

As news reports from Iran leak stories concerning their growing political unrest, pictures of protests, demonstrations, and riots reveal a sad condition. Among the complaints—one that has caught a lot of the American attention—is the discrimination of women. Notable figures from within Iran have begun to speak out openly about some of the problems. CNN recently reported, “Increasingly, women’s voices are gaining power as their numbers rise and their demands grow louder. Even the granddaughter of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the architect of the Islamic Republic, voiced frustration at the way women are treated.”

This kind of talk has certainly taken over in common conversation. It seems nowadays that everywhere you go people speak about what they see as injustice in the treatment of the Muslim women. That word—*injustice*—seems to be the common cry. What I have most often heard expressed is not so much a complaint about the Muslim veil or their conservative dress, but the complaints about the glaring inconsistencies people see between Muslim men and women. “The men,” they say, “look like everyone else, while the women are covered from head to toe.” I tend to chuckle a bit and shake my head in agreement with this glaring contradiction. But lately, as I look around Lancaster County, I’m beginning to wonder if it isn’t rather ironic that I should be so amused at their inconsistency.

I recently read through the Quran. In so doing I noticed that, similar to the New Testament, the Quran has more specific things to say about the dress of women than it does the dress of men. I assume that Muslim men, noticing the absence of a “law” concerning dress, interpret this as a license to dress however they want. This caused me to ponder ... “*In what way are we Christians different?*” Admittedly, the New Testament is more specific about the dress of women than it is of men. But aren’t Christians supposed to be led by the *spirit* of the law more than the letter of the law? As the spiritual leaders of our homes, I feel we men ought to be able to discern this conspicuous inconsistency more readily than a people who are living by law.

Coming from a culture that thought very little of modesty, my wife and I had to struggle our way through what the Bible had to say about the modesty of women. From the start, the mere thought of having my wife wear dresses really stretched me. And while my wife had always had long hair since we were married, coming to terms with what the Bible says about women having long hair was yet another stretch for me. And then, of course, the teaching we found in 1 Corinthians 11 on the covered head was the toughest biblical concept of all to accept.

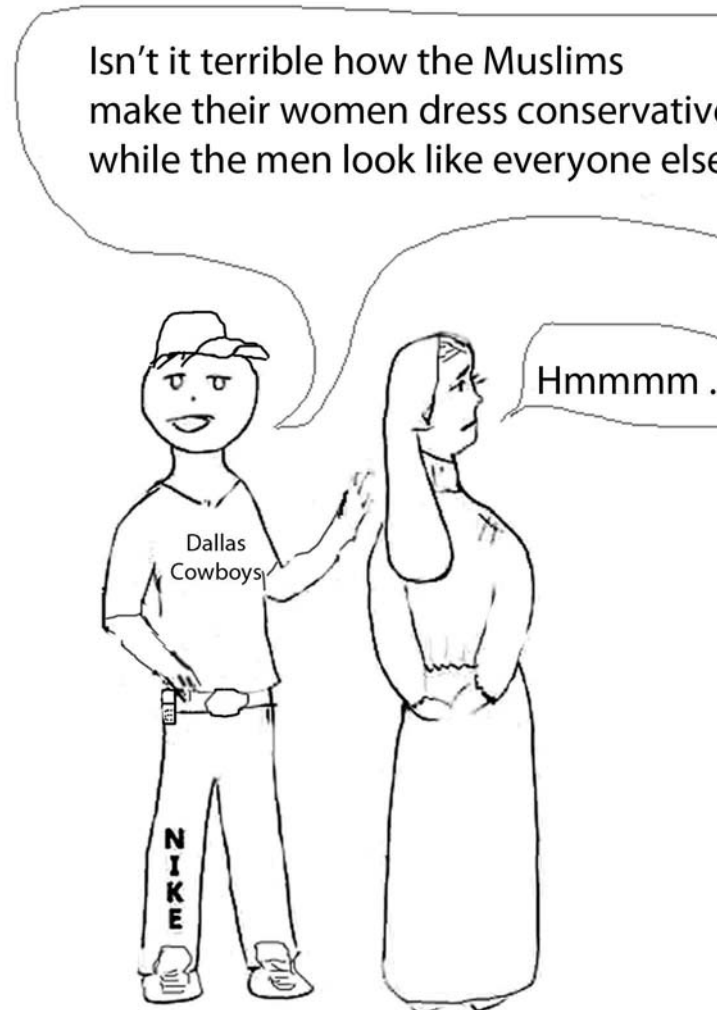
Because of my pride, I had a lot harder time accepting all of it than my wife did. She was the one who had to make all

# Modesty

Dean

the changes, such as no longer styling her hair, not wearing her makeup and jewelry, and then disposing of almost every single piece of her wardrobe in exchange for more modest and feminine dresses. Looking back, I’m ashamed to admit I was more embarrassed being *seen* with someone who was dressed in biblical attire, than my wife who was actually making such profound changes. Eventually, when I finally surrendered to the words of Scripture, we both found great peace together.

After I finally surrendered, I remember wishing that I could be the one who had to do the “hard part.” Coming from my background, making a change like putting on a head covering was as about as hard as going to the mall in a

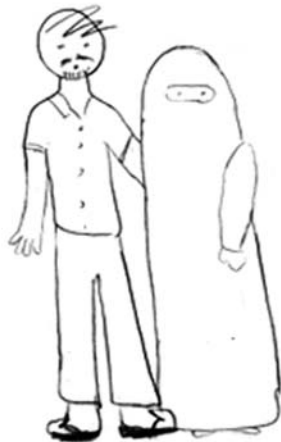


# for Men

Taylor

clown suit. One of our local sisters here, Christine Lamice-la, described her experience by saying that when she first put on the covering, “The way people looked at me, it was like going out in public sporting a big green nose.” I wonder how many of our sisters can relate to her experience?

As we continued to look deeper into the issue, I realized that, while the Bible might certainly have more *specifics* mentioned for my wife, those same biblical principles should be as applicable to me as they are to her. Moreover, as I consciously chose to embrace these biblical principles as the leader of my home, I was also hit with the profound sense of responsibility that my wife *needed* me to lead out in this area as much as any other.



## Biblical principles summed up in three biblical words

In 1 Timothy 2:8-10, we find three words that can act as a tremendous guide to discipline the way we dress as men: *adorn*, *shamefacedness*, and *sobriety*. Paul writes:

*“I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting. 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.”*

While the clothing issues addressed in this passage are specifically directed toward women, as the spiritual leaders of our homes they certainly can be used as a guide for men as well. Men, let’s not miss an important parallel that the Apostle makes here: the women’s dress guidelines, such as shamefacedness and sobriety, are given in the context of being “in like manner” to the holy/worshipping behavior of the men. If we could just take those three words—adorn, shamefacedness and sobriety—and cause everything in our closet to pass through this filter, I wonder what effect that alone would have on our wardrobe?

The word “adorn” is an interesting one. It comes from the Greek word *kosmeo*. This is where we get our word for the cosmos or universe. It means “to put in order, arrange, make ready.” Our God is a God of order, and it is significant that He employed this word to describe how he wants His saints to dress. The other two words are pretty self-explanatory: shamefacedness and sobriety. Ask yourself ... do these three words describe your wardrobe? Do these three words guide your manner of speaking? What about your hairstyle?

## Separation

Without question, one of the most forgotten New Testament teachings in the modern American church is the doctrine of separation. You know how it goes ... when a discussion on separation comes up, most Christians today will promptly reach for their favorite misquotation of Paul’s ministry to the Greeks and Jews (i.e. Greeks to the Greeks, and Jews to the Jews)<sup>1</sup>. However, even a casual look at the passage reveals that Paul was not speaking about a proclamation of his newfound liberties, but of the renunciation of his own comforts. One honest look at this doctrine can be life changing. Paul addresses this issue numerous times to the Gentile converts of Corinthians.

Let’s take a look at another such passage in 2 Corinthians 6:11-13. In this instance, Paul begins his teaching on separation with a rebuke:

<sup>1</sup> Common misinterpretation of 1 Co. 9:19-23 (See box on the next page.)

*Ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged. Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels. Now for a recompense in the same, (I speak as unto my children,) be ye also enlarged.*

What Paul is saying here is that he has a heart full of things to say to them. But in saying these things, he wants them to know that he is not trying to *restrict* them or spoil their fun.

However, he lets them know that their real *restriction* is actually coming from their passions, not from godly disciplines. To get through this mental block, he challenges them to open their mind to hear what he has to say. Then he spells it out for them more specifically (vss. 14-16):

*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? 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.*

If that is not powerful enough, he goes on to link this teaching of separation with a wonderful promise (vss. 17-18):

*Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you. And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.*

Finally, he sums up his teaching with an accent on the *promise* and summarizes that our response to this promise should affect both the inside and the out (2 Co. 7:1):

*Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the*

**flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.**

Wow!

## The restrained strength of meekness

Perhaps the most appropriate word we could use to define the behavior of a Spirit-filled man of God would be the word “meek.” Numbers 12 tells us that “Moses was very *meek*,

above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.”<sup>2</sup> Unlike the modern rendering of the word *meek*, the ancient usage of the word, *praos*, is full of powerful meaning. Instead of painting a picture of being weak, mild, and cowed, it instead portrays a picture of *power*—power that is directed, self-controlled, and disciplined.

Gerald Heard, speaking of the ancient Greek word *praos* says:

*They used it for wild animals which had been tamed, trained; for wild horses which had been made able to work with men. There is then in this definition nothing weak or spiritless, but rather the description of energy which, instead of exploding, is now channeled and directed. The tamed are not the tame ... The trained are those whose powerful impulses have been put into understanding service.*

None of these definitions should be an exact rule or law to us; but if we would allow ourselves to be led by the spirit behind the words, they should at least serve as a guide. Perhaps we have more to go on than we originally thought when we ponder these forgotten spiritual concepts:

*Meekness, as being strength in control.*

*Adorn as representing setting things in order.*

*Shamefacedness and sobriety, as taking them at face value: i.e. shamefacedness and sobriety mean shamefacedness and sobriety.*

<sup>2</sup> Numbers 12:3

### When in Rome, do as the Romans?

This popular saying is sometimes considered biblical. It does kind of sound like Paul’s declaration in 1 Corinthians 9, where he says, “unto the Jews I became as a Jew.” But it is not a biblical saying.

Without stopping to consider the real meaning of Paul’s words, some people have erred in thinking that Christians are to imitate the culture around them, so as to win people. However, Paul is simply saying that when he walked among people who kept the Mosaic law—which Christians were not obligated to follow—he would submit himself to that law (if it did not violate the will of God). In other words, he was willing to go beyond what God required, if doing so would win a soul to God’s kingdom.

What then about the saying “When in Rome, do as the Romans”?

The story goes that when Augustine traveled to Milan, he noticed that the church there did not fast on Saturdays, as did the church at Rome. So he consulted Ambrose, the local bishop, who gave him the following advice:

*“When I am at Rome, I fast on Saturday; when I am at Milan, I do not. Follow the custom of the church where you are.”*

Following the practices of the local church is quite different than conforming to the culture of the unconverted!

Despite the fact that people now use it to justify conformity to the world, Ambrose’s advice of “When in Rome, do as the Romans” was only intended as advice to follow local congregational practices.



Considering the general concepts of being “in order, “separated” and “sober,” may I suggest a simple application that I have found useful:

- If it is unzipped—zip it.
- If it is hanging out—tuck it in.
- If it is untied—tie it.
- If it is unbuttoned—button it.
- If it is sticking up—comb it down.
- If it is hanging down—pull it up.
- If it is flashy—subdue it.
- If it is revealing something that it shouldn’t—cover it up.
- If it looks like the world, smells like the world, and sounds like the world—separate from it.

You probably get the idea. This not an exact science, but, at the very least, it is a pretty basic discipline that engages the concepts of orderliness, discipline, and separation (which, by the way, is the very definition of the word “holiness”). We know it is the heart of God that we be a special people, set apart and clearly distinguishable from the world around us—for we know God desires a *holy* people.

## Timeless teaching

Since the time of the New Testament, the Spirit of God has inspired godly men to look at the principles in God’s word and apply them to every aspect of their lives—including the way they dressed. The church has never invented some kind of universal pattern, but godly men in every age have taken the way they dressed very seriously. As the world further twists God’s pattern, and continually tries new angles for us to copy, the church must be on guard—prepared and willing to stand apart.

In the early church, Tertullian (A.D. 150-220) made an interesting remark that revealed that as things in the world were growing more and more immodest, the Christians were increasingly starting to stand out from the world around them. Apparently, the simple, modest design of the *mantle* was growing out of style; and more and more people were adapting the more immodest style of the *toga*. Because of this, Tertullian said that the mantle had, by default, “begun to be a Christian’s vesture.”<sup>3</sup>

Cyprian, writing in the later 200s, noted that when a person was truly born again, it would require a reexamination of all parts of their life—including their manner of dress. Speaking about his conversion, Cyprian said:

*I used to regard it as a difficult matter, and especially as difficult in respect of my character at that time, that a man should be capable of being born again ... When does he learn thrift, who has been used to big banquets and sumptuous eating? And he who has been glittering in gold and purple, and has been noted for his expensive clothes, when does he reduce himself to mundane and simple clothing?<sup>4</sup>*

## John Wesley

In an unusually candid sermon preached by John Wesley in 1789, insightfully entitled “Causes of Inefficacy of Christianity,” we get a rare glimpse into the heart of an older and experienced man of God. In a portion of this sermon, there is a cry that, quite frankly, gives me chills. Speaking almost as though he was a defeated minister, he humbly confesses that he fears that it was way too late to make any

3 The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. IV, p. 12

4 The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. V, pp. 275

## Ever met a meek workhorse?



The real meaning of “meekness” came alive to me when I went to buy a horse while in South America. “Es manso,” the seller told me.

That hit me a bit strange, for I knew that “manso” was the word used in the Spanish Bible for meekness. When I realized that “manso” meant “broke,” I began to better understand the real power of “meekness.”

Take, for example, the seven “mansos” workhorses in the picture at the left. The one man has even left his plow, and those big, strong horses just stand there. A picture of wimpyness? Ha! No way!

At a word or a slap of the reins, those five or six tons of muscle and bones will immediately step up and put every ounce of strength to turning sod. A slight tug on the reins will turn them left or right, or stop them dead in their tracks.

Meekness is not weakness! Meekness is to let great strength be guided by a gentle tug on the reins. -

of the changes he felt were necessary in regard to dress. In his sermon, Wesley takes a look back, and—surprisingly—states that it would have been better to have had some kind of church guideline on the matter. I think it is very important that we listen to what he said:

*I am distressed. I know not what to do. I see what I might have done once. I might have said peremptorily and expressly, "Here I am: I and my Bible. I will not, I dare not vary from this book, either in great things or small. I have no power to dispense with one jot or tittle of what is contained therein. I am determined to be a Bible Christian, not almost, but altogether. Who will meet me on this ground? Join me on this, or not at all." With regard to dress in particular, I might have been as firm (and I now see it would have been far better,) as either the people called Quakers, or the Moravian brethren; I might have said, "This is our manner of dress, which we know is both Scriptural and rational. If you join us, you are to dress as we do; but you need not join us unless you please." But, alas! the time is now past; and what I can do now, I cannot tell.*<sup>5</sup>

Later, in another sermon entitled "On Dress," based on 1 Peter 3:3-4, Wesley cries out, almost pathetically:

*Let me see, before I die, a Methodist congregation, full as plain dressed as a Quaker congregation.*<sup>6</sup>

## Charles Finney

Charles G. Finney (1792-1875), the revivalist and president of Oberlin College, boldly wrote:

<sup>5</sup> Sermons, Volume 2, Sermon 116, The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M., Cincinnati and New York, p. 439. Can be read at: <http://new.gbmg-umc.org/umhistory/wesley/sermons/116/>

<sup>6</sup> Sermon 88, The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M., Cincinnati and New York. Available to read at: <http://new.gbmg-umc.org/umhistory/wesley/sermons/88/> Or an audio version: <http://www.elcristianismoprimitivo.com/english/john-wesley-on-dress.mp3>

*Christians are bound to be singular. They are called to be a peculiar people, that is, a singular people, essentially different from the rest of mankind. To maintain that we are not to be singular is the same as to maintain that we are to be conformed to the world. "Be not singular," that is, be like the world. In other words, "Be ye conformed to the world." This is the direct opposite to the command in the*

# Free Indeed

*Krislyn Shank (age 17) Maryland*

You say you are free;  
Yet you are bound  
To pleasure,  
To hate,  
To the opinions of your peers.

I say I am bound;  
Yet I am free  
For service,  
For love,  
For submission to the will of my God.

And in this my bound liberty,  
I am far more free  
Than you are  
In your liberated bondage.

*text. But the question now regards fashion, in dress, equipage, and so on. And here I will confess that I was formerly myself in error. I believed, and I taught, that the best way for Christians to pursue was to dress so as not to be noticed, to follow the fashions and changes so as not to appear singular, and that nobody would be led to think of their being different from others in these particulars. But I have seen my error, and now wonder greatly at my former blindness. It is your duty to dress so plain as to show to the world that you place no sort of reliance in the things of fashion, and set no value at all on them, but despise and neglect them altogether. But unless you are singular, un-*

*less you separate yourselves from the fashions of the world, you show that you do value them. There is no way in which you can bear a proper testimony by your lives against the fashions of the world, but by dressing plain.*<sup>7</sup>

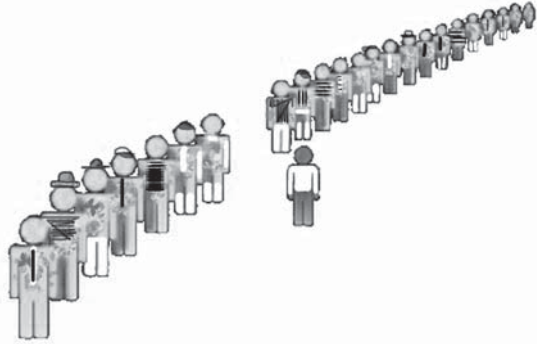
## Anabaptists

From the start of the Anabaptist movement, this doctrine has been of continual concern. Interestingly, the Roman Catholic theologian Franz Agricola, writing way back in 1582, wrote a book affectionately entitled "Against the Terrible Errors of the Anabaptists." He said:

*Among the existing heretical sects there is none which in appearance leads a more modest or pi-*

<sup>7</sup> Finney, Charles, *In Regards to Fashion*: <http://www.elcristianismoprimitivo.com/finneyondress.htm>

ous life than the Anabaptist. As concerns their outward public life they are irreproachable. No lying, deception, swearing, strife, harsh language, no intemperate eating and drinking, no outward personal display, is found among them, but humility, patience, uprightness, neatness, honesty, temperance, straightforwardness in such measure that one would suppose that they had the Holy Spirit of God.



It is your duty to dress so plain as to show to the world that you place no sort of reliance in the things of fashion, and set no value at all on them, but despise and neglect them altogether. -Charles Finney

Finally, I leave you with a defining quote from Menno Simons, where he is speaking of the hypocrisy of the Catholics and Evangelicals who claim a biblical faith, yet ignore these elementary biblical principles concerning dress:

*They say that they believe, and yet there are no limits nor bounds to their accursed wantonness, foolish pomp, show of silks, velvet, costly clothes,*

*gold rings, chains, silver belts, pins, buttons, curiously adorned shirts, handkerchiefs, collars, veils, aprons, velvet shoes, slippers and such like foolish finery; never regarding that the enlightened apostles, Peter and Paul, have in plain and express words forbidden this to all Christian women.*

After making his point about dress—mainly in reference to women—Menno concludes with a punch for the men:

*If this is forbidden to women, how much more then should men abstain from it, who are the leaders and heads of their women. Notwithstanding all this, they still want to be called the Christian Church.*

Oh, brethren, let's remember that friendship with the world is still enmity with God! If our dress, hairstyle, music, and conversation is like the world, how long can we continue in this direction and still flatter ourselves with the great, New Age deception of "At least my heart is right!"

The biblical principles we have received as followers of Christ clearly state that we are called by God to draw a distinct line between the church and the world. Your line may not be the same as my line, but there should be a line.

At the very least, we should consider what kind of testimony it is when we have our wives dressed modestly, with dresses and head coverings, and we go around sporting jeans, the latest "moussed" hair fashions, and T-shirts which thoughtlessly propagate trite worldly slogans. Brethren, let us remember to take our place of leadership even in the small things, like the way we dress. Our wives need our support, and the world needs an example. ~

But it is marvelous, while many are taking all the trouble they can to array this poor body, they have very few ornaments for their soul; they forgot to dress the soul. . . . really the children of God cannot now be told by outward appearance from the children of the devil, and they really ought to be; there should be some distinction between the one and the other . . . everything in the Bible cries out against our arraying ourselves, and making ourselves proud by reason of the goodness of our apparel.

Some will say, "I wish you would leave that alone!" Of course you do, because it applies to yourself. But we let nothing alone which we believe to be in the Scriptures; and while I would not spare any man's soul, honesty to every man's conscience and honesty to myself demands that I should always speak of that which I see to be an evil breaking out in the Church. We should always take care that in everything we keep as near as possible to the written Word.

If some people had a little more piety, they would not require such a showy dress; if they had a little more godliness to set them off, they would have no need whatever to be always decorating themselves. The best earrings that a woman can wear are the earrings of hearing the Word with attention. . . . the very best dress we can ever wear is a garment made by the Holy Spirit: the garment of a consistent conduct . . . . It would be a good thing, perhaps, if we went back to Wesley's rule, to come out from the world in our apparel, and to dress as plainly and neatly as the Quakers . . . .

If you want ornaments, here they are: jewels, rings, dresses, and all kinds of ornament. Men and women, you may dress yourselves up till you shine like angels. How can you do it? By dressing yourselves up in benevolence, in love to the saints, in honesty and integrity, in uprightness, in godliness, in brotherly-kindness, in charity. These are the ornaments which angels themselves admire, and which even the world will admire; for men must give admiration to the man or the woman who is arrayed in the jewels of a holy life and godly conversation. I beseech you, brethren, "adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things." —Charles Spurgeon, Sermon Collection, vol. 1, pp. 516, 517.