

December 2017

Dear Brethren:

Many religious groups employ unique customs that make them stand out from the crowd. Some are designed intentionally to advertize their sects, while other practices simply may be part of their heartfelt creeds. Although Sikhs—as an ethnic group—are very common in the Far East, their practice of wearing turbans often makes them stand out in the Western world. In southern Africa, seeing one dressed in a white robe and carrying a staff likely identifies that individual with the African Zionist movement. A Muslim woman is easily recognized by her head scarf (and often, a veil), even as an Amish woman is recognized by her white bonnet and long black dress. If you see a man with a shaved head wearing a saffron orange robe, he is likely a Buddhist monk. Even when an evangelical Protestant family holds hands and prays in a restaurant over a meal, it draws attention because they are doing something "out of the norm," but likewise something that is part of their faith.

What all of these examples have in common is a conscious choice to reject the *normal* practices of one's worldly community in favor of making one's outward appearance and behavior acceptable foremost to one's God (or gods). It is a willingness to stand out—even to be a spectacle if need be—for religious conscience sake. But what does that have to do with members of God's true Church?

In this *Monthly Letter*, you are going to receive some candid thoughts about the issue of proper attire for women and men in our faith. This topic has been addressed in a number of church letters and sermons in past years, but it is past due to be covered again. And to make the points as strongly as possible, I am departing from the usual protocol of writing in the third-person in order to admonish all of you in a very direct and personal way.

There is virtually no topic that can spur an emotional response in the church faster than that of proper dress for women and men, including both casual and formal attire. It was always a controversial topic in our parent organization, but it became even more so in this remnant body from the mid-1970s onward. Why? The 1970s saw some of the most radical changes in dress styles away from godly principles, and at the same time, our parent church became very lax and permissive. Simultaneously, church members were losing their willingness to be teachable, hardening themselves to any instruction they did not fancy. The combination of ever-increasing degeneracy in worldly fashions and a hardening of the laity against inspired correction created the perfect environment for

confrontation. And even as much as this ministry has attempted to teach and to guide in loving benevolence, we have certainly felt the "push back" whenever we have addressed the topic. Raymond Cole certainly felt the resentment when he made comments, and it is certain that I have too.

Rather than being cowed into telling some of you what you would prefer to hear, I am going to reiterate *the very same principles* that have never gone out of style in God's eyes (including some direct quotes from past church letters), and will do so in the most emphatic first-person. Then as always, it will be up to each one of you to either accept that as an instruction of Jesus Christ through this ministry, or to dismiss it as the personalized "edict of a man." But rest assured you will each become responsible before God for your own choices, and none of you will have the excuse that you were not told.

What does any of this have to do with other religious sects and their recognizable dress or identifiable practices? I find it ironic that other *deceived* peoples in this world are so willing to make themselves a spectacle by being different in appearance when they believe their deities require it—especially through customs we know are manmade and often silly in God's sight—while *the true called of God* are often the ones who demand the right to *look like the world* so that they can *avoid* standing out in any way. If only our brethren were as eager to please the One True God as many deceived pagans are willing to honor their false gods. Especially ironic is the fact that God does not require His people to dress in some outlandish way—like with a turban, a veil, an orange robe, or with ashes painted in a cross on the forehead—but simply to preserve the *basic principles of modest dress* that used to be acceptable in our worldly western societies even sixty years ago! Is that really asking too much? It is all a matter of perspective.

Unisex In General

Here is one of God's commands concerning His hatred for anything that attempts to blur the two sexes which He created:

The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the LORD thy God (Deuteronomy 22:5).

It is our modern—Babylonian—society that is intentionally seeking to upend the distinctions between men and women. Do you believe Satan exists? Do you believe God has permitted him to remain in power as the god of this world? Do you believe he is the enemy of God and of man and seeks to inspire man to do the very opposite of anything that God commands? Do you believe that same enemy is the author of human societies today, and that the world you live in is the very continuation of that Babylon which first

manifested soon after Noah's flood? If you believe all of those things are true, then how might you think that deception is being manifested today in the world around you, especially regarding the roles of men and women? If God made a difference in the sexes, Satan will do everything possible to mitigate that difference. And God is not neutral about the topic. He is adamant! Therefore, anything that smacks of men wearing women's clothing, women wearing men's clothing, or any attempt to amalgamate clothing as neither male nor female (unisex), is an abomination.

With that in mind, if you want to know if a particular garment is OK to wear, just ask what is the history of a particular form of clothing. I am not even suggesting the need to go back hundreds of years in most cases. For most of us, just look back to what was the standard for men's and women's attire in the 1940s and '50s, for instance.

Why that demarcation in time? Because up until that time in our Western culture, there was still a very strong cultural distinction between all things feminine vs. masculine. In the USA, it was only during and after World War II that the trend for women wearing men's clothing began to really take off, in part because it was during the war that women began to work in factories to replace the labor lost from the men joining the military. *Rosie the Riveter* became the iconic image of our women supporting the war effort in order to fill the labor void. Rosie was portrayed as wearing men's work pants (blue jeans), a man's work shirt and boots, and flexing her bicep to show that she was fully capable of doing the work of a man. Even through much of the 1950s and '60s, it was still unusual for women to wear "trousers" except for common-sense purposes like farm work, recreation, sports, etc. But by the end of the 1960s, the trend toward women wearing pants as routine casual attire had set in fully as part of the feminist movement. At the very same time they were burning bras and becoming sexually "liberated," they were also starting to wear men's pants!

Fast forward to today and it often seems to be the exception for women to wear dresses anymore. Our most prominent women politicians seem to prefer pantsuits. It was Pat Nixon (wife of President Richard Nixon) who as First Lady donned a pantsuit outfit in public for the first time in the early 1970s. All new trends begin someplace. But it was not until 1993 that the United States Senate was finally forced to change its long-standing rule prohibiting women from wearing trousers on the Senate floor, after two new female Senators and their staffs began openly to defy that rule. The feminists won that spitting contest. You will often find that in the USA, the change in acceptable styles for work and formal wear have coincided with changes in government office dress codes. Once the government approves it for its workers, the die seems to be cast.

Just days ago, at a formal state dinner in Japan, hosted by the Japanese Prime Minister for the President of the United States, the White House Communications Director in attendance (female) chose to wear a black tuxedo. The fashion set raved

about her well-tailored suit jacket and oversized black bow-tie. The world thinks she looked stunning. God says it is an abomination. What do you say?

The point is not for God's people to try to justify what society allows today. Human society is perverse. The point for God's people is to never—ever—forget that Deuteronomy 22:5 applies to you, even today, and will never go "out of style"!

Many have expressed the sentiment that it seems that all of these clothing restrictions fall squarely upon *the women* in God's church, and not the men. The men seem to get to wear whatever they want, but it is the women who have all the "special rules." If that is accurate, it is only because that up until recently, the primary thrust of *Babylonian perversion* has been largely one-sided—seeking to encourage women to act and dress like men. But unlike sixty years ago, that tide has also been turning, socially. Today, the political movement toward mainstream perversions, like transgender culture, is touting more than ever the adoption of feminine clothing for men. So it is beginning to apply a little more to *both men and women* in God's church. That trend will only grow in future years. But for now, admittedly, it is especially our women who need to beware of violating Deuteronomy 22:5. The entire Church of God is symbolized by a woman. Satan hates women (especially the Church, as the bride of Christ) and understands that a primary way to destroy human society is through the perversion of feminine roles. So if anyone is the sexist, it is man's enemy—Satan the Devil. Therefore, ladies, in blunt terms, I strongly admonish you to put down your torches and pitchforks, your tar and feathers, and pay attention with ready, teachable minds to what I have to tell you.

Pants In Particular

I am not interested in creating "new rules." I am however intent on reconfirming the rules that have long been part of God's teaching through His faithful ministry. With that in mind, here are a few quotes by Mr. Raymond Cole from the 1970s and '80s to acquaint you with the history of this issue within Church of God, The Eternal.

The first citation is a written transcript taken from recorded comments he made to the congregation in the *announcement* portion of a weekly Sabbath service in August 1976, in Eugene, Oregon (*Announcement on Women's Dress*). The topic concerns the dress code for any woman working in the church office:

. . . We discussed this somewhat with respect to a number of other—let's say—responsibilities, locations, whatever you want to call it. It has to do with—and I know there are a lot of people that are extremely, highly sensitized by a number of things; sometimes it makes you wonder how many of us really [are] going to have faith to endure and go on through to

the end. . . . But, I know the thing came up when we had this matter of the office, and various ones who were going to bear responsibility. I knew that those who came into the office, of course, were going to—in part—create a certain image. . . . I think there are certain responsibilities that are absolutely important. . . . Because there are certain things that I subscribe to and believe emphatically—I'm not even saying always that everybody within my own family may fully agree with some of the things that I say—but I'm nonetheless very firmly convinced. Now, the difference is, I'm not going to coercively apply a lot of these things to many of you. In certain ways—I haven't done it to this point, and I don't intend to—but as I said, with those coming into the office, I do expect everybody to come in there, that is, not everybody, but all women to come in there with dresses. I do not want anyone coming and working in the office in pantsuits or any other thing. It creates an image, and an image is very, very important. . . .

Mr. Cole follows this with comments about his personal opinion about women wearing "pantsuits" in general:

Now, what you do at home, I guess, is your responsibility. If I happen to see you, it doesn't mean that you have to run in fear, or anything else, because that's not what [I] am out there for. If you want to live that way in your own homes, and so on, that's your responsibility. You're going to pay the price before God, ultimately. I do not agree with it. Never have agreed with them, and I'll say that very emphatically. And someone says, "How do you know?". . . Well, I don't know. All I know is a change took place from dresses to pantsuits, and the whole thing was—and one of these days I will speak on it because I have the documentation and I have the material to show you that the whole concept of pantsuits and this type of thing was—the creation of what they call the unisex appeal. The whole idea was to liberate that bondage, they called it, which was supposed to be identifying you as a woman, or whatever. They were to throw off these shackles, and so on. Oh yes, it's written.

Does this mean that the church policy is that women are never permitted to wear any form of trousers? Hold that thought for the moment. Here are further comments that Mr. Cole made four years later, in a sermon given in Portland, Oregon, on August 9, 1980, "What Are Abominations in the Sight of God?" #2 (track #4), reaffirming the dangers of unisex styles:

Herein is one of the very atrocious abominations of God. The very concept of unisex. The masculine/feminine reversal, or the attempt to make them the same. God is the Creator of them twain. He is The Creator of male and

female, and God intended for us to leave them in the way He created them. And He intended for us to honor them for the purpose for which they were created. For any purpose, in the exploitation or the usage of that outside of divine purpose, is an abomination in the sight of God. And any attempt to reduce its effectiveness and to attempt to amalgamate it into a oneness—a unisex—is absolutely an abomination in the sight of God. And my dear brethren, you see that at every turn in the road today. I don't care whether it is in a dress, or whether it is in the perfumes, or whether it is in styles, or whatever it may be in. It is absolutely contrary to the will of God. And one of the odious things in the nostrils of God is for women to appear as men before God. God does not like it!

Notice next Mr. Cole's comments on the sixth day of the Feast of Tabernacles, October 18, 1981, in Eugene, Oregon, "What Can We Know About Babylon?" #3 (track #6), just after quoting Deuteronomy 22:5:

Take it for what it's worth. God is not the one that created all these wretched styles that women and men have so glibly accepted in our day . . . I can read you quote after quote from the stylers that it was done deliberately to confuse the two sexes. A whole system was generated to confuse the sexes. That was the beginning intent and the purpose behind it. Now, even if we accept certain things as being marginal, there is no way to accept—on the part of girls, or our women—jeans and this type of thing that are worn only by men. It is an abomination unto God. How does God look down upon you, women? And how about you men, because it works both ways.

What did he include as being "marginal"—implying there might be something that could be acceptable to some degree without being an abomination? By 1980, Mr. Cole was not saying that there were no kinds of trousers that could be acceptable for women. He did allow for that, even if he still, personally, did not like it. For proof of that, here is the continuation of his comments from that August 9, 1980, sermon referenced above:

I'm not saying—you know, my wife has brought this up many times, and said, "Well, you know, is a feminine pair of slacks contrary?" And I said, "No, no man would wear them. I'll guarantee you I don't intend to put them on." So a feminine pair of slacks is not a problem. But *men's* form of attire is a problem. It's one of the things that has absolutely become dominant in our society today, and God calls it a terrible abomination in His sight.

Does this reflect a change in Mr. Cole's thinking from 1976 to 1980? Perhaps. Perhaps it was similar to Moses making allowances for carnal Israelites "because of the

hardness of their hearts." I cannot tell you for certain. But it is also possible that he simply chose not to make his own personal preferences against "pantsuits" equivalent to doctrine. When I look at all of these historical documents, I too must decide how to instruct the church *today* about the principles. What is true is that by 1980, Mr. Cole's ruling was not that every form of trousers was absolutely forbidden to women in God's eyes. But it is a very slippery slope when we get into making a distinction between what is "marginally" acceptable vs. what is absolutely forbidden. Yet, that is exactly what is needed, given that most women in God's church today seem dead-set on wearing pants of some sort.

To clarify further, even within those comments to the church in that 1976 Sabbath service, Mr. Cole made other statements acknowledging the need for practicality. His real emphasis at that time was proper dress for *Sabbath services* or any *church-sponsored activity*. Notice it here:

All I'm saying now, and I've tried to give you an underlying purpose behind this: I would like for every formal activity, whether it should be a matter of a formal function with respect to some social program; when I say a social program, I mean of that nature. I'm not talking about, now, a softball game or something else. We dress accordingly, obviously. It makes good sense. There's propriety; you wouldn't expect a girl who's playing tennis, would you, to be in a long dress? It would be rather the height of folly, wouldn't it? No, we wouldn't expect it. We don't expect her in a tennis skirt to come to church either, do we? That would be the height of folly too. So, we wouldn't expect that. I'm merely saying with respect to certain functions, I'd like to see us exercise both manly and our feminine responsibilities. Whatever that function, whatever that responsibility is—and I'm not going to narrow that down to any particular function—but I'd just like to see, for those formal activities and those basic activities that are conducted by the church and so on, to be honored in that sense.

This clarifies that Mr. Cole was not talking about trying to restrict women from athletic or recreational activities by reason of never being able to wear anything but a long skirt. That was never his point! He was addressing acceptable norms for "regular dress," whether for church services or for other *casual activities* where dresses and skirts had always been the norm previously (remember my reference to the 1940s and '50s).

The History of Denim Jeans and T-Shirts

To answer the question about the origin of any particular garment, find out for whom it was first made. Take denim jeans for instance. From an article written by Aimée Gowland and Corrie Pellerin, *ALG Style*, published in August 2015:

What we know as jeans, in current fashion, were invented by Jacob Davis in 1871 and patented by Davis and Levi Strauss on May 20, 1873. Beginning in the 1950s, jeans, initially designed for cowboys and miners, became standard garb amongst teenagers — and especially for members of the greaser subculture. At first, jeans were simply sturdy trousers worn by factory workers. During this time, men's jeans had the zipper down the front, whereas women's jeans had the zipper down the left side.

This is only one small sample of a history that is easily verified. What about the t-shirt?

The T-shirt evolved from undergarments used in the 19th century. First, the one-piece union suit underwear was cut into separate top and bottom garments, with the top long enough to tuck under the waistband of the bottoms. With and without buttons, they were adopted by miners and stevedores during the late 19th century as a convenient covering for hot environments.

As slip-on garments without buttons, the earliest T-shirt dates back to sometime between the 1898 Spanish–American War and 1913, when the U.S. Navy began issuing them as undergarments. These were a crew-necked, short-sleeved, white cotton undershirt to be worn under a uniform. It became common for sailors and Marines in work parties, the early submarines, and tropical climates to remove their uniform jacket, wearing (and soiling) only the undershirt ("History of the T-shirt," from Tee Fetch.com; Alice Harris, "The White T," Harper Collins, 1996).

So how then did men's work pants and work shirts become standard clothing for women? You already know the answer to that. It was an intentional, *calculated* scheme by Satan and society to begin to dress women like men. And it is so accepted today that many of you would hardly know how to dress yourselves if you did not have your jeans and t-shirts.

Just like pants, the t-shirt problem has a solution. There are "t-shirts" made especially to be feminine, not just because they have feminine colors, but because the cut of the shirt has been changed also—e.g. cropped sleeves, a feminine neckline, etc. How do you know if it is feminine enough not to be an abomination to God? Simple. Find a manly man in your life and ask him if he would wear it (if it were his size). It is not about the color or what is printed on it. It is about the *style and cut* of the top. If it is virtually the same style as a manly t-shirt, then ladies, it was not made for you!

What Then Is Permissible?

In light of this history, the following is what I have given previously as guidelines so that women in God's church will have a basis for making personal choices according to *the spirit of the law*.

- 1) As clarified in the March 2003 *Announcement Letter*, slacks made specifically for women are not wrong *at appropriate occasions*, but they should have fasteners either *on the side or the back, never in the front like a man's trousers*. For casual wear, denim is no more an inappropriate fabric than any other, but the key is that the construction of women's slacks—regardless of the fabric—should never have a fastener in front.
- 2) *Appropriate occasions* for women in God's church to wear slacks will *never* include church-sponsored activities *which do not require active wear*. This means not only that a woman will never wear pants to a church service, she also will never wear pants to a church potluck social, or any other gathering with other church brethren, even as Mr. Raymond Cole originally clarified. A group hike, horseback riding, softball game, or tennis outing are examples of exceptions in which appropriate, *womanly* pants might be OK. May we please see the end of the practice of girls rushing out of church services and donning their pants before coming back for the after-church social?
- 3) To evaluate whether something is appropriate, ask this question: Is it a garment made for the opposite sex? Then don't wear it! Is it a unisex garment? If so, what was its origin? If it was a man's garment originally, then it is still a man's garment today in God's eyes, and not to be worn by women. If contrariwise, it was a woman's garment originally (like pantyhose, tights or modern leggings), then it should not be worn by men today (even if that is the new style for runners or cyclers). You see, it really is going both ways today. Even as Mr. Cole said in 1980 that one proof it is a woman's garment is that ". . . no man would wear them. I'll guarantee you I don't intend to put them on." Even so, that is a pretty good yardstick by which to measure.
- 4) What about work clothes around the house? If no one is going to see you, it is not a problem (assuming you are not pursuing some perverted hobby). What we are talking about is propriety in public. It is not wrong to wear your bathrobe and fuzzy slippers around the house, but you would not go out to the store dressed that way (or at least you shouldn't). You might wear an old t-shirt to paint in, but you would not be seen out in polite company in that same painter's shirt. And you might mow the lawn in a pair of work pants, but old-fashioned decorum says you will not go out in public dressed that way. But even in these instances, is it really

that impossible to find *eventually* a feminine option for work clothes too? Why not?

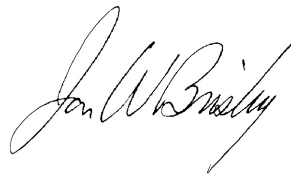
Your Response Will Be a Choice

Rather than react with indignation and frustration at *how inconvenient* this all becomes, how about a positive response among the godly women of this church to embrace the most important underlying principle—that God cares about this! If we truly care about what *He finds* acceptable vs. offensive, then perhaps we can move on to finding some constructive and creative ways to maintain our active lifestyles without losing our decorum as manly men and womanly women. Yes, it will be inconvenient, because you will not be able to buy clothes off the rack as easily as do your worldly neighbors. You will have to put some thought into it. But if the members of God's True Church would care even *half as much* about *their own religion* as do many Buddhists, Muslims, African Zionists, and Amish, I think we just might begin to set a better example in this dark world, and perhaps gain God's real acceptance and favor to boot.

There is a lot more to appropriate appearance for God's people than merely avoiding the unisex trap. The next time I write to you, we will tackle some other key principles, like modesty in our dress, hair length, make-up, and church service attire.

You are all much loved, much appreciated, and much valued. May God continue to guide you, bless you, and inspire you in your Christian endeavors.

Yours most sincerely in Christ Jesus,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jon W. Brisby". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned centrally below the typed name.

Jon W. Brisby