

Biblical Principles of Dress and Adornment

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Dear Members of the Endtime Issues Newsletter:

Every newsletter generates few negative responses among the many positive ones. I welcome both, because they help me to understand what you, my readers, perceive to be some of the positive or negative aspects of each Bible study. The last newsletter (no. 60), which offered a brief historical survey of dress and ornaments in Christian history, was not an exception.

Few readers wrote that I am majoring on minors by focusing on such subjects as the outer appearance. In their view, dress and ornaments have nothing to do with salvation. They feel that I should address the more weighty subjects of love, faith, grace, and forgiveness. May I respond by asking: Can these weighty subjects be divorced from a Christian's outward appearance? Is not the transforming power of God's forgiving grace revealed by the way the Lord changes people from inside out?

It is obvious that we are not saved by what we wear, but what we wear can serve as a frame to reveal the picture of Christ whom we serve. As we shall see in this study, the Bible does not prescribe a standardized dress for Christian men and women to wear, but it calls us to follow the simplicity of Jesus' life-style, even in our clothes and appearance.

Our previous study (no. 60) has shown that dress and ornaments have been an important index of the spiritual decline or revival of the churches during the course of their history. We have found that at times of prosperity and moral laxity, many Christians have adopted the extravagant fashions of their time, reasoning that the Christian faith does not consist in outward appearance. They have underestimated the power of worldly fashion to mold their characters in accordance with the secular values of society. The result of this cultural accommodation has been the disappearance of internal spiritual vigor, a surrender of Biblical doctrines such as modesty in dress, and a loss of the identity and mission of the church.

The lesson of history is clear. Our Adventist church must continue to uphold her standard on dress and ornaments, because while clothes do not make an Adventist, Adventists do reveal their identity through their clothes and appearance. To abandon our church standard on dress and ornaments will contribute to blurring our sense of identity and mission.

UPCOMING WEEKEND SEMINARS

As a service to our subscribers, I am listing the date and the location of the seminars for the month of January and February 2001. Feel free to contact me at (616) 471-2915 for a special seminar in your area during the coming year. I am in the process of finalizing my 2001 calendar of speaking engagements for and I still have few open weekends.

JANUARY 6, 7, 8: WICHITA THREE ANGELS SDA CHURCH

Location: 4558 North Hydraulic, Wichita, KS 67219

For information call Pastor Don Mackintosh at (316) 744-2726 or (316) 832-1010.

JANUARY 12-13: ST. CROIX, US VIRGIN ISLANDS

Location: Central SDA Church

For information call Pastor Desmond James at (340) 778-8054.

JANUARY 19-20: ST. THOMAS, US VIRGIN ISLANDS

Location: Philadelphia SDA Church

For information call Pastor Ammaran Williams at (340) 775-1388

FEBRUARY 2-3 SACRAMENTO CENTRAL SDA CHURCH

Location: 6045 Camellia Avenue, Sacramento, CA 95819.

For information call the church office at (916) 457-6511

FEBRUARY 9-10: TACOMA SOUTH SDA CHURCH

Location: 230 South 94th Street, Tacoma, WA 98444

For information call Pastor David Moench at (253) 537-2555 or (253) 332-6893

FEBRUARY 16-17: PENDLETON SDA CHURCH

Location: 1401 SW Goodwin Place, Pendleton, OR 97801

For information call Pastor Daniel Knapp at (541) 276-0882 or (541) 996-6222.

FEBRUARY 23-24: COEUR D'ALENE SDA CHURCH

Location: 111 Locust Avenue, Coeur d'Alene, ID 83814

For information call Pastor Lloyd Perrin at (509) 276-7386 or (908) 664-5473.

MARCH 2-3: WALLA WALLA CITY SDA CHURCH

Location: 2133 Howard Street, Walla Walla, WA 99362

For information call Pastor Rick Bowes at (509)525-9540 or (509) 525-5700.

MARCH 9-10: APOPKA SDA CHURCH (ORLANDO)

Location: 305 South Highland Avenue, Apopka, FL 32704

For information call Pastor John Appell at (407) 899-2812 or (407) 880-1726

MARCH 16-17: WINTER SPRINGS SDA CHURCH (ORLANDO)

Location: 50 S. Moss Road, Winter Springs, FL 32708

For information call Pastor Gustav Scheuneman at (407) 327-1190 or (407) 862-5463.

MARCH 23-24: SPOKANE CENTRAL SDA CHURCH

Location: 828 W Spofford Avenue, Spokane, WA 99205

For information call Pastor Jeff Kinne at (509) 328-5900 or (509) 443-9961.

AN INVITATION TO A UNIQUE SABBATH TRAIL

May I encourage you to visit to the Sabbath Trail either in person or virtually via the internet at: <http://www.tagnet.org/washington/>. You can access the Sabbath Trail also through my website: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com> Your virtual walk through the trail will be a most pleasant experience.

The Sabbath trail was a venture of faith of Pastor Merlin Knowles, who served as the pastor of the Washington SDA Church, in New Hampshire and who is now the pastor of the Conway NH district. This church is known as the birthplace of the first Sabbathkeeping Adventist Congregation. It was established in the autumn of 1844 by William Farnsworth. The original church still exists and is used during the Summer months. I was privileged to preach in this church from the same pulpit used by Ellen White.

Pastor Merlin Knowles was impressed to build a Sabbath Trail next to this historical church, that would beautifully tell the story of the Sabbath to visitors of all denominations who visit the historic church each year. I walked through the this unique one mile long trail which is located in the woods surrounding the Washington SDA Church. I stopped at the thirty-one sites where visitors can sit on benches and read attractively engraved granite markers that tell the story of the Sabbath from Creation to the New Earth. I encourage you to take a virtual walk through this unique Sabbath Trail.

A TRIBUTE TO PASTOR DON MACKINTOSH

It is not my custom to pay a tribute to pastors who invite me to present my seminars to their congregations. What I experienced this past weekend (January 5-7, 2001) at the Three Angels SDA Church in Wichita, Kansas, impresses me to say few words about the dedicated leadership of Pastor Don Mackintosh.

Don has served the Three Angels SDA Church for the past eight years since he graduated from the seminary. The positive impact of his ministry is evident not only in the building of an impressive one million dollars church, the adjacent school with 52 students, and the church attendance over 200 every Sabbath which has double during his tenure, but especially in the spiritual nurture he provides to his members.

Don has a passion for helping his members to understand and experience biblical truths, even if they are controversial. This is indicated by the fact that he specifically asked me to deliver two lectures, one on "The Christian and Music," and the other "A Biblical View of Women Ministry," in addition to the three standard presentations on the Sabbath. I was afraid that very few people would show up on Sunday morning after an intense Sabbath during which I spoke for over five hours.

What a pleasant surprise to see so many people coming out on Sunday morning at 10:00 a. m. to listen attentively to another two hours final lecture! I attribute the exceptional reception and response to Don's ministry who motivates his members to deepen their understanding of biblical truths. May God continue to richly bless Don's ministry with His wisdom and grace.

NEW WEBSITE FOR *BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES*

This past week my new ***BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES*** website became operational. Ted Phelps, my webmaster, did a fine job in making the website more attractive and user-friendly. An average of 200 people a day are visiting the website which provides about 2000 pages of biblical research excerpted from the 16 books displayed there.

Every day I receive calls and email from people of different denominations who express appreciation for the research offered free of charge at the website. Today a doctoral student called me after reading several chapters of ***Wine in the Bible*** at my website. The other day, a minister of the Evangelical Lutheran Church told me that he downloaded several chapters of ***The Sabbath Under Crossfire*** and was eager to get the book for his personal library. He told me that the book almost made a Sabbath convert out of him. Thank God for the convicting power of the printed page.

You are welcome to visit my new ***BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES*** website at <http://www.biblicalsperspectives.com> Feel free to download any chapter of my books that can help you in your personal Bible study and witnessing outreach.

LEFT BEHIND: FACT OR FICTION?

The best-selling book *Left Behind?* which has inspired the newly released (February 2, 2001) multi-million dollars movie by the same title, reminds me of a conversation between a preacher and an actor. The preacher asked the actor: "Please explain to me, Why is it that the people are ecstatic when you talk about fiction, but they fall asleep when I proclaim biblical truths?" The actor responded: "The secret is that I talk about fiction as if it were truth, while you preach about truth as if it were fiction."

There is no question that Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins have done a masterful job in making people believe that their fictitious novel about the sudden vanishing away into thin air of million of Christians, is biblical truth. A major reason for their success is that their fictitious books and newly released film, are based upon what most Evangelical Christians have been taught to believe, namely, that very soon believing Christians will be secretly and suddenly snatch away from this earth, leaving behind a mass of unbelieving Jews and unconverted people, who will have to go through the worst Tribulation this world has ever seen.

This doctrine, known as the "Secret Rapture," is undoubtedly one of the greatest deceptions of our time. It grossly misrepresents not only the biblical teachings about Christ's Return, but also the very character of God. It portrays God as a discriminatory Being who gives preferential treatment to the Church, which He secretly raptures away, leaving behind those to be saved or destroyed at a later date.

The authors, Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins would have never imagined that *Left Behind*, first published in 1995, would become, according to Barnes & Noble, "One of the top ten best-selling books of the 20th century." The skyrocketing sales inspired the authors to expand their project by producing a series of 12 books, 7 of which have already been published: *Left Behind*, *Tribulation Force*, *Nicolae*, *Soul Harvest*, *Appollyon*, *Assassins*, and *The Indwelling*. Surprisingly, these books have reached the *New York Times* best-seller list, and have resulted in an interview of LaHaye and Jenkins on *Larry King Live*. On February 2, 2001, the much-publicized movie *Left Behind, The Movie*, produced by Cloud Ten Pictures, opened in theaters across the United States and is on sale on video-cassette on chain stores like Wal-Mart.

Several of you have urged me to examine these books and the movie. Believe it or not, your urging succeeded. For the first time in my life I went to a video rental store to rent a movie. The movie is entitled "*Left Behind: The Movie*." Indeed, this is the very first movie I have ever rented in my life. Most likely, it will be the last. God willing, in the next newsletter I plan to expose some of the major fallacies of the secret Rapture deception

that is taking America by storm. Don't miss the next newsletter! You should find it very timely.

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES OF DRESS AND ADORNMENT

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Andrews University**

In every age men and women have bedecked and bejeweled their bodies. The desire to adorn the body with colorful cosmetics, costly jewelry, and eye-catching clothes has left few untouched. Thus, it is not surprising that we find throughout Biblical and Christian history, frequent calls to dress modestly and decently, without glittering jewelry or luxurious clothes. Such a call is especially relevant today when modesty and decency are out, and nudity and sensuality are in.

To bring into sharper focus the relevance of the Biblical teachings on dress and ornaments for our time, I shall endeavor to formulate seven basic statements of principle which summarize the highlights of my book ***Christian Dress and Adornment***. This brief summary is designed to provide an overview of the fundamental Biblical teachings on dress and adornment that have emerged in the course of my investigation. To receive your copy of this timely book, feel free to call us at (616) 471-2915.

PRINCIPLE ONE: 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. The Bible recognizes the importance of dress and ornaments as indicated by the numerous stories, allegories, and admonitions that we have found regarding appropriate and inappropriate adorning.

Our outward appearance is a visible and silent testimony of our Christian values. Some people dress and adorn their bodies with costly clothes and jewelry to please themselves. They want to be admired for their wealth, power, or social status. Some dress in accordance with certain fashions to please others. They want to be accepted by their peers by dressing like them. The Christian, however, dresses to glorify God. Clothes are important for Christians because they serve as a frame to reveal the picture of the One whom the Christian serves. "In no better way," wrote Ellen White, "can you let your light shine to others than in your simplicity of dress and deportment. You may show to all that, in comparison with eternal things, you place a proper estimate upon the things of this life."¹

As Christians we cannot say, "What I look like is no one's business!" because what we look like reflects on our Lord. My house, my car, my personal appearance, my use of time and money, all reflect how Christ has changed my life from the inside out. When Jesus comes into our lives, He does not cover our blemishes with cosmetic powder, but He cleanses us wholly by working from within. This inner renewal is reflected in the outward appearance.

The most effective witness to the change that Christ has wrought within is not a painted smile on the face of a seductively dressed woman, but a radiant smile on the face of a clean, becomingly dressed woman. A too-sophisticated, coiffured, and made-up appearance, with glittering jewels and extravagant clothes, reveals not the spontaneous radiance of a God-centered personality, but the studied, artificial image of a self-centered individuality.

PRINCIPLE TWO: Adorning our bodies with colorful cosmetics, glittering jewelry, and luxurious clothes reveals inner pride and vanity, which are destructive to ourselves and to others. This truth brought out implicitly by several negative examples and explicitly by the apostolic admonitions of Paul and Peter. Isaiah reproves wealthy Jewish women for their pride shown by adorning their bodies from head to foot with glittering jewelry and expensive clothes. They seduced the leaders, who eventually led the whole nation into disobedience and divine punishment (Is 3:16-26).

Jezebel stands out in the Bible for her determined effort to seduce the Israelites into idolatry. The inner corruption of her heart is revealed by the attempt she made even in her final hour to look her seductive best by painting her eyes and adorning herself for the arrival of the new king, Jehu (2 Kings 9:30). But the king was not fooled, and she died an ignominious death. Because of this her name has become a symbol of seduction in Biblical history (Rev 2:20).

Ezekiel dramatizes the apostasy of Israel and Judah through the allegory of two women, Oholah and Oholibah, who, like Jezebel, painted their eyes and decked themselves with ornaments to entice men to commit adultery with them (Ezek 23). In this allegory again we find cosmetics and ornaments associated with seduction, adultery, apostasy, and divine punishment.

Jeremiah also uses the allegory of a seductive woman dressed in scarlet, with painted eyes and decked with jewelry, to represent the politically abandoned Israel, who is vainly trying to attract her former idolatrous allies (Jer 4:30). Here again cosmetics and jewelry are used to seduce men into adulterous acts.

The prophetic portrayal of apostate Israel as an adulterous woman bedecked, bejeweled, and whoring after heathen gods recurs in John the Revelator's description of the great harlot "arrayed in purple and scarlet, and bedecked with gold and jewels and pearls" (Rev 17:4). This impure woman, who represents the end-time apostate religious-political power, lures the inhabitants of the earth to commit spiritual fornication with her. By contrast, the bride of Christ, who represents the church, is attired modestly in pure and fine linen without outward ornaments (Rev 19:7-8).

In both the Old and New Testaments we have found a consistent pattern of the use of colorful cosmetics, glittering jewelry, and eye-catching clothes to accomplish seductive purposes. Such a pattern implicitly reveals God's condemnation of their use. What is taught implicitly through negative examples is reiterated positively by the two great apostles, Paul and Peter, in their condemnation of the use of jewelry and luxurious clothes.

Both apostles contrast the appropriate adorning of Christian women with the inappropriate ornaments of worldly women. Both apostles give us essentially the same list of inappropriate ornaments for the Christian woman. They include eye-catching hair styles, glittering jewelry, and costly clothing (1 Tim 2:9-10; 1 Pet 3:3-4). Both apostles recognize that the outward ornaments of the body are inconsistent with the appropriate inward ornaments of the heart, the quiet spirit and benevolent deeds.

PRINCIPLE THREE: To experience inner spiritual renewal and reconciliation with God, it is necessary to remove all outward besetting objects of idolatry, including jewelry and ornaments. This truth expressed especially through the experience of Jacob's family at Shechem and of the Israelites at Mount Horeb. In both instances ornaments were removed to effect reconciliation with God.

At Shechem Jacob summoned his family members to remove their outward idols and ornaments (Gen 35:2-3) as a means of preparing themselves for an inward spiritual cleansing at the altar he intended to build at Bethel. The response was commendable: "So they gave to Jacob all the foreign gods that they had, and the rings that were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was near Shechem" (Gen 35:4).

At Mount Horeb God requested the Israelites to remove their ornaments as proof of their sincere repentance for worshiping the golden calf: "So now put off your ornaments from you, that I may know what to do with you" (Ex 33:4). Again the response of the people was positive: "Therefore the people of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments, from Mount Horeb onward" (Ex 33:5). We noted that the phrase "from Mount Horeb onward" implies that repentant Israelites made a commitment at Mount Horeb to discontinue the use of ornaments in order to show their sincere desire to obey God. Both

at Shechem and Mount Horeb the removal of ornamental jewelry was preparatory to a renewal of a covenant commitment to God.

These experiences teach us that wearing ornamental jewelry contributes to rebellion against God by fostering self-glorification, and that removing it facilitates reconciliation with God by encouraging a humble attitude. Thus it is important for us to remember that to experience spiritual renewal and reformation, we need to remove from our hearts the idols we cherish, whether they be jewelry, cosmetics, immodest clothes, professional goals, cars, or homes, and replace them with devotion to God.

PRINCIPLE FOUR: Christians should dress in a modest and decent way, showing respect for God, themselves, and others. This principle is found in Paul's use of the terms *kosmios* and *aidos*—"well-ordered" and "decent"—to describe the appropriate adorning of the Christian woman (1 Tim 2:9). With reference to clothing, the terms mean that Christians must dress in a *well-ordered, decorous, decent manner*, without causing shame or embarrassment to God, themselves, or others.

We can violate the Christian dress code of modesty by neglecting personal appearance as well as by giving excessive attention to it. "Dress neatly and becomingly," Ellen White counseled, "but do not make yourself the subject of remarks either by being overdressed or by dressing in a lax, untidy manner. Act as though you knew that the eye of heaven is upon you, and you are living under the approbation or disapprobation of God."²

To dress modestly and decently implies that clothing must provide sufficient covering for the body so that others are not embarrassed or tempted. This principle is especially relevant today when modern dress fashions reject modesty and decency as the basis for constructive human relationships. The concern of the modern fashion industry is to sell clothes, jewelry, and cosmetics by exploiting the powerful sex drives of the human body, even if it means marketing immodest products that only feed pride and sensuality.

The Bible explicitly condemns the lustful look: "Every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matt 5:28). The revealing clothes promoted by the modern fashion industry awaken lustful passions in the heart of the beholder and contribute immeasurably to the depravity of our time. By dressing modestly, the Christian woman plays a key role in maintaining public morality.

God calls us to dress modestly and decently, not only to prevent sin, but also to preserve intimacy. People who want to sin will sin no matter how modestly dressed the people they see are. The purpose of modesty is not only to prevent lustful desires, but also to preserve something which is very fragile and yet fundamental to the survival of a marital relationship: the ability to maintain a deep, intimate relationship with one's spouse. If marriage is going to last a lifetime, as God intended it to, then husband and wife must work together to preserve, protect, and nurture the intimacy. When all is said and done modesty will preserve the joy of intimacy long after the ringing of the wedding bells.

The apostolic admonition to dress modestly and decently summons us to reject the seductive dictates of fashion, choosing instead to reflect in our outward appearance the natural beauty of simplicity and of elevated purity.

PRINCIPLE FIVE: Christians should dress soberly, restraining any desire to exhibit themselves by wearing eye-catching clothes, cosmetics, or jewelry. This principle is found in Paul's use of the term *sophrosune*—"soberly,"—to describe appropriate Christian adorning (1 Tim 2:9). This term denotes a mental attitude of self-control, an attitude that determines all other virtues. Paul recognized that self-control is indispensable for a Christian to be able to dress modestly and decently. The reason is that modest and decent attire derives from the exercise of self-control.

Paul pictures the converted Christian woman as one who dresses soberly by restraining her desire to exhibit herself through wearing *elaborate hair styles, gold, pearls,*

or expensive clothes (1 Tim 2:9). Her appearance does not say, 'Look at me; admire me,' but rather, "Look at how Christ has changed me from the inside out." A Christian woman who has been freed from the abiding concern to be the object of admiration will not be afraid to wear the same dress too often, if it is well-made, conservative, and wears well. It is evident that the same principle applies to men.

The apostle's call to dress soberly by shunning elaborate hair styles, glittering jewelry, and extravagant clothes is particularly relevant today, when fashion reigns supreme and many worship at her altar. Ellen White reminded us that "those who worship at fashion's altar have but little force of character . . . They live for no greater purpose, and their lives accomplish no worthy end. We meet everywhere women whose mind and heart are absorbed in their love of dress and display. The soul of womanhood is dwarfed and belittled, and her thoughts are centered upon her poor, despicable self."³

Paul's admonition to restrain the desire to buy or wear "expensive clothes" (1 Tim 2:9) also points to the practice of Christian stewardship. Expenditures that go beyond our means are incompatible with the Christian principle of stewardship. Even if *we can afford to buy* expensive clothes, *we cannot afford to waste* the means that God has given us at a time when there are many crying needs to reach the unreached with the gospel and to help the needy.

"Practice economy," Ellen White wrote, "in your outlay of means for dress. Remember that what you wear is constantly exerting an influence upon those with whom you come in contact. Do not lavish upon yourselves means that is greatly needed elsewhere. Do not spend the Lord's money to gratify a taste for expensive clothing."⁴

PRINCIPLE SIX: A plain wedding band can be worn in countries where the band is a symbol of marital commitment. However, caution should be taken to prevent the plain ring from becoming a pretext to wear all kinds of jewelry. This principle is derived from the Biblical disapproval of wearing ornamental jewelry (1 Tim 2:9; 1 Peter 3:3-4; Gen 35:2-4; Ex 33:3-5). The only finger ring mentioned in the Bible several times is the signet ring (Jer 22:24; Gen 41:42; Esth 3:10, 12; Luke 15:22), which was used to seal various documents and contracts. The wearing of the signet ring is not condemned in the Bible, presumably because it was regarded as an instrument of authority rather than an ornament.

Historically, the betrothal ring was first a plain iron ring used by the Romans to "tie" the betrothal commitment of two lovers. Soon the betrothal ring evolved into elaborate ornamental golden rings worn on practically all the fingers. What happened in ancient Rome was later repeated in the history of Christianity. In the early church the use of the marital ring evolved through three main stages.

In the first stage, the apostolic period, there was no apparent use of the marital ring. In the second stage, the second and third centuries, there was a restricted use of only one plain, inexpensive conjugal ring. In the final stage, from the fourth century onward, there was a proliferation of all kinds of ornamental gold rings set with gems to display wealth, pride, and vanity. This was true not only for the laity but also for the clergy. Church leaders bedecked and bejeweled themselves with gold rings, precious stones, and gold embroidered vestments.

What happened in the early church was later repeated in modern denominations. The two examples considered in *Christian Dress and Adornment*, namely, the Methodist and Mennonite churches, show the same pattern. In the first stage, no jewelry or wedding rings were allowed in these denominations. In the second stage, a concession was made for wearing the wedding ring. In the final stage, the concession to wear the marital ring became a pretext for wearing all kinds of jewelry, including ornamental rings.

The pattern in the Seventh-day Adventist church is very similar. In the first stage of the early days of Adventism, no jewelry or marriage rings were worn. In the second stage, a concession was made for wearing the marriage ring only in those countries where

the custom was imperative. In the final stage, the concession to wear a plain marriage band was extended in 1986 to church members in North America. The result of this evolution is a steady rise among Adventists in the wearing of different kinds of jewelry, including ornamental rings.

The lesson of history is evident. Rings seem to exercise an almost fatal attraction. People can become so enamored with their finger ring that they are easily tempted to wear all kinds of jewelry. Thus, it is important not to allow the wearing of a plain wedding band in countries where it is a social imperative, to become the pretext for wearing ornamental jewelry. Instead of ornamental jewelry, we can wear “the golden link which binds [our] souls to Jesus Christ, a pure and holy character, the true love and meekness and godliness that are the fruit borne upon the Christian tree, and [our] influence will be secure anywhere.”⁵

PRINCIPLE SEVEN: Christians should respect gender distinctions in clothing by wearing clothes that affirm their male or female identities. This principle is plainly taught in the law found in Deuteronomy 22:5, which prohibits wearing the clothes of the opposite sex. The Bible attaches great importance to preserving gender distinctions in dress as well as in functional roles, because these are fundamental to our understanding of who we are and what role God wants us to fulfill.

Clothes define our identity and help us develop a new identity. Not only is it true that we are what we wear, but also that we become what we wear. A woman who wants to function as a man will most likely dress like a man. Similarly a man who wants to be treated as a woman will most likely wear feminine items like jewelry, perfume, and ornate clothing. This means that when we blur the gender distinctions by wearing genderless clothing, we gradually lose our male or female identity and experience an identity crisis and confusion of roles.

We have found that role confusion is present today in the home, in the workplace, and in the church, making it increasingly difficult to tell where the role of a man ends and that of a woman begins. Christians must recognize today’s attempts to abolish male and female distinctions, especially through the popularity of genderless clothing, as Satan’s effort to destroy the order and beauty of God’s creation.

The Bible does not tell us what style of clothing men and women should wear, because it recognizes that style is dictated by climate and culture. The Bible does teach us to respect the gender distinction in clothing as it is known within our own culture. This means that as Christians we need to ask ourselves when buying clothes: Does this article of clothing affirm my gender identity, or does it make me look as though I belong to the opposite sex? Whenever you feel that a certain type of clothing does not belong to your gender, follow your conscience: Don’t buy it, even if it is fashionable.

At a time when modern fashion seems bent on abolishing gender distinctions in clothing, it is not always easy for Christians to find clothes that affirm their gender identity. But it has never been easy to live by Biblical principles. Yet this is our Christian calling, not to conform to the perverted values and styles of our society, but to be a transforming influence in this world through the enabling power of God.

Conclusion. Clothes do not make a Christian, but Christians reveal their identity through their clothes and appearance. The Bible does not prescribe a standardized dress for Christian men and women to wear, but it calls us to follow the simplicity and unpretentiousness of Jesus' life-style, even in our clothes and appearance.

To follow Jesus in our dress and adornment means to stand apart from the crowd by not painting up, jewelizing up, and dolling up our bodies as do the rest. This takes courage. Courage not to conform to the seductive dictates of fashion, but to be transformed by the sensible directives of the Word of God (Rom 12:2). Courage to distinguish between the capricious mode that changes and the sensible style that remains. Courage to reveal the loveliness of Christ's character, not by the external decoration of our bodies "with gold or pearls or expensive clothes" (1 Tim 2:9, NEB), but by the internal beautification of our souls with the graces of the heart, the gentle and quiet spirit which is precious in God's sight (1 Pet 3:4). Courage to dress, not to glorify ourselves by wearing glittering jewelry and eye-catching clothes, but to glorify God by dressing modestly, decently, and soberly.

Our outward appearance is a constant silent witness of our Christian identity. May it always tell the world that we live to glorify God and not ourselves.

ENDNOTES

1. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, California, 1948), vol. 3, p. 376.
2. Ellen G. White, *Child Guidance* (Nashville, 1954), p. 415.
3. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, California, 1948), vol. 4, p. 644.
4. Ellen G. White, *Child Guidance* (Nashville, 1954), p. 421.
5. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers* (Mountain View, California, 1954), p. 180.

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