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**“APRONS” AND “GARMENTS”
IMPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN DRESS STANDARDS**

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INTRODUCTION

In the Christian worldview the concept of *dress* is believed to be biblical and dates back to the Garden of Eden. *Aprons* and *garments*, two nouns used in introducing the concept in Gen 3:7, 21 are translated from two Hebrew words, *Chagwor* (Gr. *Shimikinthion*) and *Kethoneth* (Gr. *Chiton*). The verbs used in portraying the mode of wearing the *aprons* and *garments* are *kabash* and *labash*. *Kabash* (Gr. *Kalupto*) is translated *to cover* and *to conceal*. *Labash* (Gr. *Enduo*) is used regularly as *to put on, clothed, wear* and *come upon*. For the benefit of review, a brief narration of the episode containing these words is in order. Adam and Eve, the representatives of the human race at creation were seen wearing *garments* of glorified *nakedness*. While innocent, they did not experience any shame. Nevertheless, they broke God's commandments and sinned. Their radiant *garments* of innocence disappeared. Hitherto, they had worn no clothes. They felt a loss of their purity and innocence and realized they were naked. In an attempt to evade disgrace they chose *aprons* (*chagowr*) of fig-leaves, an outward covering to conceal (*kabash*) their inner consciousness of guilt. After donning their *aprons* (*chagowr*) of fig-leaves Adam confessed to God that they were *naked*. It could be inferred from God's reaction to Adam's answer that He does not condone nakedness (And he said, "Who told you that you were naked?" Gen 3:11). Besides, God associates *nakedness* with the *breaking of His commandments* ("Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?" Gen 3:11). Since nakedness is a shame in the eyes of God He rejected their self-made *aprons* (*chagowr*) which could not conceal (*kabash*) their guilt and *clothed* (*labash*) them with *garments* (*kethoneth*) of skin.

This passage shows that clothing has become necessary because of the pair falling into sin. It is a Christian belief that since the race descended from Adam, humanity inherited this guilty and corrupt nature (Rom 5:12) and are destitute of spiritual clothing. The heavenly *garment* was lost thereby leading the race to separate from God, disobey Him, oppose Him and engage in rivalry against Him. Hence humanity lost the ability to do right in their human strength (Isa 64:6). However, man's relationship to God is "God – initiated and God – sustained and not humanly initiated or humanly sustained." Therefore, God provided something much better for the race than they could do for themselves, in this instance covering of fig-leaves (Gen 3:7). This action of God was physical. It also had a spiritual dimension. He sacrificed an innocent animal and used its skin in making clothes for them. The material chosen for the "garments" implies sacrifice. Life was surrendered. Blood was shed. At Calvary, through Christ's innocent blood a perfect "garment" was provided for a world of sinners which was lost and ruined by the fall. In the sense, Gen 3:21 is a prophecy about Jesus and what he does

for the human race. The “imagery” of clothing therefore, extends beyond creation to include redemption and restoration.

PROBLEM

The Scriptures are replete with other reasons why although the race chooses to *cover* their nakedness God *clothes* them. There are principles which God intends to characterize the dress of His people to adorn and clothe their *nakedness*, both physically and spiritually. His redeeming love takes center stage. It confronts Christians with a new crisis of belief and calls upon them to make life adjustments in their dress in order to live within the confines of his love relationship. Moreover, redemption specifies the life adjustments that are to be made to join God in His witness to the world for this instance Christian dress standards and spirituality. Meanwhile, the subject of proper attire is one of the most controversial subjects among Christians today. Some take the Scriptural stand and apply the biblical principles while others have capitulated to the world with the excuse “we don’t want to make dress an issue.” An excuse such as this confirms the fact that the controversy is between God as a lawgiver and man as a lawgiver. This poses a serious problem since God is sovereign and Christians are subordinates.

PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

This paper does not attempt to answer the myriads of excuses besides the one that has been cited. Rather it will attempt to glean out principles underlying dress by examining the most relevant passages dealing with the *form* and *mode* of wearing dress by *both sexes* as embedded in the concept of *aprons and garments*. *Aprons* will be used to depict acts and attitudes of disobedience of God and *garments* as acts and attitudes of obedience to God, as regards *the form and mode of wearing* dress by men and women. The principles that characterize the dress of the Israelites, people from the Middle East, would also be discussed. Jesus said that “It is from the Jews that salvation comes because they were entrusted with the oracles of God.” (Jo 4: 22; Rom 3:2). Furthermore, the men who were inspired to write the word of God were Jews (2 Pet 1: 20, 21). Still the fact that some of them were unfaithful did not change God’s revelation, his ideals and perspectives for dress standards (Rom 3: 3). Finally, the paper will outline the implications of the principles for Christian dress standards and spirituality.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Two attitudes toward dress have characterized Christian thought. One of them holds the view that dress belongs to culture, differs according to culture, and has no significance in a Christian life. The other views dress as purely biblical and Christian. Since Christians believe that God is sovereign and His perspective is vital, it will be rewarding to seek God’s perspective on the issue

of proper attire (Pro 3:6-7). Besides, He is always willing to show His perspective in any matter that perplexes His people (Matt 7:7) through His revealed will, the Scriptures:

The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration through holy men of God who spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. In this Word, God has committed to man the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the authoritative revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God's acts in history.¹

LINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVES: *Chagwor* (Gr. *Shimikinthion*); *Kethoneth* (Gr. *Chiton*)

All the laws and precepts of Old Testament Israel regarding dress, apart from those belonging to the ceremonial, are ordained by God and are therefore binding on the Christian Church since Christianity is Jewish (Matt 5: 17). To elucidate the words employed in conveying God's thoughts is to make the words subservient to His intent. From God's point of view, principles of clothing could then be gleaned for contextualization. For the sake of limited time and space only the Hebrew words would be analyzed since the same English words were used in translating and explaining the Greek.

Chagowr (Gr. *Shimikinthion*) is translated *girdle* three times, *apron* one time, and *armor* one time and *what gird on the dress* one time in the Old Testament.² In Strong's concordance the word is defined as *girdle, belt, waist-cloth, loin-cloth, armor*.³ Loin-cloth signifies a loss of pristine innocence.⁴ In the Bible it is used to depict a spiritual condition in which a person loses control and thereby becomes a laughing stock to enemies (Ex. 32: 25). In the ancient Near East it was found mostly on captives of war who were usually scantily dressed. It was wrapped around the waist and covered the thighs. In Bible lands it was put on primarily as an undergarment over which an outer one was worn. To wear nothing except the undergarment was considered *naked*. A young man followed Jesus after Gethsemane and was said to be naked (Mk 14:51, 52). He was probably wearing an undergarment. The word *nakedness* is translated from the

¹ C. Raymond Holmes, *The Tip of and Iceberg*, (Wakefield, MI: Pointer Publications, 1994), 11.

² G. Johannes Botterweck, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* Vol. IV., (Grand Rapids, MI, 1980), 213-216.

³ James Strong, *Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary, Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*, (Grand Rapids, MI: World Publishers, 1986), 37.

⁴ Nahum N. Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary*, (Philadelphia: The Jewish Pub. Society, 1989), 26.

Hebrew word *ervaw*.⁵ It means an *indecent thing*.⁶ Male and female sexual organs are represented by this word. The first time it appeared in the OT (Gen 9: 22-23), it was used to describe a *shameful exposure*. Noah became drunk and he lay in his vineyard *naked*. His sons Shem and Japheth became so embarrassed that they had to walk backwards and cover his *nakedness* with a cloth. It is also used to present the exposure of female sex organs as a *shame*. For instance, in Lam 1:8, Jerusalem is spoken of as a woman whose nakedness is exposed. Hence the belief of moralists that our innate feelings of guilt and shame resulting from exposure of particular *parts of the body* dates back to Adam and Eve. The Nudist Theory contends against this, though. They argue that clothing is not the result of modesty but immodesty since children are not embarrassed by their nakedness until they become accustomed to wearing clothes. It must be pointed out that Adam and Eve did not become ashamed of their *nakedness* while they were sinless and *innocent* before God. They became embarrassed when they sinned and lost their *childlike innocence*. Children are characteristically *innocent*. As yet, they do not know evil experientially with all of its attendant shame, guilt and sorrow (Mar 10: 13-16).

Kethoneth (Gr. *Chiton*) on the other hand is taken from an unusual root and it means *to cover*.⁷ It is translated *coat* 23 times, *garment* 5 times and *robe* 1 time.⁸ Strong's concordance defines it as *tunic, undergarment (skirt), outer garment and a long shirt-like garment*.⁹ *Kethoneth* is the ordinary garment worn by both men and women and was formed out of a piece of cloth that was square in shape. It had openings for the neck and arms. It was worn next to the skin. It was worn suspended from either one or both shoulders and reaches down to the knees or to the ankles. *Kethoneth* is made with or without sleeves, short or long. After the invention of weaving in about 5000 B.C., pieces of cloth were sewn together to create a semi-fitted garment. Jesus' garment at the crucifixion was made from one piece of cloth since it has no seam.

Aprons are a partial covering of the waist and hips. To wear nothing except undergarments was considered *naked*. *Nakedness* connotes indecency, shameful exposure of particular parts of the body and a spiritual condition in which one loses control and becomes a laughing stock to the enemy. On the other hand *garments* are presented as a complete covering of the upper and lower parts of the body. It is the ordinary garment worn by both men and women. Jesus put on both the inner and the outer garment. Most sources on Christian Literature agree that *kethoneth* (Gr. *Chiton*) covered the body from the neck to the knees, while sometimes it extends all the way to the ankle. This style of clothing have been discovered to correspond to what human beings have worn

⁵Merrill F. Unger and William White, *Nelson's Expository Dictionary of the Old Testament*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Pub., 1980), 257.

⁶Ibid.

⁷The BROWN-DRIVER-BRIGGS HEBREW AND ENGLISH LEXICON, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1906), 528.

⁸ Ibid., 527-628.

⁹SECB: CDWHB, 58.

as far back in history as the records extend.¹⁰ In the same vein Dickson speaks of “‘common sense’ and ‘settled custom’ being agreeable to nature in respect to what is comely in dress”.¹¹ The Puritans approved of long-established custom not simply for its own sake, but because “the style of clothing passed down through the generations was generally in accordance with the rules of Scripture and the light of nature, being morally and practically acceptable”.¹² It is a proven fact that a law that has a near universal adherence is generally one that is taught by nature.¹³ This is because both nature and Scripture have the same author. To consummate this point, Paul writes “even nations which do not have a Christian heritage show that the remnants of God’s law are still found written in their hearts (Rom 2: 14, 15).

A study of the many civilizations and peoples of the world will show that women have generally worn long dresses, while most men, except on important occasions, tended to wear shorter tunics and sometimes trousers. The ancient Greeks, Romans, Britons and Vikings from Europe; the ancient Egyptians and Berbers from Africa; the Indians of the Subcontinent; the Japanese, Thais, Koreans and many of the Chinese from Asia; the Phoenicians, Ottomans, Arabs and Kurds from the Middle East; and the Pueblos, Aztecs, Incas and Plains Indians from the Americas are but a sample of those cultures which have, as a rule, attested to this statement.¹⁴

Aprons of Fig-leaves

“Then the eyes of both were opened and they discovered that they were naked; so they stitched fig-leaves together and made themselves aprons of fig-leaves (Gen 3: 7).

The Scriptures opened with Adam and Eve clothed in a garment of light. White testifies that they looked “beautiful” in their radiant garments.¹⁵ The robe of light was spiritual and symbolized a state of innocence and total dependence upon God.¹⁶ Internally, they were pure and humble having no knowledge of sin or evil. Neither did they have any inclination within them to dictate sinful actions. As someone rightfully said “evil communication corrupts good manners”. Eve came into contact with Satan who was proud, guile, self-centered and subtle. She

¹⁰Back in Shakespeare’s day, only upper-class people dressed fashionably; the mass of the rural peasantry wore simple clothing that hardly changed over many generations, since the beginning of the 20th century, however, fashions have changed rapidly” (Encarta Encyclopedia, 2004).

¹¹ “Necessity of Modest Clothing” www.CovenantofGrace.com p44

¹²www.CovenantofGrace.com Ibid.

¹³ www.CovenantofGrace.com Ibid

¹⁴ Ibid., www.CovenantofGrace.com

¹⁵ E.G., White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, (Washington, D.C., 1940), 310-311.

¹⁶ Ibid.

listened to him against God's caution and contracted his sinful nature. Having been seduced by Satan she became prone to seductive schemes and lost her purity and humility. Eve persuaded Adam. Unwilling to face the consequences of sudden separation he also ate the fruit and damned the consequences. Satan was once a good angel who had great favor with God. He was endowed with extraordinary wisdom and beauty. His beauty filled him with pride, corrupting his wisdom. He rebelled against his Maker and accused him of injustice. Lucifer contended that the demands of God's laws were unreasonable and claimed he could do better "I will make myself like the Most High" (Is14: 14). Consequently, he devised a method of guileful subtlety and began to perplex minds with doubts about God's purposes and goodness. Some other good angels were deceived and all together they rebelled against God. Having been ejected from heaven he sought a place of refuge on planet earth. He masterminded the woman and overthrew the pair. Being an avowed traitor, the devil urged them to disobey God "After eating the fruit your eyes will open and you will be like God" (Gen 3: 5). Through cunning he persuaded Eve to focus on the fruit and appealed to her carnal appetite (The woman saw). He followed it by unsettling her mind, inwardly. Her appetite was wetted (the fruit was good for food after all) and was tempted to taste it. Eve began to question God's goodness and purposes (But the fruit was pleasant to the eyes?) and was filled with lust. She took the fruit and ate, indulging her appetite (a tree to be desired to make one wise). In biblical literature these steps have been identified as a summary of Satan's method of tempting every human being throughout history (1John 2: 16). She alienated herself from the divine fellowship. The pristine innocence disappeared (Gen 1: 27). Little did she know that she had been deceived when she broke the news to Adam? The pair had sufficient discovery of their sin and folly in disobeying the command of God. They felt obliged to abstain from all known evil and to keep the moral law to the standard required by God, but was not possible in their fallen state. They became unhappy. They noticed they were *naked*. Finding themselves in *this shameful state*, they displayed a sinful bent *to conceal (kasha)* their guilt rather than confess it. Satan's mission was accomplished! He has stripped them naked. He felt he has outwitted God. He ridiculed them further by suggesting a covering of aprons of fig-leaves. *Aprons* denote *shameful exposure*. *Aprons* are loin-cloths. They did not cover all the bony and fleshy parts of the body. Two-thirds of their bodies were left uncovered. They were still naked. Again, *aprons* suggest a sinful human activity or human merit offered in the place of God's grace. *Aprons* denote absence of humility and purity. Clinging to *aprons* revealed the pair's insistence on independence of God. *Aprons* represent pride, self-centeredness and subtlety of Satan. Conclusively, the pair chose *aprons of sin and guilt* as a substitute for garments of *innocence, purity and humility*. *Aprons* mean "all men sinned and became short of the glory of God" (3: 23). *Aprons* ushered in the great controversy between God and Satan in the issue of proper attire.

Aprons: A Misrepresentation of God's Character

The sentiment of being ashamed of their nakedness and sexuality, owed its roots to Satan. He infected them with guile, seduced them and made them lose their intellectual excellence. Satan uses human feelings in place of reason to control the will.¹⁷ He reduces the five senses of taste, smell, sight and hearing into feelings before fitting them into his plan. This is the reason why he could control the race through lust in "enmity against God". In contrast, God uses reason to guide human minds to reach the highest fulfillment of the capabilities he placed in them. Before the fall, God instructed the pair in true and right knowledge. They were taught to look upon their sexuality and nakedness as dignified conditions. After the discourse with the devil they told God being naked was not right. If Adam and Eve were in control of their actions, they would have covered their whole body and not only their private parts since nakedness means exposure of any part of the body. The aprons turned out to be too narrow to wrap themselves in (Is 28: 20). It covered only their private parts. What this implied was that they had been made to think that their sex organs were sinful. If they were not covered it could lead them to temptation and sin. God did not teach them that. This sentiment was expressed after Satan's misrepresentation of God's character (Gen 3: 6, 7). The first lie "You shall not surely die" is then a package. When Adam and Eve were created they were naked but the Scriptures testify that God deemed it good (Gen 1: 31). God created the sex organs for a purpose. He designed sex for use only between a husband and wife together in a loving relationship, unshared with others (Heb 13: 4). The very privacy of the marriage relationship makes it sacred. Besides, nakedness before the fall was an acceptable condition between Adam and his wife. After the fall it remained the same (1 Cor 7: 4). By Satan's suggestion he put into the mind of the race that sex could be indulged in any how since it is sinful. The mere sight of sex organs arouses lust in carnal minds. **Aprons** mean sex is bad. **Aprons** point out that all transgressions represent the deliberate distortion of realities already in existence (Gen 3: 14-19).¹⁸ They describe a new life-situation within the framework of the consequences of the Fall.¹⁹ Through the indulgence of appetite, the progenitors of the human race passed on carnality. *Aprons* represent a misrepresentation of God's character. Olsen presents this vividly:

Did an added new element enter their beings which, in late twentieth-century terminology, could make man and woman "sex-objects" to one another? Sin distorted the relationship and the polarity of the sexes (the nudity included more than physical nakedness), but must also have distorted the most intimate sex relationship. With the danger of oversimplification it may be said that all male-female relationships before

¹⁷White, *The Adventist Home*, 401.

¹⁸ V. Norskov Olsen, *The New Relatedness for Man & Woman in Christ: A Mirror of the Divine*, (Loma Linda, California: Center for Christian Bioethics, 1993), 54.

¹⁹ Ibid.

the Fall were fully controlled by *agape*, but after the Fall, among other aspects, a sensual (sexist) element came in and further distorted the original polarity.²⁰

Aprons: The Beginning of Fashion

With innocence gone and the robe of light lost, the pair sewed aprons of fig leaves to cover themselves. This attitude of the pair later affected their descendants. The sin of insisting on man's independence of God affected the human race. As people became increasingly corrupt, they developed the tendency to replace the beautiful simplicity of their innocence with inventions fabrics, fashions, degrading dress styles, wearing of form fitting dresses and exchange of clothes among the sexes. People also became ostentatious in their choice of clothes. This led to immorality, pride and the tendency to become extravagant. Brocke writes:

So Lucifer, now Satan, portrays his character and ambition in the fashions of today. He recreates women, putting color where God had placed no color. Stripping them naked where God had clothed them. Making them extravagant where God had made them simple.²¹

Satan being an angel of extremes influences some fashions to exhibit nakedness. In countries where fetish is practiced, followers dress exactly in the same way. They always love to appear in loin-cloths. 'Show your back', 'Show your belly', 'See through garments', 'Striptease acts', 'tight skirts and jeans', 'Mini skirts', 'Trousers for women', and all commercial exhibitions are deliberately intended to attract male admissions for profit through lust.²²

Today, clothing styles are chosen out of a desire for recognition rather than for moral and ethical reasons. In this way dress has become an index of spiritual decline and apostasy. *Aprons* led to fashion.

GARMENTS OF GOD

And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God...But the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?"..."I was afraid because I was naked and I hid myself". He said, who told you that you were naked?" Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" ...And the Lord, God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins, and clothed them.

²⁰ Ibid., 57.

²¹ Eunice Miranda Brocke, *Spirit of Garment and Fashion*, (Ghana: EMB Publications, 2001), 55.

²² Ibid., 59.

Justification and Sanctification: Invitation to Wear Garments

The fact that Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of God does not mean they felt remorse for their sin. In their fallen state their sense of the consequences of sin had become keener than the sin itself. It is Satan's legacy to the human race through their progenitors. When Satan engaged Eve in conversation he cunningly urged upon her mind that God had not instituted the prohibition because His law is holy and breaking it would result in condemnation which was punishable by death. He knew that as long as they kept God's law he could not ruin them. To succeed, he misrepresented God's character to them and seduced them. God confronted them and assured the pair he knew where they were as lost sinners, who desperately needed a Savior ("Where are you?" Gen 3: 9). He awakened hope in them to trust him to provide that Savior. He encouraged them to yield their guilt and shame to Him since they could not bear up under its weight. God tells man what is right and wrong. He pleads with humanity to follow what is right and warns against what is wrong. When men sin He makes His atonement available and seeks to bring them back into a new life-giving relationship with Himself again. Adam and his wife were suddenly lifted up in spirit and they appreciated this marvelous love and gracious offer. They yielded up their aprons by acknowledging their nothingness. Immediately, they were led to Jesus whose friendship justified them and gave them pardon (Rom 5: 1). God sacrificed a lamb, a sacrifice of sweet-smelling savor (Heb 7: 25). He adorned them with wedding *garments* and made them the first brides of Jesus (Rev 19: 9). Clothed with the white garments of Christ they lived and acted like Jesus. It is for this same reason that Christians are "to put on the whole armor of God" and wrestle with the world, the flesh and satanic forces till these enemies are vanquished (James 4: 7; Eph 4: 27).

Hence God's children are to clothe themselves with his righteousness as with a garment, to cover their nakedness "He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments..." (Rev 3: 5). Lockyer writes that the material of skins chosen for the *garments* implies sacrifice.²³ Through the sacrifice of Christ Jesus the race will be restored into the lost image and brightness of the glory of God (Heb 1: 3). Isaiah talks about the restoration of the *garments* of light in the Messianic Kingdom (Ref 21:23). The garments lost in sin would be regained in righteousness. In Rev 19: 8, John compares the Church awaiting Christ's coming to a bride *adorned* for a wedding. To receive the *garment* of Christ's glory at His return, the Christian needs to *put off* this old nature of Adam and Eve (Eph 4:23) which are *aprons of nakedness* and put on the *garment* of Christ's glory (Rom 13: 14) which consist of obedience to Christ and a right exercise of the will. Jesus will then cleanse the mind and empower it to resist Satan's temptations to sin. *Garments* represent justification and sanctification.

²³ Herbert Lockyer, *All the Books of and Chapters of the Bible*, (Grand Rapids, MI; Zondervan Pub. House, 1966), 10.

Garments of Skin (Physical)

Moses was inspired to use the Hebrew word *labash* in describing God's intent and purpose for clothing the fallen pair. The verb *labash* does not mean to cover shameful or hide nakedness or any such meaning. *Labash* could therefore, refer to outer garments rather than underclothing. It implies adorning, decorating, displaying or protecting, rather than concealing or hiding something that is shameful or indecent. God did not design modest *garments* because the pubic region is degrading or evil. Modesty in dress was designed by God to afford protection from the weather and the environment. It was also designed for proper decorum. For instance taking baths in bathrooms or eliminating waste privately is a matter of etiquette, having a sense of propriety for others and not a matter of covering up something wrong. In the same manner, God wills that *garments* are worn in consideration of others and avoid leading the carnal mind into temptation. The reason why God wants people to avoid indecent or lewd exposure is that this type of exposure of the female body arouses lust in the minds of unregenerate males. Adam and Eve covered their loins, but God covered them from the neck to the knees to show that in the fallen state nakedness must be confined by his people. As a demonstration of His loving concern, He also chose animal skins known for strength, comfort and beauty. Today, animal material for human clothing is still being considered. He replaced their *loincloths of fig-leaves* and covered them with *garments of skin*. Garments were also made of leather, haircloth, wool or linen. God's action is not insignificant. It was to show that Adam's choice of dress was not acceptable to God both spiritually (Is 64: 6) and physically (Rom 13: 14). Only the covering provided by God Himself was sufficient for covering. Adam and Eve covered only their private parts while God covered their bodies. Consistently, the concept of *garments* as God's design for dress is used throughout the Bible.

THE RIGHT AND WRONG WAY TO DRESS

Garments: Sex Distinctions

A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment, for all who do so are abomination to the LORD your God Deuteronomy 22: 5

The Scriptures teach that proper attire must cover nakedness, maintain modesty, preserve the healthiness of the bodies, and protect the bodies against heat and cold, to distinguish one sex from the other, to adorn the body and to testify grief or joy. In Deuteronomy 22: 5 men and women are admonished to observe distinctions in dress. Not only is physical clothing absolutely required of God but immediately Adam and his wife sinned God bestowed dress upon men and women to be worn in the way that He sees fit as well as the manner that fulfills the purpose of clothing. At creation Adam and Eve were given roles. Although they are equal in nature and worth by virtue of their creation and redemption men

and women are different in function.²⁴ The physical structures of men are different from that of women. In Deuteronomy 22: 5 the word used for man denotes a “valiant man or warrior” while the word used for woman is the feminine of the ordinary word used for any man.²⁵ For this reason, this phrase in the Hebrew grammar²⁶ “The woman shall not wear that which pertained to a man”, shows that it is especially forbidden to woman to wear the costume of an active man.²⁷ According to the order of creation Adam is the head while Eve is the subordinate. Before the fall they enjoyed this relationship. After the fall it became a bone of contention. It has been pointed out that all transgressions represent the deliberate distortion of realities already in existence (Gen 3: 14-19). Men’s garments were distinctively adapted for manly physique and activity and were more suited to outdoor life, traveling and hard physical work. This was evidenced by the fact that they *girded up the loins* when their garments became a hindrance. Girding up the loins was fundamentally a custom which pertained to men alone and applies to the shorter garment, the trousers worn as an outer covering by workmen, soldiers, sailors, horsemen, to mention just but a few.²⁸ This is found in many ancient and modern cultures.²⁹ Tanner explains this further:

*Men’s robes being of such a style , and being worn in such a manner as was conducive to their being girt up to free the wearer for action is one of the most frequently cited distinctions of men’s apparel in Scripture, and it contradicts the common argument for ‘women’s trousers’.*³⁰

The Bible clearly teaches that the “distinctive clothing of women was never merely a modified imitation of whatever men might be wearing, but a full-length robe, so styled as to conceal the body and provide proper covering down to the ankles or feet”³¹.

Garments: Men’s Clothing

In Bible times, both men and women wore robe-like garments but “The dress of women was very much the same as that of men but the difference must have been sufficiently noticeable”.³² This consisted of a loin-cloth, a long or short skirt or garment, an upper garment and a cloak. This long shirt or garment is mentioned in the Bible as *kethoneth*. It was worn next to the skin and reaches down to the ankle or to the knees. It is made with or without sleeves, short or

²⁴ C. Raymond Holmes, *The Tip of an Iceberg*, (Wakefield, MI: Pointer Publications, 1994), 77.

²⁵ Strong, *HCD*, 25.

²⁶ Notes on 2 Kings 9: 1, Geneva Bible, 1599.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ www.Covenantof Grace.com

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary Vol. 1.* (Sydney: Inter-Varsity Press, 1980), 394.

long for work. While running this shirt was pulled up (Ex 12: 11; 2 Ki 4: 29). There was another kind of garment called *kethoneth passin* (Gn. 37:3, 23, 32). It was special and was worn also by princes, highly colored and plaid twisted round the body (2 Sa. 13: 18-19).³³ The shirt worn underneath could be torn as a sign of mourning (Ezr 9: 3). The mantle is more or less a square piece of cloth and it is sometimes thrown over one shoulder or both of them. There are openings for arms at the sides of the kethoneth and it could not be given in loan since it was used at night for a covering (Ex 22: 25-26). Generally, it was taken off for work (Mk 10: 50). This garment was used in carrying all kinds of objects (Ex 12: 34). The girdle or belt which was used to gird up the loins shows a man's readiness for work. Men outside the priestly order wore trousers either as under clothing or as outer garments with their cloaks:

*Such styles are still in use in the Middle East, and have also been a tradition for millennia in much of Europe and Asia – men's trousers playing a more prominent role in the costumes of those who relied on the horse for transport - while full-length dresses remained the garment of women.*³⁴

The mantle was also exclusive to men.

Aprons in Men's Clothing

Men who wear long and flowing garments for serious business were regarded as wearing aprons because the long garments should be put away when doing earnest business. These were used by men who indulge in excessive elegance, luxury and softness. For one thing dress must not be gaudy, ostentatious or showy (1 Tim 2: 9; 1Pet 3: 3). Rather it must be modest and most modern dictionaries define modesty as "Having of showing a moderate estimation of one's own talents, abilities and values"; "having or proceeding from a disinclination to call attention to one; "reserve of propriety in dress"; "free from ostentation".³⁵ It would be recalled that modesty is a requirement by God. When Adam and his wife sinned they tried to *put their self's forward* making a covering which was not acceptable to God. Ostentatious dress arouses pride in the owner and lead beholders to covetousness. In either case people become guilty before God. At best it reveals a *will* that has not been surrendered to Jesus Christ. A man wearing only an inner garment is also said to be naked or in *aprons*. God requires that dress worn by men and women are put on in the way that He sees fit as well as the manner that fulfils the purpose of clothing. They are also forbidden to wear women's clothes which are described "as confusion, an absurd, unnatural thing, and an inlet to much wickedness". All these clothes are signs of Christian insanity.

³³ Ibid., 396

³⁴ www.CovenantofGrace.com 30

³⁵ <http://cgg.org> 8

Garments: Women's Clothing

The dress of women was very much the same as that of men. The difference is sufficiently noticeable. It lay in the material used for making the *kethoneth* which was finer than those of the men. Their inner garments were also made of fine material. Women's dresses were long, relatively loose and flowing. The material used for sewing it is composed of opaque material. It was not indecently thin and adhesive. It was completely different from the woman in Proverb 7: 10 who was said to be dressed shingly gaudy as the "Athenian whores wore" or wearing "short garments" like the Romans. In other words the women in Scripture wore clothing which were not form fitting but graceful (11 Sam 14:27). In the New Testament the women were enjoined to "adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety" (1Tim 2: 9). In first Timothy 2: 9 the word translated *garment* or *apparel* is *katastole*.³⁶ It is a Greek compound word and the second part *stole* is used to denote a *dignified long robe* (Mark 12: 38; Rev 6: 11, 7: 9). The prefix *kata* means *down* or in some instances *covered down*. In using the word *katastole* then Paul exhorted the women to wear modest long robes in keeping with the custom of the godly women in the Old Testament times. From this it would be seen that modesty is an element of Christian character and the dress of a woman reflects her true attitude towards this revealing aspect of her own character. During festivals women wore more costly attire. Women's garments are a few inches longer; they reach below the knees, extend farther up around the neck and cover the body more fully than the men's. The shawl was also exclusive to women.

Aprons in Women's Clothing

In the book of Isaiah the Prophet the spiritual captivity and humiliation of the Roman abomination is represented as the "virgin of Babylon". This Scripture identifies certain parts of a woman's body which should not be made bare:

"Come down, and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon, sit on the ground; there is no throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans; for thou shalt no more be called tender and delicate. Take the millstones, and grind meal; uncover thy locks make bare the legs uncover the thigh, pass over the rivers. Thy nakedness shall be uncovered, yea, thy shame shall be seen: I will take vengeance, and I will not meet thee as a man. As for our redeemer, the LORD of host is his name, the Holy One of Israel (Is. 47:1-4)

The lower limb in humans between the hip and the knee is known as the thigh. According to the word of God if a woman puts on a dress and fails to cover this part of the body it is tantamount to nakedness. The leg is the area between the knee and the ankle and the Scripture says it is a shame to uncover that part too.

³⁶ www.CovenantofGrace.com 35

These areas are to be covered with the modest apparel appropriate for women. Thus Girding up the loins was fundamentally a custom which pertained to men alone. Paul's caution to women to put on their attire with shamefacedness means they should avoid exploiting their physical charms and the emotional disturbance they are liable to cause their male counterparts.

Aprons Among Family Members Leviticus 18: 6-17

In this passage God cautions family members to avoid running around the home in various states of nudity. When this is encouraged God's people become desensitized to it and are no longer ashamed of being naked.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY FOR SPIRITUALITY

The issue of dress stands or falls on the authority of the Bible. It dates as far back as the creation of Adam and Eve who were representatives of the human race. Adam and Eve listened to the Devil, a fallen angel, and lost their garments of innocence. They also lost the power to obey God. Finally, they lost their righteous standing with God and became naked in their sin. The knowledge they gained from the devil transformed their experience of good nakedness and sexuality into humiliating shame. As a result, blushing and disgrace entered human history. In order to hide their guilt and shame, Adam and Eve chose a covering of aprons of fig leaves which was too narrow for them to wrap themselves in. These aprons depict human effort which is independent of God's grace. They became the gateway for the entrance of fashion. God does not condone nakedness so He chose for Adam and Eve garments of skin which were large, strong and durable for them. The garments of skin also revealed God's mercy and grace for the human race which was later fulfilled in the sacrifice of Jesus. The first lesson that should be learnt from this is that our first parents made garments of inferior materials unsuitable for clothing, but God provided garments which were superior in quality because they were made from the finest material known to mankind. In the covering of Adam and Eve by God, we can learn how insufficient is our own righteousness to cover spiritual nakedness and our desperate need of the righteousness of God with its fitness to cover our sins in every way. Although Adam covered his private part, God covered his whole body from neck to knees showing that the work of Adam's hands was not acceptable to God physically or spiritually. Only the covering that God Himself provided was sufficient to cover his body.

The robe of light was a symbol of their spiritual garments of heavenly innocence. Hitherto, they had never worn any dress. So the loss of the spiritual garments separated them from the glorious presence of God which became the lot of their descendants the human race. They also lost their power to harness the goodness built into the earth for their comfort and welfare. God made a plan to enable them regain their heavenly innocence as well as the dominion which they lost to Satan. This is known as redemption and it is the restoration of the original robe of light which emanates from God's glorious presence. To receive God's

salvation one must put off the old nature of Adam's *aprons* of rebellion and put on the *garments* of obedience to Jesus Christ.

IMPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN DRESS STANDARDS

This study has proved that the Scriptures are replete with principles that the Lord has given to guide the dress of Christians. The covering of righteousness for sinners was devised in eternity when God made a covenant with His Son. Since dress is of God and its design is His own, it is appropriate that His principles for dress be applied by Christians wherever they find themselves. For one thing God knew that His children would be scattered all over the world when He was making these principles for proper attire.

- 1. One of the reasons the Lord provided clothing is to protect His people against the ravages of the weather, the air, heat and cold and the violence of the wind.*
- 2. There must be sex distinctions in the dress of Christian men and women.*
- 3. God does not condone nakedness. Therefore Christian men and women should guard against clothing styles which expose the parts of the body He wants covered.*
- 4. In choosing dress Christians must avoid being ostentatious, showy or extravagant. They exhibit the spirit of Satan and also undermine Christian witness.*
- 5. Christians are to bear in mind that fashion is one of the indexes of spiritual decline and apostasy today.*
- 6. Since dress has both spiritual and physical dimensions, the subject should be prayerfully handled. God is not vindictive (1Cor 3: 3; 2 Cor 4: 5).*
- 7. Nakedness is allowed only in the bonds of marriage God places great value on our sexuality.*
- 8. Clothing must be selected to preserve the healthiness of the body of Christians.*
- 9. Christian dress must be simple, comely and beautiful without being showy.*
- 10. Christians should also dress to notify the conditions, ranks and places of men. Christians are to base the choice of their dresses on moral implications.*

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