestess to uncover their heads while under the control of the spirits, and it's likely that the Corinthian

Christian ladies, as former pagans, attempted to introduce the practice in the church. This meant that head covering as part of the regular public dress of Christian women was not a problem at all, because like Jewish women, “The Grecian women, except their [pagan] priestesses, were accustomed to appear in public with a veil – Doddridge” (*Albert Barnes Notes on the Bible*, 1 Cor. 11:13, e- Sword). The problem was the tendency on the part of the ‘inspired’ Christian women to imitate the pagan priestesses in the church. The probable explanation for going bareheaded (though mistaken) was that divine inspiration granted them an exalted position which meant they could dispense with the veil, the emblem of their subordination in the divine order.

To this day, it’s still the practice among fetish priestesses in West Africa and other parts of Africa to uncover their heads while gyrating and dancing under the influence of the spirits. So then, while the Lord insists on His daughters covering their heads in deference to the divine order, the priestesses of Satan do the exact opposite because they are not part of the divine order and would gladly disrespect it. Against this background, could we say paganism has overrun the ‘church’ given that the majority of Christian women today don’t cover their heads?

That the man ought not to cover his head, but the woman must, is reinforced by the fact that he’s the “image and glory of God” whereas the woman reflects the glory of the man (v. 7). Moreover, the woman was created out of man and for him (vv. 8-9). And this is the more compelling reason why she should cover her head (have authority over it) lest she offends the angels should they witness any attempt on her part to disrespect or undermine the divine order by uncovering her head (v. 10). The angels in reference are obviously the “ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation” (Heb. 1:14). Unlike the rebellious, fallen angels who possess the pagan priestesses, the “ministering spirits” from God keep His commandments and expect their human “brethren” (Rev. 19:10, 22:8-9) to do the same. We read in Ps 103:20-21:

“Bless the LORD, ye His angels, that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word.

“Bless ye the LORD, all ye His hosts; ye [human] ministers of His, that do His pleasure”.

Some have tried to circumvent the clear instruction to Christian ladies to cover their heads by arguing that the statement in verse 10 that “a woman ought to have authority over her head” does not refer to head covering. If this were true, that would destroy much of the logic of the passage, rendering the earlier references to the need for a woman to cover her head inconclusive and isolated. But Paul is building his argument to a crescendo.

After having stated that the man is the head of the woman, he now emphasizes the symbiotic relationship between the man and the woman in Christ. Citing support from both creation and nature, he draws attention to the fact that, although the woman originally came from the man, it’s the woman who gives birth to the man and brings him into the world. Therefore, one cannot do without the other; each needs the other. So, why shouldn’t the woman do what is expected of her for the man’s sake and vice versa, especially as both are of God and must submit to His will in the Divine order (vv. 11-12)?

As the final point to consolidate his argument, the apostle appeals to nature and the accepted cultural norm to impress on his readers that his teaching has a basis in everyday commonsense: Just as it's improper for a woman to pray with her head uncovered so it's shameful for a man to keep long hair (vv. 13-14). But if a woman has long hair, "it is her glory"? asks Paul in the original Greek. "For her hair is given her for a covering", that is, meant to be covered (v. 15)—unless it's shaved off (v. 6). To all who will argue otherwise, notice is hereby served that the churches of God have no 'custom' which permits women to pray with their hair uncovered (v. 16).

The *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary* explains the 16th verse further:

A summary close to the argument by appeal to the universal custom of the churches.

if any ... seem — *The Greek also means "thinks" (fit) (compare Mat 3:9). If any man chooses (still after all my arguments) to be contentious. If any be contentious and thinks himself right in being so. A reproof of the Corinthians' self-sufficiency and disputatiousness (1Co 1:20).*

we — *apostles: or we of the Jewish nation, from whom ye have received the Gospel, and whose usages in all that is good ye ought to follow: Jewish women veiled themselves when in public, according to Tertullian [Estius]. The former explanation is best, as the Jews are not referred to in the context: but he often refers to himself and his fellow apostles, by the expression, "we - us" (1Co 4:9, 1Co 4:10).*

no such custom — *as that of women praying uncovered. Not as Chrysostom, "that of being contentious." The Greek term implies a usage, rather than a mental habit (Joh 18:39). The usage of true "churches (plural: not, as Rome uses it, 'the Church,' as an abstract entity; but 'the churches,' as a number of independent witnesses) of God" (the churches which God Himself recognizes), is a valid argument in the case of external rites, especially, negatively, for example, Such rites were not received among them, therefore, ought not to be admitted among us:... (1Co 7:17; 1Co 14:33).*

So then, the need for Christian women to cover their heads is strongly defended in the text, especially in verses 5, 6, 10 and 13. The 10th verse which some try to distort to mean something else other than head covering is rendered in a more straightforward manner in the following versions:

"Therefore, a woman should wear something on her head to show she is under someone's authority, out of respect for the angels" (*God's Word*).

"And so, because of this, and also because of the angels, a woman ought to wear something on her head, as a sign of her authority" (*Contemporary English Version*).

"So that is why a woman should have her head covered with something that shows she is under authority. Also, she should do this because of the angels" (*Easy-to-Read Version*).

In its commentary on the verse, the *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown's Commentary* says:

1 Corinthians 11:10

power on her head — the kerchief: French *couvre chef*, head-covering, the emblem of “power on her head”; the sign of her being under man’s power, and exercising delegated authority under him. Paul had before his mind the root-connection between the Hebrew terms for “veil” (radid), and “subjection” (radad).

because of the angels — who are present at our Christian assemblies (compare Psa 138:1, “gods,” that is, angels), and delight in the orderly subordination of the several ranks of God’s worshippers in their respective places, the outward demeanor and dress of the latter being indicative of that inward humility which angels know to be most pleasing to their common Lord (1Co 4:9; Eph 3:10; Ecc 5:6). Hammond quotes Chrysostom, “Thou standest with angels; thou singest with them; thou hymnest with them; and yet dost thou stand laughing?” Bengel explains, “As the angels are in relation to God, so the woman is in relation to man. God’s face is uncovered; angels in His presence are veiled (Isa 6:2). Man’s face is uncovered; woman in His presence is to be veiled. For her not to be so, would, by its indecorousness, offend the angels (Mat 18:10, Mat 18:31). She, by her weakness, especially needs their ministry; she ought, therefore, to be the more careful not to offend them.”

But what about v. 15 which many liberal Christians love to twist too? “But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for *her* hair is given her for a covering”.

The usual gloss put on it is that a woman’s hair is her covering itself and therefore she needs no other covering, such as a veil on her hair. But is that really the meaning? If so why the explicit command elsewhere in the passage that if a woman leaves her head uncovered she dishonours her head?

Note the *New English Translation’s* rendering of verses 14 and 15, which is truer to the original Greek:

“Does not nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace for him, (15) but if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For her hair is given to her for a covering” (so in *NASB*, etc).

The *NET Bible* then comments in its footnote:

That the hair is regarded by Paul as a covering in v. 15 is not necessarily an argument that the hair is the same as the head covering that he is describing in the earlier verses (esp. v. 10). Throughout this unit of material, Paul points out the similarities of long hair with a head covering. But his doing so seems to suggest that the two are not to be identified with each other. Precisely because they are similar they do not appear to be identical (cf. vv. 5, 6, 7, 10, 13). If head covering = long hair, then what does v. 6 mean (“For if a woman will not cover her head, she should cut off her hair”)? This suggests that the covering is not the same as the hair itself.

The *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary* concurs:

her hair ... for a covering — *Not that she does not need additional covering. Nay, her long hair shows she ought to cover her head as much as possible. The will ought to accord with nature [Bengel].*

A Study in Contrast:

The Dressing Style of the Daughter of Zion versus that of the Daughter of Babylon

Piecing the various instructions together, here then is God's heavenly dress pattern for His obedient daughters: a decent, well proportioned dress, a veil or head covering to match and no worldly ornaments but "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit".

This is exact portrait of the chaste woman of Zion pictured in Rev. 12 in sharp contrast to that of the adulterous woman of Babylon pictured in Rev. 17.

Rev. 12

"And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:

"And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered" (Rev. 12:1-2).

Rev. 17

" And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters:

"With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.

"So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

"And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication:

"And upon her forehead *was* a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH" (Rev. 17:1-5).

The woman of Rev. 12 is brilliantly but modestly dressed; she is unadorned and she has her head covered (or veiled) with a crown of twelve stars. In her heavenly, holy attire, she simply radiates the glory of God! The woman of chapter 17, on other hand, is ornately decorated with ornaments of gold and pearls. She looks every bit a spoilt, saucy courtesan in her gaudy outfit of immorality! The two women are unlike in character and behaviour. The clothing of the woman of Rev.12 communicates her spiritual chastity and that of chapter 17 her spiritual harlotry! Prov. 7:10 said it – the attire of a harlot indicates a wily heart.

Holy Christian Women and Cosmetics

We will notice from the scriptural description of the woman of Rev. 12 that the chaste woman of Zion wears no cosmetics. Like hair dressing, the use of cosmetics has an ancient history too; although not evil in all aspects, ungodly women made use of them for immoral purposes. The *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* sheds more light on the subject:

COSMETICS *Materials used for personal care and beautification. In the ancient Near East, both men and women used cosmetics. Men primarily made use of oil, rubbing it into the hair of the head and beard (Ps. 133:2; Eccl. 9:8). Women used cosmetic preparations which included eye paint, powders, rouge, ointments for the body, and perfumes.*

Eye Paint *Women painted their eyelids to make their eyes appear larger (Jer. 4:30 NASB). There may also have been some medicinal value by preventing dryness of the eyelid or discouraging disease-carrying flies. However, biblical references often seem to associate the practice of painting the eyes with women of questionable reputation (2 Kings 9:30; Ezek. 23:40).*

Dry powders for eye coloring were stored in pouches, reeds, reed like tubes of stone, or small jars. The reference to Job's daughter, "Keren-happuch" (horn of antimony or eye paint, Job 42:14), indicates the powders were also carried in horns. The powders were mixed with water or gum and applied to the eyelids with small rods made of ivory, wood, or metal. Egyptian women favored the colors of black and green, painting the upper eyelid black and the lower green. Mesopotamian women preferred heavy yellows and reds. Heavy black lines were traced around the eyes to make them appear more almond-shaped (pp. 350-351).

Obviously, cosmetics are not inherently evil; it's only some of their uses that are evil. Eyeliner, eye-shadow, etc, which were all part of the ancient woman's dress as they are of modern women, certainly do have a ring of immorality about it. Jezebel, the pagan wife of King Ahab of Israel, had the infamy of being the first woman to be mentioned in the Bible as having painted her face or eyes:

"And when Jehu was come to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it; and she painted her face, and tired her head, and looked out at a window" (2 Kings 9:30).

The *God's Word* translation puts it in more modern English:

"When Jehu arrived in Jezreel, Jezebel heard about it. She put on eye shadow, fixed her hair, and looked out of a second-story window" (2 Kings 9:30).

Here, it can clearly be seen that the eye shadow Jezebel wore was not designed to serve any functional purpose as in preventing dryness of the eyelid but to enhance her appearance or possibly 'sexual appeal' so that she could possibly entice Jehu (see Prov. 6:25), who was on a campaign to execute judgment on her and her associates.

Thus, the functional use of cosmetics like ointments to protect the skin against the heat of the sun and to keep it moist are not immoral and must even be encouraged. In Matthew 6, Christ recommends it for believers undergoing fasting in order not to betray what should be a secret spiritual exercise, ideally meant for the Father's eyes only, to others as hypocrites love to do:

"Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

“But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face;
“That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly” (Matt. 6:16-18).

In the Old Testament God showed a high regard for ointments. In accordance with His instructions, they formed an important part of religious ceremonies:

The manufacture of the anointing oil consisted of mixing olive oil with myrrh, sweet cinnamon, calamus, and cassia (Exod. 30:22-25). This ointment was considered holy; anyone who manufactured the sacred oil for use outside the worship place was to be cut off from the people (Exod. 30:33). Many individuals were anointed with the sacred ointment. The anointing of a person was seen as an act designation of that person for the service of God” (Holman’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary, p. 1216).

Like ointments, we must welcome perfumes since they generally do no more than make us smell good and pleasant. Prov. 27:9 tells us, “Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so *doth* the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel”. We read of the Divine Messianic King in Ps 45:

“Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of equity is the sceptre of Thy kingdom.
“Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated wickedness: therefore God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows.
“All Thy garments *smell of myrrh*, and aloes, *and cassia*; out of ivory palaces stringed instruments have made Thee glad” (vv. 6-8 RV).

In the Gospels, the Lord greatly appreciated the woman who anointed Him with the costly perfume and rebuked those (esp. Judas, John 12:3-8) who criticized the lady’s gesture:

“While He was in Bethany at the home of Simon the leper, and reclining *at the table*, there came a woman with an alabaster vial of very costly perfume of pure nard; *and* she broke the vial and poured it over His head.

“But some were indignantly *remarking* to one another, “Why has this perfume been wasted?

“For this perfume might have been sold for over three hundred denarii, and *the money* given to the poor.” And they were scolding her.

“But Jesus said, “Let her alone; why do you bother her? She has done a good deed to Me.

“For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you wish you can do good to them; but you do not always have Me.

“She has done what she could; she has anointed My body beforehand for the burial.

“Truly I say to you, wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be spoken of in memory of her” (Mark 14:3-9 NASB; also Matt. 26:6-13).

The “costly perfume” poured on the Lord by the woman was “a good deed”. Even so, the discerning believer should make distinctions as to what types of perfumes to use as some perfumes are made of odoriferous compounds meant to give off ‘suggestive smells’ which excite desire (see Song 1:3). So in doing all things to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31), show good taste and godly vigilance, and you will know the right perfume for you.

What about bleaching? Should Christian women do it?

It's a question many believers, men and women alike, continue to ask. While the scriptures do not specifically comment on it, the answer is nevertheless inferable from the scriptures. The answer is that as far as bleaching is the practice of using chemicals to make the skin whiter/lighter than God created it, it cannot be right in the sight of God, and "all unrighteousness is sin" (1 John 5:17; see also Jam. 4:17). Secondly, since people, especially women, bleach in the hope of making themselves more attractive to others, the motive cannot be good but evil. And God judges motives just as He does actual evil deeds, as stated in the following scriptures:

Matt. 5:8

"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God".

Prov. 16:2

"All the ways of a man are clean in his own sight, But the LORD weighs the motives" (NASB).

Jer. 17:10

"I the LORD search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds" (ESV).

Heb. 4:12-13

"... the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

"Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things *are* naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do".

The only Biblical instances of people's skin turning white or light was when they were afflicted with a leprous skin disease which made a person's skin white. As one of his signs to him, God made Moses put his hand in his bosom and "when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous, as *white as* snow. And He said, Put thine hand into thy bosom again. (And he put his hand into his bosom again; and when he took it out of his bosom, behold, it was turned again as his *other* flesh)" (Ex. 4:6-7 RV).

In other cases, God punished people like Miriam and Gehazi, prophet Elisha's greedy servant, by making their skin turn white with the skin disease of leprosy (Num. 12:10; 2 Kings 5:20-27).

In Leviticus 13, God gave the priests extensive rules regarding the detection, control and treatment of the skin disease of leprosy. The one sign they were to look for, for evidence of the disease was when an area of the skin turned white. This is one strong proof that the ancient Israelites were dark-skinned since white can only show on dark skin.

So, will God see the deliberate whitening of the natural skin colour any differently from the leprous disease of white skin which required its victims to be quarantined?

It's all in the heart. What will motivate a man or woman to purge his skin of the colour God gave him or her? Is it not vanity? Is it not "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes"?

But you had better be more vigilant; greater abominations are on the loose!

Cosmetic Surgery—what Jezebel missed!

It's the height of human vanity clothed as a modern scientific means of personal beautification. But take the 'modern' qualification with a pinch of salt. Cosmetic surgery dates back to ancient times, which is no surprise. Vanity is as old as human history itself!

Nevertheless, cosmetic surgery grew out of a rather noble scientific endeavour to give persons who would otherwise be scarred for life a chance at normal life again. Cosmetic surgery developed from the broader medical specialty called Plastic Surgery.

Also called Reconstructive Surgery, Plastic Surgery is "the branch of surgery concerned with the repair or reconstruction of deformed or damaged tissue or body parts, the replacement of missing parts" (*Chambers 21st Century Dictionary*). Its derivative Cosmetic Surgery, however, has little utilitarian (or functional) value; it caters to the dandy's dreams: "surgery, e.g. a facelift, which is performed purely to improve the patient's appearance, rather than for any medical reason" (*ibid.*).

The website www.life123.com has more on the historical background of plastic/cosmetic surgery:

While cosmetic surgery seems to be a modern invention for movie stars and millionaires, cosmetic surgery has a history that goes back more than 4,000 years. From early records out of India to today's technological advances, cosmetic surgery has always been about improving the natural body or restoring a damaged or deformed body.

For thousands of years, people have sought to correct or restore the way the human body looks. Records show detailed steps of reconstructive surgery in documents from India dating from around 2,000 BC and the medical techniques perfected there spread to the Middle East and across Europe. Other documented examples of cosmetic surgery in the ancient world include the Egyptians, where basic cosmetic surgery was performed. The Romans used simple cosmetic surgery to repair war wounds, such as damaged earlobes. Procedures ranging from rhinoplasty to cataract surgery were being performed, and instruments became modified and improved over the years.

*Modern cosmetic surgery became more commonplace in the early nineteenth century with better anesthesia and an understanding of sterile operating environments. Surgeries still focused on reconstructive procedures, such as repairing cleft palates, skin grafts, mastectomies and reconstructed noses and ears (*A Brief History of Cosmetic Surgery*, <http://www.life123.com/beauty/cosmetic-procedures/cosmetic-surgery/history-of-cosmetic-surgery.shtml>).*

With the arrival of advanced, modern scientific techniques, elective cosmetic surgery evolved as virtually a subculture for the great and high in western society. This was the way

for them enhance their appearance and reshape areas of the body which fell short of their expectations. The Creator couldn't have gotten it all right; cosmetic surgery is their way of correcting the oddities of creation, even though at creation "God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good" (Gen. 1:31). But beyond the general form and appearance God gave to every person after His own "image and likeness" (Gen. 1:26), the Creator also gives to each individual his or her particular looks and other peculiarities at the moment of conception and even aeons before that. David wrote in Ps 139:

"For You formed my inward parts; You knitted me together in my mother's womb.

"I praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are Your works; my soul knows it very well.

"My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth.

"Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in Your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them" (Ps 139:13-16 *ESV*).

Isn't He an awesome God? He sketched in our individual files—far in advance of our actual birth—the different shapes of our bodies, skin tones, and textures of our hair and facial looks. Therefore, if you have a pointed nose, or plump cheeks, or long ears, or deep-set eyes, or protruding eyes, that's the way God sculpted you, and it's not your place to judge the works of His hands. You are "fearfully and wonderfully made". The least you can do is to be thankful for His gift of life (see Acts 17:26), and the many blessings that have come with it.

But then, lust is the controlling force at work among the unsaved (see 2 Pet. 1:4). And it's all about "the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vain glory of life" standing in direct opposition to love for God, which is the doing of His will (1 John 2:15-17 *ASV*). So, what are some of the cosmetic surgeries people usually go in for to 'perfect' their bodies?

According to the online encyclopedia *Wikipedia*, "The most prevalent aesthetic/cosmetic procedures include:

- [Abdominoplasty](#) ("*tummy tuck*"): *reshaping and firming of the [abdomen](#)*
- [Blepharoplasty](#) ("*eyelid surgery*"): *reshaping of the eyelids or the application of permanent eyeliner, including [Asian blepharoplasty](#)*
- [Mammoplasty](#):
 - [Breast augmentations](#) ("*breast implant*" or "*boob job*"): *augmentation of the [breasts](#) by means of fat grafting, saline, or silicone gel prosthetics, which was initially performed to women with [micromastia](#)*
 - [Reduction mammoplasty](#) ("*breast reduction*"): *removal of skin and glandular tissue, which is done to reduce back and shoulder pain in women with [gigantomastia](#) and/or for psychological benefit men with [gynecomastia](#)*
 - [Mastopexy](#) ("*breast lift*"): *Lifting or reshaping of breasts to make them less saggy, often after weight loss (after a pregnancy, for example). It involves removal of breast skin as opposed to glandular tissue*
- [Buttock augmentation](#) ("*butt implant*"): *enhancement of the [buttocks](#) using silicone implants or fat grafting ("*Brazilian butt lift*") and transfer from other areas of the body*

- Buttock lift: lifting, and tightening of the buttocks by excision of redundant skin
- Chemical peel: minimizing the appearance of acne, chicken pox, and other scars as well as wrinkles (depending on concentration and type of agent used, except for deep furrows), solar lentiginos (age spots, freckles), and photodamage in general. Chemical peels commonly involve carbolic acid (Phenol), trichloroacetic acid (TCA), glycolic acid (AHA), or salicylic acid (BHA) as the active agent.
- Lip enhancement: surgical improvement of lips' fullness through enlargement
- Rhinoplasty ("nose job"): reshaping of the nose
- Otoplasty ("ear surgery"/"ear pinning"): reshaping of the ear, most often done by pinning the protruding ear closer to the head.
- Rhytidectomy ("face lift"): removal of wrinkles and signs of aging from the face
 - Browplasty ("brow lift" or "forehead lift"): elevates eyebrows, smooths forehead skin
 - Midface lift ("cheek lift"): tightening of the cheeks
- Chin augmentation ("chin implant"): augmentation of the chin with an implant, usually silicone, by sliding genioplasty of the jawbone or by suture of the soft tissue
- Cheek augmentation ("cheek implant"): implants to the cheek
- Orthognathic Surgery: manipulation of the facial bones through controlled fracturing
- Fillers injections: collagen, fat, and other tissue filler injections, such as hyaluronic acid
- Laser skin resurfacing
- Liposuction ("suction lipectomy"): removal of fat deposits by traditional suction technique or ultrasonic energy to aid fat removal (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plastic_surgery).

The lengths some will go in the name of beauty, not to mention the huge costs involved. And what an abhorrent sight it must be to the Creator—this cutting, reshaping, pinning, enlargement, silicone insertions, and all the ‘repair works’! Elective cosmetic surgery is a brazen statement that God’s handiwork can be substandard which needs to be ‘improved’.

Yah, the holy God, warns His people in Lev. 19:28: “Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you: I *am* the LORD”. God wants our bodies to be whole and wholesome; we are His holy temple. His people are not even allowed tattooing, much less needless surgery just to satisfy one’s warped idea of beauty.

In Bible days, the heathens used to cut their bodies in time of bereavement to show respect for the dead as well as to appease the deities who presided over death and the grave. Tattooing or the practice of printing marks on the body similarly evolved among the Gentiles in ancient times. They would imprint on themselves the name of their idol to indicate that they were his servants. But Yah is the true God, and His people, Israel, would have none of that!

How sad today’s society celebrates everything God abhors! And what shall be the outcome? The Preacher makes a profound observation in Eccl. 7:29: “Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions”.

Apart from an undying desire to have an 'enhanced' look usually fanned by advertizing, the obsession with cosmetic surgery could be the symptom of a psychological ailment:

Though media and advertising do play a large role in influencing many people's lives, researchers believe that plastic surgery obsession is linked to psychological disorders. [24] [Body dysmorphic disorder](#) is seen as playing a large role in the lives of those who are obsessed with going under the knife in order to achieve physical perfection.

BDD is a disorder resulting in the sufferer becoming "preoccupied with what they regard as defects in their bodies or faces." While 2% of people suffer from body dysmorphic disorder in the United States, 15% of patients seeing a dermatologist and cosmetic surgeons have the disorder. Half of the patients with the disorder who have cosmetic surgery preformed are not pleased with the aesthetic outcome. BDD can lead to suicide in some of its sufferers. While many with BDD seek cosmetic surgery, the procedures do not treat BDD, and can ultimately worsen the problem. The psychological root of the problem is usually unidentified; therefore causing the treatment to be even more difficult. Some say that the fixation or obsession with correction of the area could be a sub-disorder such as anorexia or muscle dysmorphia. [25]

In some cases, people whose doctors refuse to perform any further surgeries, have turned to "do it yourself" plastic surgery, injecting themselves and running extreme safety risks (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plastic_surgery).

Despite the 'cool' media image, cosmetic surgery is not without great risks. We look at a few of those risks:

Research has found that risks of a bad plastic surgery is quite high. For every four people who go through this procedure, chances are that one person may have a bad plastic surgery. Many a time if plastic surgery goes wrong, it may lead to bruises, marks, excessive removal of skin, asymmetrical face and in some rare cases even death (depending on the kind of surgery performed).

There can be several reasons for these risks associated with plastic surgery. The main reason for plastic surgery gone wrong includes adverse reaction to medications, which are applied during the process. It can also be due to incompetent hands, but whatever the reason it can further complicate matters for the person going through plastic surgery if it goes wrong. If the surgery goes wrong, it can be quite painful, stressful, time-consuming, and expensive to rectify the process. And the worst part is, there is no guarantee that the repeat process would be successful.

The possibility of plastic surgery gone wrong is always there, and there are numerous instances of that. Many people who have gone through plastic surgery have reported to get serious complications of anesthesia used. Moreover, there are chances of heart rhythm becoming abnormal, besides blockage of the air passage. Other complications which may happen include blood clots and nerve damage. Due to the age and the type of skin of a person going through plastic surgery, the healing process may take time which in turn may give you a distorted appearance for some time. You may also get a numbing or tingling sensation continuously which may be quite irritating.

It has been reported that women going through plastic surgery for breast lift have faced adverse reactions wherein the breasts have ended up becoming larger or smaller than required. To worsen matters, the size have not shown any changes in some cases. There may be constant pain of the breasts as there may be a small hole left behind.

There may be small blemishes which may remain after going through a plastic surgery. And this can become unpleasant to look at, besides being embarrassing. Moreover if there's a case of plastic surgery going wrong, there may be other problems like slipping of implants which may be tucked into your skin. Moreover, capsular contraction is another problem which has been reported in women who go through breast implants (<http://www.buzzle.com/articles/plastic-surgery-gone-wrong.html>).

Others include a distorted, unnatural look or an asymmetrical face, and a change in the physiology of the skin and underlying tissues, speeding up the aging process. When God is disobeyed, the chickens always come home to roost.

The Christian Woman and the Wearing of Men's Clothes

The LORD states it forthrightly in His Word: His people are expressly forbidden from wearing the clothes of the opposite sex: "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" (Deut. 22:5).

As straightforward as this scripture is, some still try to raise issues with it: what is a man's garment and what is a woman's garment?

When God gave Israel the command, they knew what men's clothes were as distinct from what women's clothes were. So is it in every culture. What one's society traditionally defines as men's clothes should be exclusively worn by men, and what that same society defines as women's clothes should likewise be exclusively worn by women. It's God's will that the distinctions between the sexes be clearly maintained. One powerful way of ensuring this is the wearing of distinctive, gender-based clothes by men and women. Men should be men, and women should be women.

This basic rule in dressing has since ancient times largely governed the way men and women dress, not only in Israel but also in Gentile societies, until the middle of the twentieth century. That was when with the men on the war front (WWII), the women were sent to work in the factories (of Europe and America), and they began to wear their husbands' work clothes.

Today, the wearing of trousers by women has become almost universal and has even caught on in the 'church'. Unisex clothes (wearable by both men and women) have also been promoted for some time now. The campaign is on to blur the distinctions between men and women. Modernity is the almighty excuse: 'It's more convenient for the modern woman to wear trousers; she looks smarter that way'. People can make up all manner of excuses, but God's Word never went out of date.

He still says that anyone who practises cross-dressing is an “abomination” to Him! It’s not just the act that is abominable to Him but the very person practicing it. And to think some so-called Christian ladies go the church dressed in slacks and trousers. The abomination is shoved right in His face. Of course, He cannot be expected to stay there, that is, if He ever was there. His eyes cannot look on evil (Hab. 1:13). Most of contemporary Christianity has thrown overboard the sound doctrine of Christ which enjoins that “all things be done decently and in order” (1 Cor. 14:40). What has taken its place is a gospel of “cheap grace” whereby every conceivable abomination is allowed in the name of grace; in the process the position of Christ as Lord (Master) over the believer’s life is denied and undermined (Jude 1:4). But this is not the goal of the true grace of God:

“For the grace of God that BRINGETH SALVATION hath appeared to all men,
“Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly,
righteously, and godly, in this present world;
“Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour
Jesus Christ;
“Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity [lawlessness], and
purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works” (Titus 2:11-14).

The life of a recipient of the grace of God which brings salvation is characterized by sobriety, godliness, righteousness and good works which stem from God’s law, or he has not received the grace of God. The evidence is simply not there!

And it’s basically because the “teaching” the saving grace of God mandates the church to teach is no longer taught. The lives of the ministers don’t show that they themselves live under the true grace of God:

“Her priests have violated My law, and have profaned Mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shewed *difference* between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from My Sabbaths, and I am profaned among them” (Ezek. 22:26).

If the teaching priests are themselves unholy because they have abandoned God’s holy teachings, what about the congregation?

But thanks be to the Father of all grace, there will always be a holy remnant reserved for Him (Rom. 11:1-6). His foundation stands sure: “Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity” (2 Tim. 2:19).

The chosen of God don’t live in lawlessness, but conform to His holy standards which identify them as His own (see Lev. 20:24-26; Deut. 14:2-3; Num. 23:9; 2 Cor. 6:17).

The Wedding Ring

Should believers wear it?

Again, I turn to the research work of Dr Samuele Bacchiocchi. He writes in his article under the subtitle "The Marital Ring":

The pagan influence upon Christian lifestyle is reflected in the history of the marital ring. I have devoted a whole chapter to the history of the ring in my book on Christian Dress and Adornment. Simply stated, the use of the marital ring evolved through three main stages. In the first stage of the apostolic period, there was no apparent use of the marital ring. In the second stage of the second and third centuries, there was a restricted use of only one plain inexpensive conjugal ring, usually made of iron or bronze. In the final stage from the fourth century onward there was a proliferation of all kinds of ornamental rings and jewelry.

This pattern of no marital ring in the first stage, plain marital ring in the second stage, and all kinds of ornamental rings and jewelry in the final stage, has recurred in the internal history of various denominations that grew out of the Reformation (p. 8).

Since the true Church is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the chief corner stone" (Eph. 2:20), it is only appropriate that we look to the apostolic period for Biblical endorsement of the use of the marital ring. I believe that, that "there was no apparent use of the marital ring" during the apostolic period invalidates the practice for the true believer. Although Dr Bacchiocchi is of the personal opinion that a plain marital ring is okay for the Christian since it's not an ornament but "a symbol of marital commitment", he notes that the approval of the wedding ring in churches where it was previously banned has often opened the floodgates for the wearing of all sorts of jewelry.

The Seventh Day Adventist Church is a classic example. In the 1920s when the use of the marital ring had become established in many Protestant churches in America, the leadership of the SDA church took a firm decision against it. "... at the 1925 Autumn Council, church leaders voted an action which would later be included in the Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual: "Resolved . . . that we look with disfavor upon the ring ceremony and upon ministers officiating at marriages of believers and unbelievers or with those not of our faith."⁵⁰ (ibid. pp. 22-23).

The 1935 Autumn Council reiterated the same stance, only more explicitly: "Our church members have from the beginning been a plain people. Our standard calls for discarding of jewelry, especially those articles mentioned in the Scriptures and the Spirit of Prophecy, such as rings, earrings, bracelets, and necklaces; we appeal for a greater loyalty to these important and divinely given standards."⁵¹ (ibid. p. 23).

According to Dr Bacchiocchi, this SDA doctrinal position on ornaments (the marital ring included) remained unchanged until 1951 when the church revised its position to allow members in countries where the wedding ring is viewed as "imperative" to wear them: "In some countries the custom of wearing the marriage ring is considered imperative, having become, in the minds of the people, a criterion of virtue, and hence it is not regarded as an ornament. Under such circumstances we have no disposition to condemn the practice."⁵² (p. 23).

This restrictive policy remained in force until 1986 when “the North American Division Annual Council voted to lift the restriction and to allow church members in North America the possibility of wearing a plain marriage band as in other countries. The statement reads: "Voted to recognize that, in harmony with the position stated in the Church Manual (pp.145-146), some church members in the North American Division as in other parts of the world feel that wearing a simple marriage band is a symbol of faithfulness to the marriage vow, and to declare that such persons should be fully accepted in the fellowship and service of the church."⁵³ (pp. 23-24).

And what has been the effect of this new policy? Worldly dressing has wormed its way into the church. Dr Bacchiocchio observes regrettably:

The problem is that the approval of the wedding band in 1986 has opened the door for wearing more elaborate rings and all sorts of other jewelry. The plain wedding band is becoming a relic of the past. Wedding rings are becoming costly ornaments, not in keeping with the Biblical principles of modesty and simplicity that will be examined in the following newsletter.

My itinerant ministry in many parts of the world exposes me constantly to the reality of conformity to fashionable jewelry. In our churches and classrooms it is becoming a common to see young and older people wearing not only diamond wedding rings, but also earrings, bracelets, and necklaces. Some go to the extreme of piercing even their lips and eyebrows. Body-piercing to attach metals, is no longer a female problem. In some classes I taught there were more young men than ladies with metal rings hanging on their bodies.

Rapid cultural changes are taking place today and the pressure of cultural conformity is influencing an increasing number of Adventists to bedeck and bejewel their bodies. At such a critical time it is imperative to help our fellow-believers understand that our outward appearance is a frame that reveals the picture of Christ whom we serve (p. 24).

So, which is better? When the ‘no marital ring’ policy was in force and almost all SDAs dressed like real saints in conformity to Biblical standards or the present situation of ‘anything goes’ with the lifting of the restriction on the marital ring?

The Apostle Paul hit the nail on the head when he said “a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” (1 Cor. 5:6).

The New Testament scriptures plainly teach that Christian ladies should not adorn themselves with worldly ornaments. This teaching does not lose value over time nor is it to be relaxed because we are in a modern era.

While James does teach that a man with a gold ring who enters the believer’s synagogue should not be given special honour/preferential treatment because of his fine clothes, it is apparent from the text that this man is not a regular church member, but a visitor (Jam. 2:1-3). What this teaches us is tolerance towards visitors and new church members who may be wearing a ring (see Rom. 15:1).

The Daughter of Zion: Be on your Guard

Because the dressing style of “the daughter of Babylon” is the predominant style of this Babylonian world, there is the ever-present danger of “the daughter of Zion” being enticed into it. But the daughter of Zion, the obedient Christian lady, has been forewarned: “Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwellest *with* the daughter of Babylon” (Zech. 2:7).

As a true daughter of God, consider the great spiritual blessings you will continue to enjoy as long as you dress in accordance with the divine, Biblical standard. The holy angels of God will be on guard. This means you will have been viewed in heaven as a worthy member of the family of God who respects the Divine order and does not in any way seek to ‘upset’ this holy order by keeping your hair uncovered, etc. In short, you will be counted among “the holy women” who dressed modestly with godly reverence.

But not all the daughters of Zion pay heed, even though they have been taught the truth about the godly dressing expected of them. So, some fall in with the dressing culture of Babylon and invite upon themselves the wrath of God:

We read in Isa. 3:16-24:

“Moreover the LORD saith, Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing *as* they go, and making a tinkling with their feet:

“Therefore the Lord will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and the LORD will discover their secret parts.

“In that day the Lord will take away the bravery of *their* tinkling ornaments *about their feet*, and *their* cauls, and *their* round tires like the moon,

“The chains, and the bracelets, and the mufflers,

“The bonnets, and the ornaments of the legs, and the headbands, and the tablets, and the earrings,

“The rings, and nose jewels,

“The changeable suits of apparel, and the mantles, and the wimples, and the crisping pins,

“The glasses, and the fine linen, and the hoods, and the veils.

“ And it shall come to pass, *that* instead of sweet smell there shall be stink; and instead of a girdle a rent; and instead of well set hair baldness; and instead of a stomacher a girding of sackcloth; *and* burning instead of beauty”.

Let no one deceive you that dressing will not be a subject of God’s judgment. God Almighty will bring what you wear into judgment—if it does not conform to His will:

“Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord GOD: for the day of the LORD *is* at hand: for the LORD hath prepared a sacrifice, He hath bid His guests.

“ And it shall come to pass in the day of the LORD'S sacrifice, that I will punish the princes, and the king's children, and all such as are clothed with strange apparel” (Zeph. 1:7-8).

God judges and punishes the wearers of “strange apparel” because they have not been “holy in all their conduct”. But you are called to be holy—set apart and consecrated for the

Lord. May the God of all grace give us the grace to be holy in all aspects of our life, so we can be holy to Him as He wants us to be. Amen!

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