

THE DRESS QUESTION

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*“Thy Word
Is
Truth”*

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Apostolic Faith Church

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U.S.A.

PRINTED IN U.S.A.

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"Ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (I Corinthians 6:20).

A Clean Heart

The old saying that "dress does not make the man" is quite true today and has been all through the years. No matter what one does to polish up the exterior, his inward condition remains the same. Jesus told the Pharisees of His day that they appeared beautiful outwardly but within they were "full of dead men's bones." He said, "Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also" (Matthew 23:26, 27).

Man looks on the outward appearance but God looks upon the heart. No outward adornment can adorn the heart. Therefore, the first step that must be taken by everyone who desires to be at peace with God and pleasing to Him is the cleansing of the heart by the Blood of Jesus, the adorning of the spiritual nature by the work of the Holy Spirit.

"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" (I Corinthians 6:19).

When even the first steps in the Christian experience are taken, the outward life will be changed, for the outward life and actions are regulated by the inward condition. When one is made a "new creature" the "old things are passed away." He no longer loves the questionable things he once loved. He no longer is dominated by the pride that governs the worldling. His

desires are different and his affections are set on things in Heaven

In teaching on this important subject, the founder of our church often used a very striking illustration. She told of a vision she had received in which she saw a large mound covered with flowers. As she looked at it from a distance it was beautiful, but as she came closer she saw it was only a rubbish heap of tin cans and junk with a little soil here and there from which flowers were growing. She used to point out the similarity between that heap of rubbish and the false religions of today, which put a thin veneer on the outside but do nothing to change the heart.

The men of Jericho told Elisha that the situation of their city was beautiful, but that the water they had was impure, and because of that their ground was barren. Elisha took a new container, put salt into it, cast salt into the source of the stream. The waters were healed. He went to the spring, the source of the trouble. Likewise, we should examine our hearts to see that the source of all our outward actions is clean. The Bible commands:

"Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23). If our hearts are cleansed we will find that our lives will be quickly brought into conformity with the spirit of the Word of God and the Gospel.

Extremes

There is not a great deal of Scripture about the proper way to dress, but enough is given to enable us to keep in the middle of the road and not err by going to extremes either way. "Every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things" (I Corinthians 9:25). Our best advisers on the question of dress have always stood for neatness and cleanliness, together

with a style of dress that is not in the height of fashion nor is yet outstanding because it has long been out of date.

Some Gospel workers were walking down the street in a certain city when they passed a young woman dressed in the very latest style. People were turning their heads to look at her the second time. About two blocks away the workers passed another young woman who wore her skirt several inches longer than the accustomed styles, stockings that were out-moded, and who was in every way conspicuously old-fashioned in appearance. People were giving her the second look, too! Here was shown the two possible extremes. It can be said that one manner of dress was as bad as the other. Neither of these women was dressed in the modest apparel in the Scriptural sense.

In summing up the matter, then, we see that the style of dress that is proper for a Christian man or woman is that style that is modest, neat, well kept, and clean. The combined result of all is that both the style and manner of the dress is neither extreme in being excessively modern nor of an old-fashioned outdated character. It has been well said: "Be not the first by whom the new are tried nor yet the last to lay the old aside."

Whatever we do, we should do to the honor and glory of God (I Corinthians 10:31). The Gospel should be respected by the people of the world because of the manner of our dress as well as by our outward actions. We must "abstain from all appearance of evil" in all things (I Thessalonians 5:22). Our dress should not cause us to feel humiliated in a crowd of correctly dressed people, and, on the other hand, there must not be in our hearts the desire to attract attention.

Pride

"Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall" (Proverbs

16:18). Pride is a work of the flesh and is an abomination unto God. It is the cause of much of the world's sin. It was pride that caused Lucifer to desire a place of exaltation "above the stars of God" (Isaiah 14:13). Pride is completely opposite to humility. The humble soul never looks for the applause of the world. That soul desires, more than anything else, the approval of God. It is when sin enters the heart of either men or women that pride and foolishness arise to power. It was pride in the hearts of the back-slidden daughters of Zion that brought the pronouncement of God's wrath upon their heads, through the Prophet Isaiah.

"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 earring,

"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" (Isaiah 3:16-24).**

Sin was ruining the nation, and Isaiah cried out against it. When sin reigns, every evil work follows. The daughters of Zion were haughty. They decked themselves with chains, bracelets, earrings, nose jewels, hoods and veils - everything the fashions of their day called for. They were "tripping nicely" as they walked. Their dress and ornaments were for show. They wanted to appear beautiful to others. There is an old adage, "Pretty is that pretty does." But this was not true of the daughters of Israel. They had an outward adornment, but it was not the genuine beauty they should have had - the inward adornment of virtue and godliness.

The devil knows how to tempt young people along the lines of pride. He dangles a little tinsel before their eyes, and says: "I'll give you this if you will worship me. I'll make you look like this if you will do what I say." Some girls yield to temptation along the lines of rouge or lipstick. Miserable, abominable pride is the downfall of many a young girl today. Some girls who have knelt at the altars of prayer have gone away from God's house without receiving His great treasures, simply because they could not part with a few fads or fashions

- like bobbed hair, short skirts, sleeveless and low-necked dresses, rouge, or lipstick. What a cheap price for which to sell out to the adversary of their soul.

An example of a woman who painted her face is found in the Bible. (Read II Kings 9:30.) She was none other than Jezebel, a very wicked woman who died a terrible death. In fact she was not even given a burial, for the dogs ate her body. Surely her life's story should make one shun the very thought of following such an example in painting one's face. If you must follow an example, follow a good one.

Immodesty

Immodest apparel has always followed in the steps of a back-slidden nation. When people forget God, pride comes in and they become brazen and bold. The people of our so-called civilized world today seem not so much interested in how to dress, as how to undress. Slacks, shorts, dresses low at the neck, immodestly tight garments, and the generally scanty dress with which women appear on the streets at times are a disgrace and an abomination in the sight of God. The Word states too: "The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the LORD thy God" (Deuteronomy 22:5).

When our souls are clothed in the robes of righteousness we will see that the manner of our dress conforms to that of the inward man. It is those of the "mixed multitude," those who desire to walk near the border line, who want to dress in the attire that is akin to the world. The soul who is hungry for God - the one who is reaching out for righteousness and true holiness - is not concerned so much about the style of her outward dress, to see that it is of the latest style, as she is of her inward dress and adornment. The

spiritually hungry do not desire the show and style of the world. They are not so much concerned about pleasing those who are around them; they want to please God.

Commendable Adornment

The Holy Spirit, through Peter, spoke of our adorning and said: "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" (1 Peter 3:3, 4). Here, in this passage of Scripture, is the keynote of the whole matter. It is the inner man that shines out through the countenance that makes for real beauty. The clothes on the body of a person who has a meek and quiet spirit may be of the poorest quality, and no special adornment may bedeck the dress; but a humble, godly spirit will shine out with a glory so resplendent that it will transcend the glitter of the most precious jewels that could be placed there instead.

A very simple pin, a clasp, or a tie, worn for utility or to finish one's attire attractively, often gives a necessary completeness to the suit or dress worn; but superfluous or gaudy ornaments are never becoming to a saint and lend nothing to beauty or value of character. The purpose behind the wearing of a thing is usually enough to determine if that particular thing should be worn or not. Is it consistent with the principles of godliness and holiness?

This applies to both men and women, for pride in the heart of a man is just as condemning and damning to the soul as is pride in the heart of a woman.

Plaiting of the hair, as spoken of in the Scripture, refers to the extreme method used in the dressing of the hair that is sponsored by pride in the heart and a desire to be attractive to a degree that is contrary to true Christian spirit. The Scripture clearly tells us that it is a shame for a woman to cut her hair (I Corinthians 11:6).

"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" (I Corinthians 11:14, 15).

God has said that He would send baldness and other judgments upon those who refuse to obey and honor His Word and who deliberately walk in the pathway of pride and immodesty. The holiness that shines out through the countenance of a meek and humble servant of the Cross, causing her to dress carefully and modestly, in keeping with the spirit of the Gospel of Christ and in a manner that will not bring reproach upon the name of Christ, will also reflect itself in the way her hair is dressed.

Some religious orders wear special uniforms to designate who they are. The early Christians were known by what they preached, how they lived, and whom they followed — and not by the peculiar garb they wore. We have a standard, and that standard teaches us not to dress so as to be **like the world**, but to dress as becometh a child of God—not in an extreme manner, but rather in a conservative way.

If all—children and adults—whether at home, at work, or at play, will make decency and modesty of dress their basic rule, they will be in a position to uphold the

standard of the Gospel and invite God's smile of approval upon their life.

"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" (I John 2:15-17).