**DRESS AND ORNAMENTS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**

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Men who complain that women today spend too much time before the mirror making up, jeweling up, and dolling up their bodies, might be comforted to know that in New Testament times the situation was worse. Why? Simply because middle and upper-class women had little else to do to pass the time. They could not hold public offices, they usually had no jobs outside the homes, they received no awards for academic or professional accomplishments. So they spent their time beautifying themselves, putting all their hopes in their appearance.

The Roman poet Lucius Valerius responded to the moralists who denounced women for their extravagant dresses and ornaments, by asking: "Why should men grudge women their ornaments and their dress? Women cannot hold public offices, or priesthoods, or gain triumphs; they have no public occupations. What, then, can they do but devote their time to adornment and to dress?"1 These questions reveal a fundamental truth, namely, people who indulge in excessive self-adornment usually have no greater goal to occupy their mind.

It was into this world of luxury and moral decadence that Christianity was born. A new middle class had emerged, made rich by the booty of war. They wanted to affirm their new social status by wearing costly clothes and an abundance of jewelry. This was equally true of men and women. In fact, as we shall see in chapter six, some men had all their fingers so filled with rings that they could use their hands only to give orders to their servants. It was in this social context and contrast of luxury and poverty that Christians were called to live their faith. It is not surprising to find New Testament admonitions to seek the inner beautification of the heart with a gentle and quiet spirit, rather than outward adorning of the body with elaborate hairstyles, gold, pearls, and costly attire.

**Objective of Chapter.** In this chapter we want to take a close look at the apostolic admonitions of Paul and Peter regarding dress and adornment. We shall see that their admonitions contain fundamental principles relevant for Christians today. Before examining the apostolic admonitions, we want to pause for a moment to look at the attire of the two symbolic women mentioned in the book of Revelation: the Great Harlot and the Bride of Christ. We shall reflect upon the contrast between the outward appearance of the two women and its implications for the Christian standard of dress and ornaments.

**The Great Harlot.** In the book of Revelation John offers us a contrast between two types of outward adorning through the symbolism of two women, one pure and the other a "great harlot." The pure woman represents the true church, who is the "bride" of the Lamb. She makes herself ready for the bridegroom and invites others to prepare themselves for "the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Rev 19:9). By contrast, the great harlot represents the end-time apostate religious-political power; she lures the inhabitants of the earth to commit spiritual fornication with her. Like Jezebel, she takes a sadistic joy in pouring out the blood of the martyrs like a drunkard pours out wine to drink ("I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints" Rev 17:6).

The contrast between the two women is dramatically portrayed by their outward appearance. John saw the great harlot "arrayed in purple and scarlet, and bedecked with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurity of her fornications; and on her forehead was written a name of mystery: ‘Babylon the great, mother of harlots and of earth’s abominations.’ And I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and the blood of the martyrs of Jesus" (Rev 17:4-6).

This vivid description of the great harlot reminds us of the prophetic portrayal of apostate Israel decked with ornaments as an adulterous woman and "whoring" after heathen gods (Ez 23:30; 16:15; Is 23:17). She is clothed in purple and scarlet, royal colors of luxury and splendor. Scarlet in the Bible is also the color of sin (Is 1:18; Rev 17:3). She is lavishly adorned with gold, jewels, and pearls. In her hand she holds a golden cup, with which she makes her lovers drunk. The attractive golden cup serves to entice people to join the glittering harlot in her evil ways.

The woman is said to have a name on her forehead. Roman authors like Seneca2 and Juvenal3 tell us that on their foreheads prostitutes wore a frontlet giving their names. These name-bearing frontlets were the trademarks of prostitutes. This is another vivid detail used to build up the picture of the depravity of the great harlot.

Revelation’s portrayal of the use of ornaments of gold, jewels, and pearls by the great harlot to accomplish her seductive purposes represents an implicit condemnation of their use. This is consistent with the pattern we have found in the Old Testament. The prevailing negative association of ornaments with a seductive and adulterous lifestyle should serve as a deterrent against their use by Christians today.

**The Bride of Christ.** In contrast to the great harlot heavily decked with gold, jewels, pearls, and luxurious clothes, the bride of Christ is attired modestly in pure and fine linen without outward ornaments: "Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure, for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints" (Rev 19:7-8). John explains that the fine linen of the bridal dress represents the acts of faithful obedience of the saints.

The idea of being clothed with "righteous deeds" is very suggestive; we shall see below that Paul uses the same imagery to describe the appropriate ornaments of the Christian woman (1 Tim 2:10). The meaning of the imagery is not that the redeemed have clothed themselves in the pure and white bridal dress by their own righteous deeds. The wedding garment was given to them ("it was granted her to be clothed"), not provided by them. Yet it should be noted that the wedding garment is given as a divine gift to those who have exercised steadfast endurance, who have kept the commandments of God and have persevered in the faith of Jesus (Rev 14:12).

The internal purity of character of the saints is revealed outwardly not with ornaments of gold, jewels, and pearls, but with a pure and fine linen dress. Note that not only the bride, but even the great multitude of the redeemed who stand before the throne of God are "clothed in white robes" (Rev 7:9), without outward ornaments. The white robes are not provided by the righteous acts of the redeemed, but are the result of being washed in "the blood of the Lamb."

**Relevance for Today.** We can hardly miss the lesson to be learned from the outward appearance of the two women. God saw fit to represent their character by their dress, because, as we noted earlier, our clothes reveal who we are. The impure woman is dressed extravagantly and adorned with costly ornaments, simply because such attire fittingly represents her internal pride and seductive schemes. By contrast, the pure woman is dressed with simplicity and modesty, without outward ornaments, simply because such apparel fittingly represents her internal humility and purity.

The question that comes down to us today is: Which of the two women should serve as the role model for our Christian dress code? If we choose to pattern our lives after Christ’s bride, which represents His church to which we belong, then like her we will show our inner purity and godliness by the simplicity and modesty of our outward appearance.

**Paul and the Adornment of the Christian Woman.** The contrast between the apparel of the apocalyptic great harlot and that of Christ’s bride appears also in the pastoral exhortations of Paul and Peter. Both apostles emphasize the contrast between worldly and Christian adorning. Their exhortations deserve close attention not only because they give us some fundamental principles of appropriate Christian dress but also because they provide us with *explicit condemnation* of the use of jewelry and extravagant dress.

Paul addresses the question of the adornment of Christian women in the context of his instruction about conduct in public worship. After instructing men to pray publicly, "lifting holy hands without anger and quarreling," that is, sincerely and with good will toward others, Paul shifts his attention to the conduct of women in public worship: "[I desire] also that women should adorn themselves modestly and sensibly in seemly apparel, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly attire, but by good deeds, as befits women who profess religion" (1 Tim 2:9-10).

Some question the relevance of these instructions for Christians today because they assume that they were intended exclusively for the local situation existing at Ephesus. Since I have addressed this question in the sixth chapter of my book *Women in the Church,* I will refer any interested reader to that study. For the purpose of this study I will simply say that even a cursory reading of 1 Timothy suffices to show that Paul’s instructions were meant not merely for the local church at Ephesus, but for the Christian church at large. While the epistle was occasioned by the disruptive influence of certain false teachers (1:3-6; 6:3-5), Paul’s concern was not to launch a detailed rebuttal of their false teaching, but rather to explain to the congregation, its leaders, and to Timothy himself, how Christians ought to live godly lives in the face of heretical teachings and a depraved pagan environment.

**The Right Adorning.** The contrast in this passage is between the adorning of Christian women who profess religion and that of worldly women whose only concern is to attract attention to themselves. The phrase, "Women *should adorn* themselves" suggests that Paul is not opposed to adorning *per se*, providing it be of the right kind. The desire to appear well in the sight of others is not wrong when properly regulated.

God does not condemn real ornaments. He has filled this world with things that are not only useful but also beautiful. The hues of the flowers, the plumage of the birds, the fur of the animals, the beauty of the human body with its lovely cheeks, dainty lips, and sparkling eyes–these things are of the nature of ornaments, because they are superadded to what would be merely useful. God could have designed all the fruits and vegetables to be green, but He chose for them to exist in a variety of colors so that they would give us not only food but also beauty.

True adornment or adorning is that which enables a person to express the real self. There must be a consistency between the inward life and outward appearance. To pretend to come humbly before God while adorned extravagantly and ostentatiously is hypocrisy. The apparel we wear should be reflective of our profession to seek first God’s kingdom and righteousness in our lives.

Paul clarifies the nature of appropriate adorning by using three significant words: "modestly and sensibly in seemly apparel." The NIV reads : "modestly, with decency and propriety." A closer look at these three words in the original Greek can help us appreciate more fully Paul’s fundamental principles of appropriate Christian dress which are relevant for Christians today.

**Dress Modestly.** The first Greek word Paul used to characterize the appropriate adorning of the Christian woman is *kosmios,* which is rendered in most translations as "modestly." The essential idea of *kosmios* is well-ordered, becoming, dignified. It derives its meaning from the *order* manifested in the *kosmos,* that is, in God’s universe. God’s well-ordered adorning of the universe is a role model for us to follow in our outward appearance. With reference to clothing, *kosmios* "means that which is *well-ordered, decorous, becoming.*"4

The *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* explains that *kosmios* "describes one who disciplines himself and who may thus be regarded as genuinely moral and respectable."5 The inner self-discipline and humble attitude of the Christian woman is reflected outwardly in well-ordered, dignified, and becoming attire. "Paul was shrewd enough to know," wrote Donald Guthrie, "that a woman’s dress is a mirror of her mind. Outward ostentation is not in keeping with a prayerful and devout approach."6 In a similar vein Ellen White wrote, "A person’s character is judged by his style of dress. A refined taste, a cultivated mind, will be revealed in the choice of simple and appropriate attire."7

In her book *Personality Unlimited,* Veronica Dengel commented on good taste in clothes in a way that resembles Paul’s admonition. "Good taste in clothes starts with simplicity, proceeds to becomingness, and culminates in appropriateness for the occasion. . . . Loud flashy colors, poor fabrics and workmanship, and inharmonious combinations all contribute to bad taste. Your clothes should fit properly. If too loose, they are no longer smart; if they are too tight, the seams rip and fabric pulls. Simplicity should border on plainness, but with the distinction that is achieved by perfect fit, beautiful lines, fine tailoring, and complete suitability to the figure type. Absence of ornamentation helps to bring out the beauty of fabric and cut."8

Paul’s admonition to dress in a modest, orderly, and becoming way is most relevant for Christian men and women today, when modesty is out and exposure is in. His admonition challenges us to pay due attention to our apparel to ensure that it may be truly neat, dignified, orderly, and reflective of our inner moral values. It reminds us that what we wear not only reflects our tastes and moral values, but also affects our demeanor and conduct. Appropriate dress tends to encourage appropriate deportment.

**Modesty Preserves Intimacy.** God calls us to dress modestly, not only to prevent sin, but also to preserve intimacy. People who want to sin will sin no matter how modestly dressed they are. The Puritans and Victorians were dressed extremely modestly, but it did not prevent their sinning. They just had to be a little more determined and take more time to undress, but they managed to sin. 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.

God’s call to dress modestly is in reality a call to preserve and protect our intimacy. This is a delicate and precious ability that we can easily lose if we do not protect it. If marriage is going to last a lifetime, as God intended it, 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.

**Proud of Modesty?** Paul’s admonition to dress in a modest, orderly way suggests that there is no special merit in ignoring personal appearance by wearing shabby clothes, any more than there is in wearing gold, jewels, or pearls. A person can violate the Christian dress code of modesty by neglecting personal appearance as well as by giving excessive attention to it.

Some dress to show off their beautiful clothes because they are proud of their appearance. Others dress extremely plainly because they want to convince the world of their humility. Both classes are proud. One class is proud of clothes, while the other is proud of humility. To avoid both extremes, we need to heed the first principle of Christian adorning given by Paul: *The outward appearance should be neat, orderly, and becoming so that no one will be offended by it.*

**Dress Decently.** The second Greek word Paul used to characterize the appropriate adorning of the Christian woman is *aidos,* translated *"*with decency" (NIV), "sensibly"(RSV), *"*with shamefacedness"(KJV). The term *aidos* occurs only in this text in the New Testament, but its usage is frequent in the literature of Hellenistic (Greek) Judaism. Its essential meaning is "reverence" or "respect." The term is used to express respect for God, the king, old age, the neighbor, and justice.9

How can a Christian woman show *reverence* and *respect* toward God, others, and herself through her attire? By dressing *with decency* (NIV), *sensibly* (RSV), without causing shame or embarrassment to God, herself, and others, or as the KJV puts it, *with shamefacedness.* Each of the three renderings found in these major versions adds a nuance to the basic meaning of reverential adorning. The three renderings complement one another and help us understand more fully what it means to dress reverently.

Paul’s admonition to dress reverently is especially relevant for us Christians today, when modern dress fashions reject reverence and respect as the basis for constructive human relations. The concern of modern fashion is to sell its product by exploiting the powerful sex drive of the human body, even if this means placing on the market immodest clothing that only feeds pride and sexual appetite.

The Christian woman is called to dress decently not to be less attractive, but to preserve and protect something fragile which can easily be lost: her ability to be intimate with her husband, an experience that enriches both lives. The reason for dressing modestly and decently is similar to the reason for locking the house. We lock the house to protect what is inside by keeping people out. Similarly, Christians will act and dress modestly and decently to protect and preserve the intimacy of the marriage relationship by preventing intrusion from outside. Clothes can evoke intimate responses: our deepest feelings of love, the passionate expression of our sexuality, the revelation of our inner being. Such responses belong to the marriage relationship.

The purpose of modesty and decency in dress is not to hide ourselves from the view of others, but to preserve our intimacy for our spouses. Modesty and decency are to be respected even between husband and wife. Indecent exposure even within marriage can destroy mutual respect and the capacity to enjoy the intimate union of mind, body, and soul.

**Indecent Exposure.** Mary Quant, the mother of the miniskirt and Britain’s most successful designer of women’s ready-to-wear clothes, says that her aim is "to dress women so men would feel like tearing the wrapping off."10 She designs clothes to shock, because she believes, "If the clothes don’t make you noticed, then I think they’re a waste of money."11 She coined the dictum, "Good taste is death; vulgarity life."12 When asked, "What is the point of fashion, where is it leading?" Mary Quant promptly replied, "Sex."13

In an interview published in *Newsweek* Mary Quant explained, in words almost too raw to quote, what the miniskirt represents to her: "Am I the only woman who has ever wanted to go to bed with a man in the afternoon? Any law-abiding female, it used to be thought, waits until dark. Well, there are lots of girls who do not want to wait. Mini-clothes are symbolic of them."14 Seduction is also the goal of the line of cosmetics she designs: "All this decoration is put on in order to seduce a man to bed, so what’s the sense of taking it all off?"15

This unabashed admission by a leading designer that the goal of modern fashion in clothing and cosmetics is to seduce and to appeal to sensuality, makes it imperative for Christians to heed Paul’s admonition to dress with decency, sensibly, without causing shame or embarrassment to God, ourselves, or others. *A Christian woman needs to remember that her charm lies not only in what she reveals but also in what she conceals.* A woman who dresses to show her physical and sexual appeal encourages men to treat her as a sex object. By dressing modestly and decently a woman can avoid being treated as a sex object and can enhance those spiritual qualities which our sinful world needs so much to see.

This is a time for courage: courage to fight the vulgarity in fashion; courage to affront the bad taste of our time; courage to distinguish between the capricious mode that changes and the sensible style that remains; courage to recognize that "obedience to fashion . . . is doing more than any other power to separate our people from God;"16 courage to reject the seductive dictates of fashion and to accept God’s counsel to dress reverently. It is a time for Christians to have the courage to accept Paul’s second principle of Christian adorning: *The outward appearance should be decent, dignified, showing respect for God, ourselves, and others.*

**Dress Soberly.** The third Greek word Paul used to characterize the appropriate adorning of the Christian woman is *sophrosune,* which is rendered as "soberly" (NEB), "with sobriety" (KJV), *"*with propriety"(NIV), "in seemly apparel"(RSV). The different renderings reveal the difficulty translators encounter in conveying the meaning of a Greek word which has no exact counterpart in the English language.

The word *sophrosune* is a compound of two words, "sound (*sos*)" and "mind (*phrenes*)." Essentially it denotes mental vigilance, that is, the use of the mind to exercise restraint, self-control. In this context of Christian adorning, the word is used to mean that Christian women should show self-control by restraining any desire to wear attention-getting clothes or jewelry. As Albert Barnes explains, "The word used here means, properly, *sanity;* then sobermindness, moderation of the desires and passions. It is opposed to all that is frivolous, and to all undue excitement of the passions. The idea is, that in their apparel and deportment women should not entrench on [violate] the strictest decorum."17

It is not surprising that in the Greek world *sophrosune*, that is, *sobriety, mental self-control,* was regarded as "one of the cardinal virtues."18 After all, it is the mental attitude of self-control that determines all the other virtues. Also it is not surprising that, like Paul, Greek moralists frequently associate *sophrosune* (mental self-control)with *aidos* (decent, respectful behavior).19 The reason is obvious. All decent, respectful behavior derives from the exercise of self-control.

This information helps us to appreciate why Paul admonishes women to dress not only with modesty (*kosmios*) and decency (*aidos),* but also with sobriety, sobermindedness (*sophrosune*). Like the Greek moralists, the apostle recognizes that an orderly and decent outward appearance is the result of mental self-control, that is, a willful, rational restraint of the sinful desire to exhibit our pride through ostentatious adorning.

The way we live the Christian life is largely determined by the way we think. "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Prov 23:7). Paul recognizes the determinative role of the mind for the Christian lifestyle. In his epistle to the Romans he urges Christians to resist conformity to the world and to be transformed in God’s image through "the renewing of your mind" (Rom 12:2). The renewing of the mind is essential to resisting the pressure to conform to the seductive fashion of our time.

Paul pictures the converted Christian woman as one who exercises self-control (*sophrosune*) in her adorning. Her desire is not to exhibit herself, but to reflect the selflessness of Christ. Her dress does not say, Look at me, admire me, but rather, Look at how Christ has changed me from the inside out.

This apostolic vision of the Christian woman–one who shows self-restraint by rejecting attention-getting clothes and ornaments and by wearing instead neat, becoming, decent, and dignified clothes– is particularly relevant to our times. Today fashion reigns supreme, and the vast majority of men and women worship at her altar. Many Christians follow so closely the seasonal changes of fashion that they are willing to deprive themselves even of basic necessities in order to wear fashionable clothing and ornaments. They want to look like those slick models appearing on the covers of women’s magazines. By so doing they reveal inner insecurity. They are not satisfied to be their real selves, so they want to look like someone else they admire. What they seem to forget is that the image of women portrayed in women’s magazines is not the image of the kingdom of God. Guiding our lives by the dictates of changing fashion is not seeking first the kingdom of God.

To resist the tyranny of seductive fashion, we need to heed Paul’s third principle of Christian adorning: *Dress soberly, restraining any desire to wear attention-getting clothes or jewelry.*

**The Inappropriate Ornaments.** To leave no doubt as to what he meant by his admonition to dress orderly, decently, and soberly, Paul added a list of four types of inappropriate ornaments for the Christian woman: "not with elaborate hair styles, not decked out with gold or pearls, or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, as befits women who claim to be religious" (1 Tim 2:9-10, NEB).

The list begins with "elaborate hair styles" because in the Jewish and Roman world of the time, women plaited their hair with great care, arranging it in various forms according to the prevailing fashion. They adorned their hair with spangles or gold wire or interwoven tissue. We are told that Roman women liked to wear elaborate eight-inch–long hairpins with intricate Corinthian designs. "There were as many ways of dressing the hair as there were bees in Hybla. Hair was waved, and dyed, sometimes black, more often auburn. Wigs were worn, especially blonde wigs . . . . Hairbands, pins and combs were made of ivory, and boxwood, and tortoiseshell; and sometimes of gold studded with gems."20

What Paul condemns here is not fixing the hair in an orderly, becoming manner, but "elaborate hair styles" interwoven with ornaments that are designed to attract flattering attention to the wearer. Such a style contravenes the principles of Christian adorning that Paul here sets forth.

The next two inappropriate ornaments mentioned by Paul are "gold and pearls." Plentiful were the glittering rings, bracelets, anklets, and earrings made with pearls and worn by fashionable women. The apostle speaks expressly against their use, because they reflect personal vanity and self-centeredness, which are not consonant with his plea for Christian modesty, decency, and sobriety in outward adorning.

The last inappropriate ornament mentioned by Paul is "expensive clothes." Some types of clothes were extremely expensive in Paul’s time. "Purple was the favorite color for clothes. One pound weight of the best Tyrian purple wool, strained twice through, cost 1,000 *denarii*."21 Considering that an unskilled worker earned one *denarius* a day, it would take approximately three years of wages to buy one pound of Tyrian purple wool to make a dress. Such high cost did not deter wealthy women from buying expensive clothes and ornaments. "In Rome, Pliny tells us of a bride, Lollia Paulina, whose bridal dress cost the equivalent of £432,000 [about $1,600,000]."22

It is not surprising that moralists condemned extravagant and costly dresses as much as Paul and Peter did. For example, Quintillian, the Roman master of oratory, wrote: "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."23

Paul spoke against the wearing of expensive clothes because they reflect personal vanity, self-centeredness, and sometimes a desire for improper attention from the opposite sex. Such attitudes are not consonant with his plea for Christian modesty, decency, and sobriety in dress.

The mention of *expensive* clothes suggests attire that can hardly be afforded. Expenditures that go beyond one’s means are incompatible with the principles of Christian stewardship. This does not mean that expensive clothes are appropriate for those who can *afford* them, because as John Wesley emphasizes, "No Christian can *afford* to waste any part of the substance which God has entrusted him with. . . . Every shilling which you save from your own apparel you may expend on clothing the naked, and relieving the various necessities of the poor, whom ye ‘have always with you.’ Therefore every shilling which you needlessly spend on your apparel is in effect stolen from God and the poor."24

**The Appropriate Ornaments.** After listing four inappropriate ornaments for the Christian woman, Paul hastened to mention the appropriate ones, namely, "good deeds, as befits women who claim to be religious" (1 Tim 2:10). The idea of "good deeds" as the appropriate Christian ornament reminds us of the "righteous deeds of the saints" that clothe the bride of Christ (Rev 19:8). The notion of being adorned with "good deeds" is suggestive, for a life of selfless deeds of benevolence toward others may well enhance the outward appearance. Christians like Mother Teresa, who devote their lives to minister to the needy, develop an outward attractiveness that even a truckload of pearls cannot produce. "A woman’s adornment, in short, lies not in what she herself puts on, but in the loving service she gives out."25

The outer beauty of loving service ("good deeds") is appropriate for women professing *to be religious*, because their values are higher than those of non-Christian women. Christian women have fixed their hearts, not on decorating their bodies externally with costly ornaments, but on beautifying their souls internally with the love of God. They profess to have fixed their affection on Christ, their Savior. They follow Him "who went about doing good" by adorning themselves with deeds of benevolence. These alone will bring the satisfaction of being loved and respected. No amount of expensive clothes and sophisticated jewelry can hide the ugliness of a self-centered personality.

Paul sought consistency between the inward profession and the outward practice. To profess faithfulness to Christ and yet dress extravagantly and immodestly is a form of hypocrisy. Faithful Christian women are most fittingly adorned in the good deeds that correspond to their inner commitment to Christ.

**Peter and the Adorning of the Christian Wife.** Paul’s teaching on the adorning of Christian women is largely repeated by Peter, although in a different context. While the context of Paul’s teaching on Christian adornment is the conduct of women in the church, the context of Peter’s teaching is the conduct of women in the home. The striking similarity between the two teachings goes to show that the principles of modesty and decency in outward appearance apply equally to the home and to the church.

Peter offered wives a twofold admonition to help them maintain a happy relationship with their husbands, and win them to Christ if they are unbelievers. The first admonition is to have a submissive attitude toward their husbands by maintaining pure and respectful behavior. "Likewise you wives, be submissive to your husbands, so that some, though they do not obey the word, may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, when they see your reverent and chaste behavior" (1 Pet 3:1-2).

Like Paul (1 Cor 7:13-16), Peter does not advise the wife who became brave enough to become a Christian, to leave the husband, but to win him by a *submissive* attitude. She is to manifest submission not by preaching, nagging, or arguing for equal rights, but by the silent testimony of the loveliness of her life. In this way she can break down the barrier of prejudice and hostility and win her husband to Christ.

**Submissive Attitude.** The notion of a wife’s submission to her husband is unpopular today, especially among feminists who view it as equivalent to inferiority. But the submission enjoined is of function, not of moral or physical status. Functional submission does not mean inferiority. Jesus was equal with God in nature (ontologically), yet functionally He submitted himself by becoming a servant. The submission of the wife to the husband is not out of fear or inferiority, but from perfect love. She does it because she loves Christ, she loves her husband, and she gladly accepts her role and the role of her husband as the head of her home (see Col 3:18; Eph 5:22-23).

The passage suggests that some husbands, particularly those hostile to the Christian faith ("who do not obey the word"), may be difficult to please. In such circumstances the wife’s faith and devotion to Christ will help her to be submissive to her husband. Since her husband does not accept *the Word* (the Gospel)‚ she witnesses to him without *a word*, that is, without preaching at him. She lives the Word before her husband by her pure and respectful behavior.

**The Inappropriate Ornaments.** Peter’s second admonition is for wives to win their husbands to Christ not through outward luxurious ornaments, but through the inner adorning of a gentle and quiet spirit. "Let not yours be the outward adorning with braiding of hair, decoration of gold, and the wearing of fine clothing, but let it be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable jewel of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God’s sight is very precious" (1 Pet 3:3-4).

In this passage Peter followed the pattern of Paul in 1 Timothy 2:9-10, contrasting the outward adorning of the body by worldly women with the inward adorning of the heart by Christian women. The negative outward adorning of worldly women consists of "braiding of hair, decoration of gold, and the wearing of fine clothing." This list corresponds essentially to that given by Paul, which we have already examined. Thus it will suffice to note that both of the apostles recognize that eye-catching hair styles, glittering ornaments, and costly dresses are not appropriate for Christian women.

**The Ornaments of the Heart.** The positive inward adorning of the Christian woman consists of the graces of the heart, the gentle and quiet spirit which is precious in God’s sight. This is the adorning of a calm temper, a contented mind, and a heart free from the pride, vanity, and agitation of those who seek recognition through external adorning. This is the adorning that will commend a woman to God, to her husband, and to others. This is the adorning which is not lipstick-deep, nor skin-deep, but soul-deep.

Peter is not implying that a Christian wife should ignore her outward appearance and concentrate on the inner beautification of her soul. No wife can hope to secure the permanent affection of her husband if she is not attentive to her personal appearance and neat in her habits. But what a man appreciates most in his wife are the ornaments of her heart: her gentle words, her patient spirit, her calmness in trouble, her pure affection. Thus, a woman who wishes to win the permanent affection of her husband should seek to have not only a neat outward appearance but also a gentle, calm, and benevolent inward disposition.

Peter concludes his admonition by setting before Christian wives the worthy example of the outstanding wives of Old Testament times who, like Abraham’s wife Sarah, cultivated the inner adorning of the heart and "were submissive to their husbands" (1 Pet 3:5). Sarah showed her deference to Abraham by "calling him lord" (1 Pet 3:6).

It is noteworthy that both Peter and Paul spoke about the adorning of Christian women in the context of a submissive attitude. Peter appealed to a "submissive" attitude immediately before and after mentioning the adorning of Christian wives, while Paul did so right after discussing the adorning of Christian women (1 Tim 2:11). This suggests that both apostles recognized that outward adorning is determined by the inner attitude of the heart. A submissive, humble attitude will be reflected in modest, becoming, and sober apparel, while an insubordinate, proud attitude will be manifested in an immodest, extravagant, seductive appearance.

**Conclusion.** The New Testament teaches how Christians should dress by means of indirect allegories and direct admonitions. Indirectly, we have found a revealing contrast between the attire of the two symbolic women in the book of Revelation, the Great Harlot and the Bride of Christ. The impure woman is dressed extravagantly and adorned with costly ornaments, simply because such attire fittingly represents her internal pride and seductive schemes. By contrast, the pure woman is dressed with simplicity and modesty, without outward ornaments, simply because such apparel fittingly represents her internal humility and purity. As Christians, we follow the example of Christ’s bride, which is the church to which we belong, by showing our inner purity and godliness through the simplicity and modesty of our outward appearance.

Directly, we have found that both Paul and Peter contrast the appropriate adorning of Christian women with the inappropriate ornaments of worldly women (1 Tim 2:9-10; 1 Pet 3:3-4). Both apostles recognize that the outward glittering ornaments of the body are inconsistent with the inward ornaments of the heart,the quiet spirit and benevolent deeds.

A close analysis of the terms used by Paul has revealed three important principles: (1) Christian should dress in a modest, becoming way, avoiding extremes. (2) Christians should dress in a decent, dignified way, showing respect for God, themselves, and others. (3) Christians should dress soberly, restraining any desire to exhibit themselves by wearing eye-catching clothes, cosmetics, or jewelry. The outward appearance is a constant silent witness of our Christian identity. It tells the world that we live to glorify God and not ourselves.

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