



## The Burning Bush - Online article archive

### The Christian and make-up - What saith the Scriptures?



*"In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works," 1 Timothy 2:9-10.*

*"Likewise, ye wives, . . . Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price," 1 Peter 3:1-4.*

We must be careful of 'change'! So say the Scriptures. "My son, fear thou the LORD and the king: and meddle not with them that are given to change," Proverbs 24:21.

Man is given to change. He soon is wearied of routine, especially that instigated by the Lord. As Israel grew weary of manna, the provision of heaven, so man wearies even of the most blessed provisions and ordinances of God.

Surely we see this all around us. The most wicked changes are being instigated by restless man. The words of Paul in Romans 1:23-27 describe the changes taking place.

"And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet."

#### **Seemingly innocuous**

There have been more seemingly innocuous changes taking place amongst the people of God against which few, it appears, have raised any objections.

I suppose that it is a case of "the 'flu being considered of little importance in a day of cancer!"

I am speaking of the increasingly widespread use of make-up or cosmetics by young and not so young professing Christian ladies.

#### **Is it right?**

It has become the fashion, not because of new light upon Scripture but simply by imitation and following others. Preening has ever been a weakness of women and men! It is especially so in a time of spiritual decline.

Isaiah chapter 3 describes just such a time in Judah and Jerusalem. The spiritual departure from the Lord was seen in the appearance and demeanour of the womenfolk.

"Moreover the LORD saith, Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet: therefore the Lord will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and the LORD will discover their secret parts. In that day the Lord will take away the bravery of their tinkling ornaments about their feet, and their cauls, and their round tires like the moon, the chains, and the bracelets, and the mufflers, the bonnets, and



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the ornaments of the legs, and the headbands, and the tablets, and the earrings, the rings, and nose jewels, the changeable suits of apparel, and the mantles, and the wimples, and the crisping pins, the glasses, and the fine linen, and the hoods, and the veils. And it shall come to pass, that instead of sweet smell there shall be stink; and instead of a girdle a rent; and instead of well set hair baldness; and instead of a stomacher a girding of sackcloth; and burning instead of beauty. Thy men shall fall by the sword, and thy mighty in the war. And her gates shall lament and mourn; and she being desolate shall sit upon the ground," Isaiah 3:16-26.

The importing of worldly ways among the people of God is entirely justified by those who wish to embrace these ways on the grounds that "So and so does it so it must be alright!" This is walking with our eyes on others and not, as we are commanded, with our eyes upon Christ. "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds," Hebrews 12:1-3.

That others, even those whose standing would suggest that they should know better, are seen to be following the fashions and ways of the world and setting the trend for such, may serve to salve the conscience of some who wish to emulate them but it will not stand in the presence of God. The ONLY rule of faith and practice is the Word of God. If it is not sanctioned by God's Word then we must not do it, no matter who else may be doing it.

### 1. THE VIEW HELD IN THE PAST.

Fifty years ago, when I was converted, it was certainly not acceptable for a Christian woman to wear make-up.

The best summary of the general attitude of believers is seen in the description Dr Paisley frequently gave of some of those females who sought to voice their objections to something he had said or done. He gave an indication of the character of the woman by saying that "she wore enough paint on her face to paint a battleship and enough powder to blow it up with!" The amused reaction of the congregation to this remark always indicated widespread agreement with that assessment of make-up and the type of person who used it.

Now I am sure that he was not the originator of that quip. As he was given to often quoting the drolleries of W. P. Nicholson, I would be inclined to believe that it originated with him.

That being so, it indicates that this view of women's make-up was not just a feature of the early Free Presbyterian Church but of earlier years also, right back to the beginning of the twentieth century.

### No new thing

Wearing make-up is no new thing, even though some of us may consider it a somewhat recent innovation amongst Christian women.

Here is a rather startling quotation from Wikipedia. "Cosmetics, first used in Ancient Rome for ritual purposes, were part of daily life for women, especially prostitutes and the wealthy."

That should be a cause for serious consideration of the use of make-up amongst Christian womenfolk.

### Bible's references to make-up

Of course, wearing cosmetics goes back a lot earlier than ancient Rome.

*"And when Jehu was come to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it; and she painted her face, and tired her head, and looked out at a window," 2 Kings 9:30.*



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*"And when thou art spoiled, what wilt thou do? Though thou clothest thyself with crimson, though thou deckest thee with ornaments of gold, though thou rentest thy face with painting, in vain shalt thou make thyself fair; thy lovers will despise thee, they will seek thy life," Jeremiah 4:30.*

*"And furthermore, that ye have sent for men to come from far, unto whom a messenger was sent; and, lo, they came: for whom thou didst wash thyself, paintedst thy eyes, and deckedst thyself with ornaments," Ezekiel 23:40.*

All of these references put the use of make-up in a very bad light. It is seen to be the practice of a most wicked type of woman, of whom Jezebel was representative. It is further seen to be analogic of the actions of those who sought to inveigle favour with the enemies of Israel by flattery. "Reference is here particularly made to the practice of harlots to allure men," says the commentator, Adam Clarke, in his comments on Jeremiah 4:30.

Clarke has something similar to say on Ezekiel 23:40. "This is exactly the way in which a loose female in Bengal adorns herself to receive guests. She first bathes, then rubs black paint around her eyes, and then covers her body with ornaments." John Gill remarks on the same verse: "Just as harlots do to make themselves agreeable to their lovers; who use washes and paint, as Jezebel did, and dress themselves in their best clothes, and adorn themselves in the best manner they can. Harlots had their particular attire, by which they were known, Proverbs 7:10."

Thus the Bible too links make-up with the actions of harlots.

I say again, this gives cause for serious consideration amongst Christian womenfolk about the use of make-up.

### 2. SINCE VIEWS HAVE CHANGED ON THIS PRACTICE, WHO IS RIGHT AND WHO IS WRONG?

Were the views of former generations of believers wrong? Has new light been shed by the Lord on this matter?

I think not. This trend has developed, as have so many other such trends, as a result of following the world.

We are told by Paul in Romans 12:2, "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

The increasing use of make-up is the result of women and their menfolk, ignoring this verse and others like it.

It has long been the practice of unconverted women. With the decline in spirituality amongst God's people, there has been a sad tendency to begin to copy the ways of the world. That has ever been a problem amongst God's people.

"Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us; that we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles," 1 Samuel 8:19, 20. The same spirit lies behind the increasing use of make-up amongst women professing faith in Christ.

### Personal grooming

The Bible does say something about personal grooming by way of inference.

For instance, the emphasis on washing amongst the priesthood surely infers that dirt has no place in the life of a child of God whatever else those washings signified!

Again, the words of Nehemiah in which he refers to the necessity of foregoing personal hygiene indicates



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that what the men did was justified only by the imminent threat of attack they all faced. "So neither I, nor my brethren, nor my servants, nor the men of the guard which followed me, none of us put off our clothes, saving that every one put them off for washing," Nehemiah 4:23.

The actions of Joseph, when summoned before Pharaoh, indicate that cleanliness and personal appearance mattered to him, even though he was in jail! "Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon: and he shaved himself, and changed his raiment, and came in unto Pharaoh," Genesis 41:14.

### Sarah

As for a woman's deportment, Peter sets forth Sarah as an example to the Christian women to whom he wrote. "Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: even as Sara . . . ." 1 Peter 3:3-6.

Here is a call to women to pay attention to their SPIRITUAL appearance rather than their PHYSICAL appearance. The word "adornment" means "decoration". A woman is to decorate herself by paying attention to "the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." The emphasis of a woman is not to be on her outward appearance.

"Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel." That was the emphasis in the world out of which the Lord saved them, but it is no longer the pattern for them to follow. Rather, the way of the women of the old time "the holy women also, who trusted in God", their lifestyle was to be copied, not the world's.

### World's preference

An article in the Daily Telegraph of 17th October 2013 shows us the trend in the world. "More than two thirds of employers admit they would be less likely to employ a female job applicant if she did not wear make-up to the job interview. Almost half (49%) surveyed said it would be a major factor in their decision if the position was in sales or was a public-facing role in the company."

The appearance created by the use of make-up is the appearance the world wishes to see. Why are Christian women seeking to present themselves so?

### 3. THE USE OF MAKE-UP WAS THE PRACTICE OF THOSE IGNORANT OF THE GRACE OF GOD.

The Chinese began to stain their fingernails with gum arabic, gelatin, beeswax, and egg. The colours used represented social class: Chou dynasty royals wore gold and silver, with subsequent royals wearing black or red. Lower classes were forbidden to wear bright colours on their nails.

Grecian women painted their faces with white lead and applied crushed mulberries as rouge. The application of fake eyebrows, often made of oxen hair, was also fashionable! They also whitened their complexion with chalk or lead face powder and fashioned crude lipstick out of ochre clays laced with red iron.

In ancient Rome, people often put barley flour and butter on their pimples and sheep fat and blood on their fingernails for polish! In addition, mud baths came into vogue, and some Roman men dyed their hair blond. Shades, no doubt, of today's trend of dyed highlights so beloved of women and many effeminate men!

### World's way

It is clear that the wearing of make-up was the world's way of trying to enhance the physical appearance for



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anything but spiritual reasons.

A Roman philosopher, Plautus, is reported as saying: "A woman without paint is like food without salt." That is the philosophy of the world. Is not the grace of God the "salt" that gives savour and beauty to poor sinners? "And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it," Psalms 90:17.

It is noteworthy that in ancient Rome, some fashionable cosmetics, such as those imported from China, Germany and Gaul, were so expensive that a law was passed with the aim of trying to limit their use in 189 BC. It was also considered time-consuming.

Do not the same considerations have a bearing today? I have little knowledge of the amount of money spent by Christian women on cosmetics, but may we not ask if such expenditure is in keeping with wise stewardship of the material goods the Lord has bestowed upon us? And as for the time spent in the application of the paint and powder, is there no better use that such time could be put to?

I have yet to meet someone whose face indicates that a considerable amount of time has been spent applying make-up who is to the fore in the prayer meeting!

### A voice from the past

It is interesting that Tertullian (155 – 240 AD) said that Christian women in his day should avoid cosmetics and that they should praise God for what He gave them. (See **online article**.)

Here are some quotations from that document.

"You are bound to please your husbands only. But you will please them in proportion as you take no care to please others. Be ye without carefulness, blessed (sisters): no wife is "ugly" to her own husband. She "pleased" him enough when she was selected (by him as his wife); whether commended by form or by character. Let none of you think that, if she abstain from the care of her person, she will incur the hatred and aversion of husbands."

"These suggestions are not made to you, of course, to be developed into an entire crudity and wildness of appearance; nor are we seeking to persuade you of the good of squalor and slovenliness; but of the limit and norm and just measure of cultivation of the person. There must be no overstepping of that line to which simple and sufficient refinements limit their desires . . . that line which is pleasing to God. For they who rub their skin with medicaments, stain their cheeks with rouge, make their eyes prominent with antimony (black sulphide), sin against Him. . . . Whatever is born is the work of God. Whatever, then, is plastered on (that), is the devil's work. To superinduce on a divine work Satan's ingenuities, how criminal is it! . . . But how alien from your schoolings and professions are (these things)! How unworthy the Christian name, to wear a fictitious face, (you,) on whom simplicity in every form is enjoined! . . . to lie in your appearance, (you,) to whom (lying) with the tongue is not lawful! . . . to seek after what is another's, (you,) to whom is delivered (the precept of) abstinence from what is another's! . . . to practise adultery in your mien, (you,) who make modesty your study! Think, blessed (sisters), how will you keep God's precepts if you shall not keep in your own persons His lineaments?"

These sentiments (and there are many more) are a reassuring indication that the view held by the Free Presbyterian Church in earlier years was an echo of the view of the early Church.

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