

# Dress and Ornaments in Christian History

Endtime Issues No. 60

31 December 2000

Samuele Bacchiocchi, Ph. D.  
Retired Professor of Theology, Andrews University

## Dear Members of the Endtime Issues Newsletter:

This first newsletter of 2001 comes to you at the beginning of the New Year which marks also the start of the seventh Millennium of human history. This unique coincidence affords us the opportunity of wishing not only a BLESSED NEW YEAR but also a BLESSED NEW MILLENNIUM. The problem in wishing a BLESSED NEW MILLENNIUM, is that none of us can hope to live long enough to see what the next thousand years will bring to the human family and our planet.

## The Seventh Millennium: A Sabbath for the Earth

From a biblical perspective, this new seventh millennium is most likely the time of termination of the present human history and the inauguration of a new order. It will be the time when Christ will come to bring to an end the present human history and to establish a New Earth where peace, prosperity, and righteousness will prevail. This is the essence of the BLESSED HOPE that gives us reason for living, loving, and serving the Lord.

As SEVENTH-day Adventists we are reminded that SEVEN in the Bible stands for completion, rest, and renewal. It was on the seventh-day that God completed His creation and took time to celebrate His creative accomplishments (Gen 2:2-3). It was also on the seventh year, known as the Sabbatical year, (Lev 25:8), and on the Jubilee year every "seven sabbaths of years" (Lev 25:8), that the Sabbath truly became the liberator of the oppressed in Hebrew society. The land was to lie fallow to provide free produce for the dispossessed and animals. The slaves were emancipated and the debts owed by fellow citizens were remitted. At these annual institutions, the Sabbath became the liberator and restorer of the Hebrew society.

As symbol and means of rest, renewal, and restoration, the weekly and annual Sabbaths served to announce in the OT the future rest and redemption to be brought about by the Messiah. The Sabbatical typologies of Messianic redemption are examined at considerable length in chapter 5 of *DIVINE REST FOR HUMAN RESTLESSNESS* and in chapter 4 of *THE SABBATH UNDER CROSSFIRE*.

The fact that the weekly and annual Sabbaths mark in Scripture the completion of creation and redemption, suggests the possibility that the SEVENTH millennium may be also linked to the Sabbatical structure of time by ushering in the final re-creation and restoration of the earth. This is not a new idea. Beginning with Barnabas in the early part of the second century, throughout the centuries Christian thinkers have interpreted the seven-days creation week as a cosmic week that represents six thousand years of human history to be followed by the seventh millennium of rest and peace for the earth. This cosmic Sabbath is the consummation of creation and redemption for this earth to be ushered in by the Return of Christ. This view is indirectly supported by Ellen white's frequent references to the six thousand years of human history.

These reflections are not designed to encourage sensational speculations about the time of Christ's coming, but simply to alert us to the fact that we have entered into the seventh millennium of human history—the cosmic Sabbath when God will bring to consummation His creative and redemptive purposes for this earth. As God “finished” His creation on the seventh day, we have reasons to believe that He will most likely complete His redemption on the seventh millennium. This gives us reason to affirm, as Paul puts it, “salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed” (Rom 13:11).

## **NOTES OF APPRECIATIONS FOR PREVIOUS NEWSLETTER**

It has been a gratifying experience for me to read the many email messages you have sent me from different parts of the world, expressing appreciation for the last newsletter on “the Date and Meaning of Christmas.” Your “thank you notes” are a source of encouragement to me. They motivate me to continue and intensify this ministry of Biblical research designed to deepen our understanding and experience of Biblical truths.

Many of you were impressed by the fact that chronologically and typologically the date of Christ’s birth most likely coincided with the Feast of Tabernacles that falls late in September or early in October. Being the feast of thanksgiving for God’s willingness to protect His people with the tabernacle of His presence during the wilderness sojourning, it could serve fittingly to celebrate Christ’s willingness to become a human being and pitch His tent among us in order to become our Savior.

The time of the Feast of Tabernacles provides Christians today with a more accurate Biblical timing and typology for celebrating Christ’s birth, than the pagan dating of December 25th. The latter date not only is removed from the actual time of Christ’s birth, but is also derived from the pagan celebration of the birth of the Sun-god.

The lack of biblical information about the date of Christ’s birth, should encourage us instead to focus the three major themes connected with this event:: (1) adoration and worship (Luke 2:8-12); (2) the giving of gifts to God (Matt 2:1-11); and proclamation of peace and goodwill (Luke 2:13-14).

## **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: Witchita Three Angels SDA Church**

**Location: 4558 North Hydraulic, Witchita, 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.

## **DRESS AND ORNAMENT IN CHRISTIAN HISTORY**

**Samuele Bacchiocchi, Ph. D., Retired Professor of Church History and Theology,  
Andrews University**

The study of Christian dress and adornment in Scripture and history has proven to be one the most difficult subject I have ever addressed in my research and lecturing. The reason is not merely because of the scarcity of scholarly studies dealing with this subject, but also primarily because of the sensitive nature of the subject. Dress and ornaments are not merely external coverings; they touch the inner self. They touch what some people treasure most, namely, their pride and vanity.

Most people want the world to admire their outward appearance, not to criticize it. If you express your disapproval to some friends or church members for the suggestive clothes or glittering jewelry they wear, chances are that they will tell you, “What I wear is none of your business! If you don’t like it, don’t look at me!”

### **Lack of Biblical Research on Dress and Adornments**

Such emotional outbursts can hardly encourage researching, writing, or lecturing on this sensitive subject. This may explain why sermons and books on Christian dress and ornaments are rare. My search in national libraries for books dealing with dress and adornment from a Biblical perspectives found only half a dozen of titles. Most of them deal with the history of dress within communities like the Mennonites.

In depth Biblical studies on dress and ornaments are very rare, most likely because of the prevailing perception that clothing and ornaments are not a salvation issue. In fact one of the charges against my book on ***Christian Dress and Adornment*** is that the book majors on minors. Some have said: “There is more to salvation than dress and ornaments.”

There is no question that we are not saved by what we wear, but, as we shall see in the next newsletter (no. 61), dress and appearance are an important index of Christian character. Clothes and appearance are most powerful nonverbal communicators not only of our socioeconomic status, but also of our moral values. We are what we wear. This means that the outward appearance is an important index of Christian character. It serves as a frame to reveal the picture of Christ whom we serve. The Bible recognizes the importance of dress and ornaments as indicated by the numerous stories, allegories, and admonitions regarding appropriate and inappropriate adorning. Our next newsletter will examine the biblical material on dress and adorning.

### **Personal Reasons for Writing on this Subject**

In view of the sensitive and controversial nature of the subject of dress and ornaments, you may be wondering why I dared to write a book on this subject at all! Let me assure you that it is not because I have a “martyr complex.” I have learned from experience that writing on a controversial subject can be costly, both emotionally and financially. One can become embroiled in endless controversies, lose the friendship of fellow believers, and suffer economic losses. I could write a book about what our family suffered after the publication of my book *Women in the Church*—a book that has been adopted as text book by numerous theological seminaries. You would not believe the kind

of threats and recriminations our family experienced after the book came off the press. But publicizing the failings of fellow-believers would only serve the cause of the Evil One.

My criterion for writing a book has never been the popularity or unpopularity of the subject, but rather my awareness of a deeply felt need. The need to investigate the Biblical teachings regarding dress and ornaments has been brought home to me many times by what I have seen and heard in scores of schools and congregations where I have ministered across North America and overseas. It is becoming a common sight to see some students in classes and members in church wearing suggestive clothes, excessive cosmetics and glittering jewelry.

Personally I feel that we cannot blame our young and older members for wearing what is wrong if we as leaders do not help them to see the Biblical reasons for wearing what is right. There are many sincere members who are sincerely doing what is wrong. They do not see anything wrong, for example, in wearing the kind of revealing clothes or jewelry that are fashionable and popular. Their reasoning is, "Everybody wears them! There is more to Christianity than jewelry and clothes. We should not let minor things obscure the more important matters of the Christian faith."

My responsibility as a spiritual leader is to help these sincere people, not by condemning them, but by helping understand more fully how to follow the simplicity of Jesus' lifestyle, even in our clothing and appearance. During the past 36 years of teaching and preaching, countless times I have seen radical changes in the lifestyle of people who became convinced by Scripture and convicted by the Holy Spirit that certain habits or actions were wrong.

There are many sincere Christians who want to know how to live according to the principles that God has revealed in the Bible. They appreciate when someone takes time to show them from the Bible and from personal example how to live the Christian life. This is what has motivated me to research and write ***Christian Dress and Adornment***. The book has been favorably reviewed by scholars and church leaders. Most of the Conferences in North America have donated this book to their pastors and teachers. It was the first book to sell out at the General conference session in Toronto. If you do not own a copy, you can request a copy by calling us at (616) 471-2915. An order form is also provided at the end of this newsletter.

My plan is to share with you the highlights of this research in two installments. This newsletter briefly surveys the role that dress and ornaments have played in various periods of Church History. The next newsletter (No. 61) formulates seven basic statements of principle on dress and ornaments which summarize the highlights of this Biblical research. (For your comfort, the next newsletter will be much shorter).

The historical survey presented in this newsletter shows that Christians have not been immune from the extravagant fashions of their time, yet in every age there have been Christians who have adorned themselves modestly, soberly, and decently as befits Christian godliness. An important historical lesson that will emerge is that the spiritual revival or decline of the church is often reflected in the dress reform or dress extravagance of its members. The history of dress and ornaments in many ways illustrates the human struggle between pride, lust and greed on the one hand and humility, modesty, and generosity on the other hand.

If you do not have the time to read the whole essay which is rather lengthy, you may wish to skip the first part and go to the final section dealing with dress reform and the wedding ring in the Adventist church. You may not wish to miss this section.

## **DRESS AND ORNAMENTS IN THE EARLY CHURCH**

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

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

"Diamonds, emeralds, topazes, opals and sardonyx were favorite stones. . . . Pearls were loved most of all. Julius Caesar bought for Servilia a pearl which cost him £21,250 [about \$80,000]. Earrings were made of pearls, and Seneca spoke of women with two or three fortunes in their ears. Slippers were encrusted with them; Nero even had a room whose walls were covered with them. Pliny saw Lollia Paulina, wife of Caligula, wearing a dress so covered with pearls and emeralds that it had cost £450,000 [about \$1,600,000]."<sup>3</sup>

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

### **Christians: Similar and Yet Different**

It was in this world of luxury and moral decadence that the earliest Christians were called to live and share their faith. They were called to show the purity and simplicity of their Christian faith by being similar and yet different from the rest of the society. They were similar because they dressed, spoke, and lived like ordinary people. Yet they were different because they dressed with modesty and simplicity.

Tertullian (160-225), an influential church leader who is known as the father of Latin Christianity, responded to the charge that Christians were antisocial (misanthropic): "We sojourn with you in this world, abjuring neither forum, nor shambles, nor bath, nor booth,

nor workshop, nor inn, nor weekly market, nor any other place of commerce. We sail with you, and fight with you, and till the ground with you; and in like manner we unite with you in your traffickings—even in the various arts we make public property of our works for your benefit.”<sup>5</sup>

Yet, as Tertullian himself explained at great length in his numerous moral treatises, Christians were different because of their allegiance to Christ. They were called to live in this world without becoming part of its immoral practices. This meant, for example, that Christians practiced a dress code of modesty and simplicity, as enjoined by Peter and Paul. The two apostles urged Christians not to conform to the worldly fashions of their day by embellishing themselves “with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly attire,” but to show their separation from the world by adorning “themselves modestly and sensibly in seemly apparel . . . as befits women who profess religion” (1 Tim 2:9-10; cf. 1 Pet 3:1-6).

### **Exhortations to Modesty**

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

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

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

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

Similar exhortations are found in the writings of Cyprian (died 258), who served as church leader in Carthage, North Africa. In his small treatise *On the Dress of Virgins*, he urged women to be modest and becoming in their appearance. He maintained that an

immodest woman cannot rightfully claim to belong to Christ. "Having put on silk and purple, they cannot put on Christ; adorned with gold, and pearls, and necklaces, they have lost the ornaments of the heart and spirit."<sup>11</sup>

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

These exhortations reveal that some Christians in the second and third centuries were influenced by the extravagant and immodest fashion of their time, in spite of the constant appeals of their church leaders to be modest and sober in their appearance. The same is true in our own time. Many Christians follow more closely the dictates of immodest fashion than the Biblical directives of modesty, decency and sobriety.

The conformity of some Christians to the worldly fashion of their time should not obscure the fact that most Christians had the courage to reject it, dressing instead according to the Biblical principles of modesty and decency. The pagans noticed the modest way in which Christians clothed themselves. In fact, we read in *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas* that Perpetua and other newly baptized Christian women were forced to wear pagan clothes and ornaments prior to their execution in the arena of Carthage, North Africa on March 7, 203.<sup>13</sup> Presumably by this act the pagans wanted to make a mockery of Christian modesty.

## **The Marital Ring**

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

This pattern of no marital ring in the first stage, plain marital ring in the second stage, and all kinds of ornamental rings and jewelry in the final stage, has recurred in the internal history of various denominations that grew out of the Reformation. In chapter 5 of *Christian Dress and Adornment* I have traced the recurrence of this pattern within several denominations, including the Seventh-day Adventist church. Those interested on the historical evolution of the wedding ring, will find this chapter very informative.

The reason Christians did not oppose the adoption of the marital ring is because they perceived it to be not an ornament but a symbol of marital commitment. In my view, this is a valid argument even today, because a plain wedding band is not an ornament but a symbol of marital commitment. The early Christians did not anticipate that wedding ring would eventually tempt people to follow the example of the pagans in wearing all sorts of ornamental rings and jewelry.

Church leaders were not immuned from the attraction of rings and ornaments. Bishops and popes came to love their rings so much that they wanted to be buried with them. This explains why splendid collection of Episcopal rings have been found in papal sarcophagi (coffins) and have come down to us.

It is obvious that when church leaders became enamored with gold rings, jewels, and costly vestments, they could no longer in good conscience admonish the people to be modest in their outward adornment. This explains why during the Middle Ages the admonitions to modesty in dress and ornaments are most often given to the clergy rather than to the laity.

## **DRESS AND ORNAMENTS IN THE FOURTH CENTURY**

The fourth century opened a new chapter in the history of Christianity. The Edict of Milan, issued in 313 by the newly “converted” emperor Constantine, brought to an end the age of persecution and inaugurated instead the age of imperial protection and financial prosperity for the church. Suddenly millions of pagans clamored to enter the church while still clinging to their pagan lifestyle.

**The Pagan Influence.** One can sense the enormity of the problems by reading the sermons of church leaders of the time. For examples, John Chrysostom, known as the greatest expository preacher of the early church, delivered a series of sermons between 386 and 403 in the nominally Christian cities of Antioch and Constantinople. In his sermons Chrysostom frequently appealed to men and women to dress modestly and soberly, avoiding costly clothes and ornaments.<sup>14</sup>

In a sermon on 1 Timothy 2:9-10, Chrysostom went into considerable detail to expose the use of gold, pearls, costly attire, paint, coloring of the eyes, and elaborate hair styles to beautify the body. Then he exclaimed, “Why dost thou not wear the ornament that is pleasing to Him: modesty, chastity, orderliness, and sober apparel? This is meretricious and disgraceful. We can no longer distinguish between harlots and virgins, to such indecency have they advanced.”<sup>15</sup>

Chrysostom stands out for his courage to denounce the pomp and the extravagance of the rich and powerful, including the empress Eudoxia, renowned for her outrageous public display of ornaments and costly dresses. Unable to silence his denunciations through special grants to his church, Eudoxia resorted to ridiculous charges to have Chrysostom condemned and banished into exile in 403. The story of Chrysostom reminds us that it can be costly for any preacher or writer to denounce extravagant dress and ornaments, because such preaching or writing wounds what some people treasure most, namely, their vanity and pride.

The few testimonies cited from the first four centuries reveal a consistent concern on the part of church leaders to encourage Christians to resist the pressure of conformity to the immodest fashion of their time. It was not easy in the pagan society of early Christianity to uphold the Christian standard of modesty and decency in dress and ornaments. And it is not easy to uphold such a standard today in our hedonistic society where modesty is out and exposure is in. The Good News of the Gospel is that we can do it through Christ who strengthens us (Phil 4:13).

## **DRESS AND ORNAMENTS FROM THE FIFTH TO THE TENTH CENTURIES**

With the occupation of Western Europe by Germanic tribes, the Roman culture was submerged or destroyed. The period from the fifth to the tenth century is almost a total vacuum as far as the knowledge of Christian dress and ornaments is concerned. Two significant developments stand out in this period. First, the dress of the clergy became different from that of the laity. Second, extravagance in dress and ornaments became the problem of the clergy and nobles, rather than of ordinary Christians. The latter were generally too poor to indulge in costly clothes and ornaments.

**Clerical Dress.** During the first five Christian centuries the dress of the clergy was not different from that of the laity. An important reason is the democratic nature of early Christianity in which there was no class distinction between clergy and laity. But in the sixth century the civil dress of the clergy automatically became different from that of the laity. The reason is that while the people adopted the short tunic, trousers, and cloak of the Teutonic invaders, the clergy retained the long tunic and toga (or pallium) of the Romans.

The evolution of priestly vestments reflects the development of the sacramental power of the priest at the altar. The teaching that the priest at the altar transforms the elements of the Lord's Supper into the actual body and blood of Christ gives to the priest supernatural powers and prestige. By putting on the liturgical vestments for the celebration of the mass, the priest is able to impress the congregation with his alleged divine power. "With the vestment the priest puts on a 'character' of divinity. By the change of vestment he multiplies the divine force while showing its different aspects."<sup>16</sup> In essence, then, liturgical vestments exalt the superiority of the priest in the eyes of the congregation.

**Clerical Extravagance.** The use of liturgical vestments to enable priests to project an aura of divinity may well have contributed also to their extravagant use of expensive ornaments and clothes. If the priest is clothed with costly vestments adorned with gold and jewels at the altar, why shouldn't he display such luxury on the street as well? This new trend helps us understand why from the sixth century onward the admonitions to modesty in dress and ornaments are most often given to the clergy rather than to the laity. In other words, while during the first five centuries the clergy admonished the laity to dress modestly, beginning from the sixth century it is the clergy that is often admonished to be modest in their attire.

To gain an idea of the extravagance in clerical clothes, one only needs to look at some illuminated manuscripts of the Middle Ages where clerics are arrayed in garments covered with gold, jewels, and costly furs. In his book *Historic Dress of the Clergy*, Geo Tyack wrote: "The number and magnificence of the copes [ecclesiastical vestments] which accumulated in the Cathedrals and great Abbey Churches of England in the Middle Ages is almost incredible. At Canterbury, in 1315, there were more than sixty copes in regular use; and Exeter, in 1327, had seventy-four. Several of these were of cloth of gold. . . . Conrad, Abbot of Canterbury, gave to that Cathedral, in 1108, a magnificent cope, embroidered with gold, and having a fringe of one hundred and forty silver bells."<sup>17</sup>

What was true of England was also true of the rest of Western Europe. A visit to the museum *Tesori Vaticani*—Vatican Treasures— can be an eye-opening experience for anyone who has never seen such a priceless collection of gold-embroidered priestly garments covered with jewels. While the common people lived in poverty and wore

coarse and uncouth clothes, the clergy lived like princes, indulging in luxurious clothes and jewelry. If the clothes we wear are an index of our character, then the luxurious and extravagant clothes and ornaments of the medieval clergy give us a good indication of their spiritual apostasy. In the course of this historical survey, we will have occasion to see other instances where the spiritual revival or decline of the church is reflected in the dress reform or extravagance of its members.

## **DRESS AND ORNAMENTS FROM THE ELEVENTH TO THE FIFTEENTH CENTURIES**

The economic and social situation began to change in the eleventh century with the Crusades, which failed to recapture the Holy Land from the Moslems, but succeeded in breaking down the feudal system at home and opening up the trade routes abroad. The result was the emergence of a new social class made up of merchants and craftsmen who soon became wealthy. Until then there were two social classes, the rich made up of nobles and clergy, and the poor made up of everybody else. The new class of “merchant princes” were eager to prove their nobility through their wealth, since they could not do it through their blood lines. They adopted the luxurious lifestyle of the nobles, which included extravagance in clothing and jewelry.

**New Middle Class Extravagance.** In his book *Italy in the Thirteenth Century*, Charles Sedwick described this extravagance in clothing: “Fashionable women wore fine linen, silks, and brocades, trinkets of silver and gold, jewelry of all sorts, trimmings and gewgaws. Their gowns were cut low in the neck, to the scandal of the austere; they wore false hair and painted and powdered to a most reprehensible degree; they laced and they fasted in order to make their figures fashionably slim.”<sup>18</sup> With minor changes this could be an accurate description of the fashionable women of today.

The extravagance became so universal and the railing of the church against inordinate display so vociferous, that certain laws, called Sumptuary Laws, were passed to curb the ostentatious display of the newly rich class.<sup>19</sup> These laws regulated personal appearance by dictating the kind of garments and ornaments people could wear. Penalties were enforced by state or church bodies. The church exercised powerful control in the matter of extravagance, because it was intricately involved with the affairs of state as well as the daily lives of the people.

The paradox of the Roman Catholic Sumptuary Laws is that they were promoted by church leaders who were themselves very sumptuous and extravagant in dress and ornaments. The primary concern of the church was not to uphold the Biblical principle of modesty in dress, but rather to maintain class distinctions.<sup>20</sup> The church’s support for a class hierarchy with a ruling class, has resulted in frequent conflicts between revolutionaries and the church.

## **DRESS AND ORNAMENTS FROM THE REFORMATION TO OUR TIMES**

The Reformation brought about radical reforms not only in the theological understanding of salvation, but also in the practical lifestyle of people. The Reformers denounced the sumptuousness of the Roman Catholic Church and sensitized the conscience of the people regarding the Biblical principles of modesty and simplicity. They believed that extravagant dress and ornaments lead to the sins of pride and sensuality, while modesty reveals humility and purity.<sup>21</sup>

Calvin wrote: "Dress should be regulated by modesty and sobriety; for luxury and immoderate expense arise from a desire to make a display either for the sake of pride or of departure from chastity."<sup>22</sup> Calvin believed that the solution to the problem of immodesty in dress lies not in promulgating legislation but in developing a humble disposition, because "where ambition reigns within, there will be no modesty in outward dress."<sup>23</sup>

Calvin's teachings undoubtedly influenced the Sumptuary Laws that were promulgated in various Swiss cities. In his book *Costume and Conduct in the Laws of Basel, Bern, and Zurich*, John M. Vincent offered an informative survey of such laws. For example, an ordinance of Basel in 1637 detailed in nearly twenty pages the type of dress and ornaments that were permitted or forbidden.

"Women of all classes are to avoid gold and half-gold embroidery, passementerie trimming, cords, lace, embroidery, gold, silver, pearls, or precious stones anywhere on their clothing, waistcoats, trimming, girdles, shoes, slippers, rosettes (on headdress), garters, ribbons, and so on. . . . In these troublous times men and women are to avoid chains of pearls, or wear openly gold chains, necklaces, or bracelets. Garments ornamented with pearls, such as ruffs, shirts, handkerchiefs, napkins, headdresses, pendant buttons, neckcloths, are not to be worn."<sup>24</sup>

Ordinances such as this were common throughout most of Europe. To understand how people could accept the interference of the church and the government into their own private lives, we must remember that both the church and the government were viewed and accepted as paternal institutions working together for the welfare of the people. Whatever we may think of the right of the church and the government to legislate the private life of people, the fact remains that these laws reveal a respect for the Biblical principles of modesty in dress and a concern to help people live in accordance with them.

**The Anabaptists and Modest Apparel.** The reformatory movement started by Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli was taken a step further by the Anabaptists, who are the forerunners of the Mennonites, Baptists, Hutterites, Brethren, and Amish. Their aim was to recapture the simple lifestyle of apostolic Christianity. They believed that it was not enough to reform the church theologically by cleansing it from all the heresies contradicted by the Scriptures. It was necessary also to reform the church practically by putting into practice the neglected commands of the New Testament. Among these they found the command to dress in modest apparel and to avoid ostentatious ornamentation.

Menno Simons, the greatest sixteenth-century Dutch leader of the Anabaptists, wrote repeatedly on the necessity of practicing simplicity in life, especially in dress and ornaments. In describing those Christians who did not take the ideal of New Testament simplicity seriously, he wrote: "They say that they believe, and yet, alas, there are no limits nor bounds to their accursed haughtiness, foolish pride and pomp; they parade in silks, velvet, costly clothes, gold rings, chains, silver belts, pins and buttons, curiously adorned shirts, shawls, collars, veils, aprons, velvet shoes, slippers, and such like foolish finery."<sup>25</sup>

These comments must be understood not only in relationship to the Biblical principle of modesty, but also in the context of the extravagant dress and ornaments of the richer classes. This was the age of the Renaissance, characterized by extravagant

lifestyle, especially in dress and ornaments. The Anabaptists were committed to uphold the Biblical ideal of modesty and simplicity of dress. This commitment has been preserved to this very day among their main descendents, namely the Mennonites.

In his most informative study, *Mennonite Attire Through Four Centuries*, Melvin Gingerich showed how faithfulness to the Biblical teaching and Christian tradition of modesty and simplicity of dress, has enabled the Mennonites to retain their sense of identity and mission. He closed his book by noting that the “concepts of simplicity are still present among the Mennonites of Europe and America. . . . If Mennonites remain true to their heritage they will continue to stress the principle that all of life, including its expression in the kind of clothing worn, must be brought under the scrutiny of New Testament standards relating to humility, stewardship, modesty, and simplicity.”<sup>26</sup>

**A Lesson from the Mennonites.** For the sake of accuracy, we must note that the pressure of cultural conformity has been felt even among the Mennonites. John C. Wenger, a respected Mennonite historian, observed that not all the groups of Mennonites have been able to maintain a nonconformist attitude toward worldly fashions and practices. Both in Europe and in America, there are groups of Mennonites called “Progressive,” who have gradually lost the sense of nonconformity to the world.

According to Wenger within such groups “much of the internal vigor” has disappeared as a result of the process of cultural conformity, especially in the areas of dress and jewelry. “They have allowed the process of cultural accommodation to go on with little or no resistance, sincerely believing that Christianity does not consist in outward forms, but they have often tended to underestimate the power of the forces in contemporary society to mold the members of the brotherhood into the same types of character, belief, and practice, as are current in America in general. *This has resulted in a loss of sense of unique mission as well as the partial surrender of basic Mennonite doctrines.* . . . They tend to become more like American Protestants than the Mennonites have historically been.”<sup>27</sup>

The loss of identity and mission that “Progressive” Mennonites are experiencing as a result of their relaxation of Christian standards, especially in the area of dress and adornment, constitutes a warning for any church experiencing “cultural accommodation.” To put it simply, what has happened to the “Progressive” Mennonites could also happen to “Progressive” Adventists or any other religious group. The survival of our identity and mission is largely dependent upon the way we live our distinctive beliefs. This is because what we practice has a way of reinforcing what we believe. When individuals or churches become permissive in the use of jewelry and immodest dress, they also tend to relativize the validity and relevance of the Biblical principles governing these areas, and ultimately they may have very little left to affirm their identity.

**Dress and Ornaments in Colonial America.** The reformatory movement started by Luther and Calvin was taken a step further not only by the Anabaptists, but also by the Puritans and Pietists. The Puritans sought to purify the Church in England along the lines of the Calvinistic reformation in Geneva. Their “purification program” was similar to that of the Anabaptists in the sense they opposed popish aspects of worship such as pompous vestments, crosses, and statues, and they promoted preaching and sober lifestyle, avoiding luxury and outward ornaments. Some of them migrated to America, hoping to be able to follow more closely the practices of the New Testament, without undue interference from the English government. From the Puritan tradition arose great

preachers like Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield, who played a leading role in the Great Awakening.

Pietism grew out of the Lutheran tradition in Germany as a reaction to the lifeless Lutheran dogmatism. The concern of the movement was to bring new life into Lutheranism by leading Christians into an experience of salvation through personal devotion, Bible study, prayer, and simple lifestyle. Pietism made a tremendous spiritual impact in Europe as thousands of Christians joined together in small devotional circles of Bible study and prayer. On May 24, 1738, John Wesley attended one of these cottage meetings on Aldersgate Street, where his “heart was strangely warmed,” and his life was radically changed.

Many Pietists, like the Puritans, came to America and settled in the New England colonies. They brought with them their religious convictions, which included modesty and simplicity of dress. Leigh Eric Schmidt surveyed the roles that clothes played in the social and religious life of colonial America: “Clothes in early America helped order religion and society: they contributed to the notion of authority, hierarchy, community, and gender. At the same time, dress evoked significant spiritual and theological meanings within the religious culture of early America. Images of the Sabbath, of ritual, of sin, of good works, of purity, of eschatology, of redemption—all were made vivid through the medium of dress.”<sup>28</sup>

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

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

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

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

Wesley’s second reason is that “costly apparel tends to breed and to increase **vanity**. By vanity I here mean the love and desire of being admired and praised. . . . The more you indulge this foolish desire, the more it grows upon you. You have vanity enough

by nature, but by thus indulging it you increase it a hundredfold. O stop! Aim at pleasing God alone, and all these ornaments will drop off."<sup>31</sup>

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

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

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

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

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

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

For example, the 1856 edition of *The Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church* has the following section on dress: "Question: Should we insist on the rules concerning dress? Answer: By all means. This is no time to encourage superfluity in

dress. Therefore, let all our people be exhorted to conform the spirit of the apostolic precept, 'not to adorn themselves with gold, and pearls, and costly array' (1 Tim 2:9)."<sup>37</sup> The same statement is repeated and expanded in the 1880 edition of *The Discipline of the Wesleyan Methodist Connection of America*. The additional sentence reads: "Therefore let none be received into the Church until they have left off the wearing of gold and superfluous ornaments."<sup>38</sup>

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

**Dress Reform in the Adventist Church.** Interest in dress reform in the Seventh-day Adventist Church developed out of two major concerns: the first, spiritual commitment to Christ, and the second, physical health. Ellen White, one of the leading founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, repeatedly emphasized in her writings this dual function of dress. "In dress, as in all things else, it is our privilege to honor our Creator. He desires our clothing to be not only neat and healthful, but appropriate and becoming."<sup>40</sup>

Ellen White grew up as a strict Methodist, believing that the outward appearance is an index of the inward spiritual condition. As she put it, "The dress and its arrangement upon the person is generally found to be the index of the man or the woman. We judge of a person's character by the style of dress worn."<sup>41</sup> When she first denounced the use of the hoop skirt in the early 1860s, her reason was that God wants us to be a "peculiar" people.<sup>42</sup> It was after her 1863 vision on health that she began associating the subject of dress with health.

The need for dress reform was self-evident. Fashionable women wore layers of long skirts and petticoats, weighing as much as fifteen pounds. The long skirts dragged in the dust and filth of the street, collecting germs of which people were happily ignorant. Vise-like corsets tortured the midriffs into an exaggeratedly small waist, causing frequent faintings and internal damage. To add insult to injury, in the mid-1850s the steel-wired hoop skirt staged a revival, making American women even more uncomfortable and immobile. A woman in hoops needed four to five feet of standing space, and when sitting in a railroad car or public place, the hoop often caused indecent exposure. In spite of its impracticality and health hazards, the hoop was viewed as so highly feminine that reform was most difficult.

As early as 1861 Ellen White wrote that hoops were "one of the abominations of the land that God would have us utterly discard."<sup>43</sup> In 1865, with the help of some sisters in Battle Creek, Ellen White designed a style of dress which was intended to retain its femininity while at the same time freeing the hips and waist from the dragging skirts. It consisted of slender trousers neatly tapering at the ankle, to provide warmth for the legs. Over the trousers was a skirt reaching about the boot top, and a blouse. The skirt hung

by straps from the shoulders, or buttoned to a waist, thus eliminating hoops, corsets, and constricting bands.

Ellen White recommended this attire, but did not insist upon it. It was never intended to be a uniform, but a sample of a modest and comfortable dress. Many Adventists adopted it, but others opposed it, because they were too attached to the current styles. There was constant quibbling over the exact length of the dress. After four or five years Ellen White recognized that dress reform had become divisive and was detracting from more important causes. She dropped the idea of promoting any particular style, urging instead that Adventist women “adopt a simple, unadorned dress, of modest length, . . . free from needless trimmings, free from the looped-up, tied back over skirts.”<sup>44</sup>

Ellen White’s counsels on dress are typical of her balance and ultimate concern to do all things to the honor of God. She appealed to Adventist women saying, “Let our sisters dress plainly, as many do, having the dress of good, durable material, appropriate for this age, and let not the dress question fill the mind. Our sisters should dress with simplicity. They should clothe themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety. Give to the world a living illustration of the inward adorning of the grace of God.”<sup>45</sup>

## **A Look at the Wedding Ring**

The wedding ring has been a sensitive issue in the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It is important to remember that Ellen White and other Adventist leaders came out of the Methodist Church and other churches which had a firm stand against wearing jewelry, including rings. As these churches relaxed their stand in the latter half of the nineteenth century, Adventists felt the pressure to follow the trend.

Ellen White’s position on the wedding ring must be understood in the context of her concern for responsible stewardship. It should be noted that, contrary to what many Adventists think, the wedding ring was not a burning issue in Ellen White’s mind. This is shown by the fact that in all her writing of about 100,000 pages, we find only one single explicit statement about the wedding ring.

**The Wedding Ring Statement.** This important statement first appeared in a letter she wrote in 1892 from Melbourne, Australia, addressed to “My Dear Brethren and Sisters.” The statement was later published in 1923 in the compilation entitled *Special Testimonies to Ministers and Workers*, under the chapter “Economy to be Practiced in All Things.”<sup>46</sup> At that time Ellen White was in Australia guiding the beginning of the Adventist work on that vast continent. The members were few, 376 to be specific,<sup>71</sup> but the needs were many. The church was in financial distress as the building program was getting started with the construction of a publishing house.

The financial situation was so tight that every penny was needed to alleviate the situation. She lamented the fact that in spite of the financial crunch, some members were spending their money for extravagant furniture, food, and clothes, instead of placing it in the church’s treasury. American missionaries who struggled to live on a meager salary were also carried away and buying expensive wedding rings just to comply with customs.

In the context of this difficult and complicated situation Ellen White penned her statement about the wedding ring: "Some have had a burden in regard to the wearing of a marriage ring, feeling that the wives of our [American] ministers should conform to this custom. All this is unnecessary. Let the ministers' wives have the golden link which binds their 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 their influence will be secure anywhere. The fact that disregard of the custom occasions remark is no good reason for adopting it. Americans can make their position understood by plainly stating that the custom is not regarded as obligatory in our country. We need not wear the sign, for we are not untrue to our marriage vow, and the wearing of the ring would be no evidence that we were true. I feel deeply over this leavening process which seems to be going on among us, in conformity to custom and fashion. Not one penny should be spent for a circlet of gold to testify that we are married."<sup>47</sup>

This statement is clearly addressed to American missionaries serving in Australia who had not worn marital rings before, because in America it was not obligatory. Ellen White felt that there was no need for American missionaries to buy rings at a time of financial distress. It is important to note that Ellen White respected the custom of wearing the wedding ring in countries where it was regarded as imperative. Her statement continues: "*In countries where the custom is imperative, we have no burden to condemn those who have their marriage ring; let them wear it if they can do so conscientiously; but let not our missionaries feel that the wearing of the ring will increase their influence one jot or tittle. If they are Christians, it will be manifest in their Christlikeness of character, in their words, in their works, in the home, in association with others.*"<sup>48</sup>

Ellen White understood this important truth: to be successful reforms must be conducted no faster than people can understand new truths. This is why she did not object to our members wearing the wedding ring in Europe or Australia. Her philosophy is well expressed in the counsel she gave about diet reform, which is applicable to reform in dress and jewelry: "*We must go no faster than we can take those with us whose consciences and intellects are convinced of the truths we advocate. We must meet the people where they are. Some of us have been many years in arriving at our present position in health reform. It is slow work to obtain a reform in diet. We have powerful appetites to meet. . . . In reforms we would better come one step short of the mark than to go one step beyond it. And if there is error at all, let it be on the side next to the people.*"<sup>49</sup>

**Adventist Views Since 1925.** The use of the ring in wedding ceremonies became well established in most American Protestant churches during the early part of the twentieth century. Not surprisingly, some Adventists also wanted a "ring ceremony." To discourage such practice, which would have sanctioned the widespread use of the wedding ring and eventually of ornamental rings, at the 1925 Autumn Council church leaders voted an action which would later be included in the *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*: "Resolved . . . that we look with disfavor upon the ring ceremony and upon ministers officiating at marriages of believers and unbelievers or with those not of our faith."<sup>50</sup> This statement appeared in several editions of the *Church Manual* until 1951.

The disapproval of the "ring ceremony" by the *Church Manual* did not curtail the use of jewelry, especially rings. This led church leaders in North America to address the question again three years later at the 1935 Autumn Council. This time they expressed themselves more explicitly: "Our church members have from the beginning been a plain people. Our standard calls for discarding of jewelry, especially those articles mentioned in

the Scriptures and the Spirit of Prophecy, such as rings, earrings, bracelets, and necklaces; we appeal for a greater loyalty to these important and divinely given standards."<sup>51</sup>

This statement makes no specific mention of the wedding ring, apparently because at that time the problem in the church was more the wearing of jewelry in general than of the wedding ring in particular. The situation soon changed. As the wedding ring gained popularity in the American society during World War II for reasons to be mentioned below, an increasing number of Adventists in North America also began wearing the wedding band.

To discourage the growing custom of wearing marriage rings a new statement specifically mentioning the wedding ring, was introduced in the 1951 edition of the *Church Manual*. The statement is largely based on the counsel given by Ellen White in 1892 and restricts the wearing of the wedding band to those countries where such custom is imperative: "In some countries the custom of wearing the marriage ring is considered imperative, having become, in the minds of the people, a criterion of virtue, and hence it is not regarded as an ornament. Under such circumstances we have no disposition to condemn the practice."<sup>52</sup>

**Approval of Marriage Band in North America.** The restrictive policy of the 1951 *Church Manual* remained in effect in North America until 1986. In that year the North American Division Annual Council voted to lift the restriction and to allow church members in North America the possibility of wearing a plain marriage band as in other countries. The statement reads: "Voted to recognize that, in harmony with the position stated in the *Church Manual* (pp.145-146), some church members in the North American Division as in other parts of the world feel that wearing a simple marriage band is a symbol of faithfulness to the marriage vow, and to declare that such persons should be fully accepted in the fellowship and service of the church."<sup>53</sup>

The lifting of the restriction on the wearing of a plain wedding band must be regarded as a sensible decision. The reason is obvious. A plain wedding band is not an ornament, it is only a symbol of marital commitment. This is true more and more even in America. No one stops to admire a plain gold ring or compliments a person for wearing a plain wedding band that cost only few dollars.

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

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

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

**Conclusion.** This brief historical survey has shown that dress and ornaments have been an important index of the spiritual decline or revival of the church during the course of its 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.

Over a century ago Ellen White described with prophetic insight what has emerged from this brief historical survey, namely: "In every age, a majority of the professed followers of Christ have disregarded those precepts which enjoin self-denial and humility, which require modesty and simplicity of conversation, deportment, and apparel. The result has ever been the same,—departure from the teachings of the gospel leads to the adoption of the fashions, customs, and principles of the world. Vital godliness gives place to a dead formalism. The presence and power of God, withdrawn from those world-loving circles, are found with a class of humble worshipers, who are willing to obey the teachings of the Sacred Word. Through successive generations, this course has been pursued. One after another, different denominations have risen and, yielding their simplicity, have lost, in a great measure, their early power."<sup>54</sup>

Throughout the centuries the line of demarcation between the church and the world has often been blurred when Christians have conformed to the world in eating, drinking, dressing, adorning, entertainment, divorcing, and remarrying. This is particularly true today when our culture worships the beautification of the body through all the trimmings that money can buy.

Unless the line of demarcation between the world and the church is maintained, the church can easily become a Hollywood-type of mutual-admiration society in which members meet once a week to compliment one another on their latest fashionable clothes, jewelry, cars, hobbies, and vacations. But the church exists not to give the world a pat on the back, but rather to save the world.

## ENDNOTES

1. For their comments, see William Barclay, *The Letters of James and Peter* (Philadelphia, 1960), pp. 261-263.
2. Quintillian as cited William Barclay (note 1), p. 261.
3. Ibid., pp. 262-263.
4. Cited by Michael and Ariane Batterberry, *Fashion, The Mirror of History* (New York, 1982), p. 52.
5. Tertullian, *Apology* 42, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, eds., Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Grand Rapids, 1973), vol. 3, p. 49.
6. Tertullian, *On the Apparel of Women* 13, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids, 1972), vol. 4, p. 25.
7. Clement of Alexandria, *The Instructor* 2, 13, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids, 1979), vol. 2, p. 269.
8. Ibid., p. 269.
9. Ibid., p. 268.
10. Ibid., p. 268.
11. Cyprian, *On the Dress of Virgins* 12, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Alexander Roberts and J. Donaldson, eds., (Grand Rapids, 1971), vol. 5, p. 433.
12. Cyprian, *On the Dress of Virgins* 21 (note 15), p. 435.
13. *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas* 18.
14. See for example, *Works of St. Chrysostom*, Homily 89 on Matthew 27:62-64, *A Selected Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Philip Schaff, ed. (Grand Rapids, 1978), vol. 10, p. 528. Also Homily 8 on 1 Timothy 2:8-10, vol. 13, pp. 433-434.
15. Chrysostom, *Works of St. Chrysostom*, Homily 8, 1 Timothy 2:9-10, *A Selected Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Philip Schaff, ed. (Grand Rapids, 1979), vol. 13, p. 434.
16. *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, 1914 ed., s. v. "Dress."
17. Geo S. Tyack, *Historic Dress of Clergy* (London, 1897), pp. 31-32.
18. Charles Sedgwick, *Italy in the Thirteenth Century*, cited by Frank Alvah Parsons, *The Psychology of Dress* (New York, 1922), pp.25-26.
19. The three major works that provide the primary information on Sumptuary Laws are: Kent Roberts Greenfield, *Sumptuary Law in Nurnberg* (Baltimore, 1918); John Martin Vincent, *Costume and Conduct in the Laws of Basel, Bern, and Zurich, 1300-1800* (Baltimore, 1935); Baldwin, Frances E., *Sumptuary Legislation and Personal Regulation in England* (Baltimore, 1926).
20. For a discussion, see P. Binder, *Muffs and Morals* (London, 1953).
21. A. M. Tyrrell, "The Relationship of Certain Cultural Factors to Women's Costume in Boston, Massachusetts from 1720-1740," Master's thesis (Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 1975), pp. 51-59.
22. John Calvin, *The Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, trans. William Pringle (Grand Rapids, 1948), p. 66.
23. Ibid.
24. John Martin Vincent, *Costume and Conduct in the Laws of Basel, Bern, and Zurich, 1300-1800* (Baltimore, 1935 p. 56.
25. *The Complete Writings of Menno Simons* (Scottdale, PA, 1956), p. 377.
26. Melvin Gingerich, *Mennonite Attire Through Four Centuries* (Breinigsville, Pennsylvania, 1970), p. 158.
27. John Christian Wenger, "Dress," *The Mennonite Encyclopedia* (Scottdale, Pennsylvania, 1956), pp. 103-104.

28. Leigh Eric Schmidt, "A Church-going People are a Dress-loving People': Clothes, Communication, and Religious Culture in Early America," *Church History* 58 (March 1989), p. 44.
29. Albert C. Outler, ed., *The Works of John Wesley* (Nashville, 1986), vol. 3, pp. 247-261.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 251.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 252.
32. *Ibid.*
33. *Ibid.*, pp. 253-254.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 254.
35. *Ibid.*, pp. 256-257.
36. John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley, A. M.*, 14 vols. (London, 1872), vol. 1, p. 474.
37. *The Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York, 1856), p. 87.
38. *The Discipline of the Wesleyan Methodist Connection of America* (Syracuse, New York, 1880), p. 116.
39. There is no section dealing with dress on the 1944 and subsequent editions of the *Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Church*.
40. Ellen G. White, *Child Guidance* (Nashville, 1954), p. 413.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 413.
42. Ellen G. White, *My Christian Experience, Views and Labors* [*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 2] (Battle Creek, 1860), pp. 13-14.
43. Ellen White's letter to Mary Loughborough as cited by Richard Schwartz, *Light Bearers to the Remnant* (Boise, Idaho, 1979), p. 111.
44. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, California 1948), vol. 4, 640.
45. Ellen G. White, *Child Guidance* (Nashville, 1954), p. 414.
46. Eventually the statement was published in *Testimonies to Ministers* (Mountain View, California 1948), pp. 180-181.
47. *Ibid.*
48. *Ibid.*, p. 181, emphasis supplied.
49. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (note 62), vol. 3, pp. 20, 21.
50. The statement first appeared in *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* (Washington, D. C., 1932), p. 175.
51. *Actions of Autumn Council Committee from the General Conference*, Louisville, Kentucky, October 29-November 5, 1935, p. 24.
52. *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* (Washington, D. C., 1951), p. 202. This statement has appeared with no change of text on all the editions of the *Church Manual* from 1951 to 1990.
53. *1986 Year-end Meeting of the North American Division* (November 5-11, 1986), pp. 24-25.
54. Ellen G. White, *Messages to Young People* (Washington, D.C., 1930), p. 354; cited from *Review and Herald*, December 6, 1881.

## **SPECIAL OFFER ON *CHRISTIAN DRESS AND ADORNMENT***

***CHRISTIAN DRESS AND ADORNMENT*** reminds us that while clothes do not make a Christian, Christians do reveal their identity through their clothes and appearance. The Bible does not prescribe a standardized dress for Christian men and women, but it calls us to follow the simplicity and unpretentiousness of Jesus' lifestyle, even in our clothes and appearance. The Christian priority is not the external decoration of the body with costly clothes and ornaments, but the internal beautification of the soul with the love of Christ.

This book examines the Biblical teachings regarding dress, cosmetics, and ornaments. Seven basic principles regarding dress and adornment are developed from a careful analysis of the relevant Biblical passages. Two chapters address the specific questions of the wedding ring and of the unisex fashion promoted today. *Christian Dress and Adornment* is an important book designed to help Christians distinguish between the capricious mode that changes and the sensible style that remains..

### **This is the Special offer on *CHRISTIAN DRESS AND ADORNMENT***

**1 copy: \$20.00, postage paid**

**2 copies: \$30.00, postage paid. This means you receive the second copy for your witnessing outreach for only \$10.00.**

**10 copies: \$100.00, postpaid. This means that you receive 50% discount: only \$10.00 per copy.**

**30 copies (one case): \$190.00, postpaid. This means that you pay only about \$6.30 per copy when ordering by the case.**

**You can order this timely book by calling us at (616) 471-2915 or by mailing or emailing the following order form:**

**YOU CAN PRINT OUT AND MAIL THIS FORM WITH YOUR PERSONAL CHECK**

**Please mail me**

\_\_\_\_\_ copies of the book *CHRISTIAN DRESS AND ADORMENT*. I am attaching a personal check for the amount of \$\_\_\_\_\_.

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address** \_\_\_\_\_

**City** \_\_\_\_\_ **State** \_\_\_\_\_ **Zip Code** \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail your order to:**

**BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES**  
4990 Appian Way  
Berrien Springs, MI 49103

**Order Form for Email Purchase With Your Visa, Master Card, Or American Express**

**Credit Card type:** \_\_\_\_\_ (only Visa, Master Card, AMERICAN EXPRESS accepted)

**Credit Card number** \_\_\_\_\_

**Expiration date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Your name on the Card** \_\_\_\_\_

**Street address** \_\_\_\_\_

**City** \_\_\_\_\_

**State** \_\_\_\_\_ **Zip** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone number** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email address** \_\_\_\_\_

**Total amount** \_\_\_\_\_

**List the Books ordered** \_\_\_\_\_

**OUR PROMISE: We Guarantee To Process Your Order On The Same Day We Receive It.**

## **A THANK YOU NOTE**

Thank you for taking time in your busy schedule to read this lengthy newsletter. If these Bible studies enrich your understanding and experience of Biblical truths, be sure to invite your friends to subscribe to our ENDTIME ISSUES newsletter. All that they need to do is to email me a request at <[sbacchiocchi@qtm.net](mailto:sbacchiocchi@qtm.net)>, saying "Subscribe me." As a result of your promotional endeavors over 12,000 people are already benefiting from these Bible studies.

### **Contact Information**

Samuele Bacchiocchi, Ph. D.  
Retired Professor of Theology and Church History  
Andrews University  
4990 Appian Way, Berrien Springs, MI 49103

Phone (616) 471-2915 Fax (616) 471-4013  
E-mail: [sbacchiocchi@qtm.net](mailto:sbacchiocchi@qtm.net) or [sbacchiocchi@csi.com](mailto:sbacchiocchi@csi.com)  
Web site: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com>

Fashion History- Early Christian. Collection by Mikaylah Martens. 17.Â Want to dress like Arwen the Elf in Lord of the Rings? or Eowyn? this is the style of dress used in these films. This is a Beautiful Ladies 12th Century Dress, with Byzantine design details (trim down the front, rounded neckline, wide trim on hem). This long gown has lined Maunch (Angel wing/ boat / man-catcher) sleeves. Perfect for a Noble Woman's SCA Garb, for LARP, Ritual, Halloween costume, LotR, Renaissance Faire, ritual gown etc.Â Tunic with Red-Ground Ornaments Featuring Late Antique MotifsThe bright colors, bold schematic figures, and contrasting vegetal tracery of the ornamental insets give this fine woolen tunic a strong visual appeal. Belle Epoque. Middle Age Fashion. Christian Dress and Grooming. Visiting a couple of your parishes, I noticed that the women cover their heads in church. I asked Father [name deleted] when I visited him. He explained that the women cover their heads in church, donâ€™t cut their hair short and donâ€™t wear pants or tight clothes even outside church....The men he said usually have moustaches and dress with long sleeves....I do not mean to be disrespectful, but what does this have to do with Orthodoxy?Â There follow, then, a few representative Patristic and Canonical passages on the matter of modesty in Christian dress and grooming, only several from the very many others that could be cited. In his twenty-sixth Homily on I Corinthians (Patrologia Graeca, Vol. LXI, Cols. Religious dress, any attire, accoutrements, and markings used in religious rituals that may be corporate, domestic, or personal in nature. Religious dress may be used to distinguish the priestly from the lay members of a religious group and may be used at all times or only during rituals, depending on the tradition.Â Professor of Comparative Religion, Philipps University of Marburg, Germany. Author of Skilful Means: A Concept in Mahayana Buddhism and others. See Article History. Religious dress, any attire, accoutrements, and markings used in religious rituals that may be corporate, domestic, or personal in nature. Kazakh national clothes have significant history. They reflect the national experience. Throughout the centuries, Kazakh national clothes were distinguished by simplicity and rationality. Costumes were decorated with jewelry, embroidery and ornaments...Â The dress is made by folding an integral piece of fabric in half and sewing the sides laterally from the armpits to the bottom hem. âœKupeâœ. A kupe is a warm women's clothing typically made of fox fur, though it may occasionally be made from goatskin.Â Earrings, flat and wrought bracelets, rings had national ornaments as flowers and beautiful patterns. Belts - a compulsory element of both male and female clothing. It was ornamented with embroidery, silver badges were sewn on it.