

# PANTS ON WOMEN

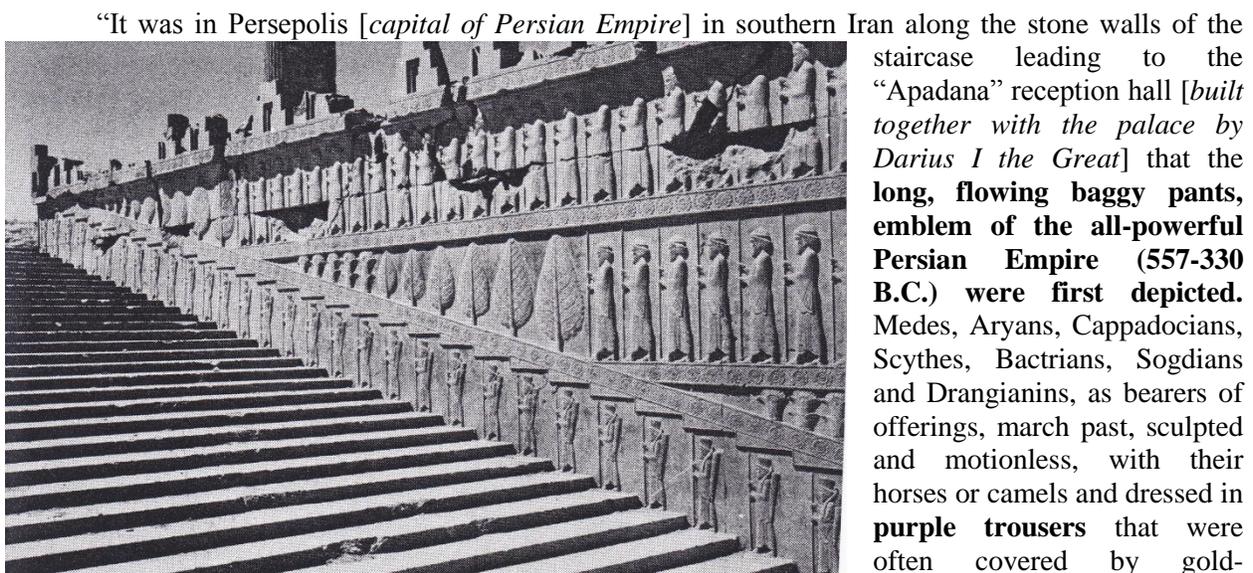
## Part 2: THE HISTORICAL ORIGIN OF PANTS & Who Made Pants a Male Garment?

Out of the numerous articles I have read on the “holiness” issue of pants on women, I have never read the first one that addresses the issue from a historical perspective. This article will supply the missing historical information and be one-of-a-kind. Too many preachers do not do their history “homework”. I give them all a big “F”.

We will answer the questions: Who invented pants? Who were the first in history to wear pants, men or women? Who created the cultural concept of pants as male and the dress as female attire? When in history did this concept arise and how?

Reliable sources tell us that **pants made their first appearance in history in the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. where they were worn by BOTH men and women in PERSIA.** The Persians, based in what is now Iran, introduced two garments to the history of clothing: trousers and seamed fitted coats. These tailored garments differed significantly from the woven rectangles of cloth generally worn in the Mediterranean region. The original intention was for warmth. Nomadic Eurasian horsemen/women such as the SCYTHIANS, along with Achaemenid and Seleucid Persians were the FIRST to wear trousers, later introduced to modern Europe via either the Hungarians or Ottoman Turks. The Persians were noted for fine horses, and people who rode horses valued trousers, and in that capacity trousers spread to China and India, as well as to the Celtic peoples of northern Europe.<sup>i</sup>

*Pants a History Afoot*, by Laurence Benaim, presents a lucid description of ancient art work, which illustrates the first appearance of pants, on pp12-14. The reliefs show delegates of the 23 subject nations of the Persian Empire paying tribute to Darius I, the same King in the book of Daniel. The various delegates are shown in great detail, giving insight into the costume and equipment of the various peoples of Persia in the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C.<sup>ii</sup>



bejeweled tunics. These treasures of Achaemenian art are testimony to a civilization whose legend fired Herodotus' imagination.

Offering protection from the cold and for combating the enemy, **pants** emerged as the outfit *par excellence* of warriors, and the bas-reliefs found in Persepolis depict them beneath a belted tunic for holding large daggers. The Huns, nomads of the Steppes and so-called "cruel men", and ancestors of the Turks, Mongols, Alans, and above all, the Scythes and the Sarmates, were the **FIRST** to adopt the tunic with pointed hood, along with leather **pants**, which distinguished them from the dress of the Mediterranean region. [*Historians commonly attribute the first wearing of pants to the Persians, but Benaim states in the Forward that pants were "worn by populations subjected to the rigors of the Central Asian climate. It was with the nomads of the steppes – the Huns, the Scythes and the Alans – who made pants their attire for war, and clearing these first steps, they were adopted by the Persians and the Hittites, but with the exception of Alexander the Great, were rejected by the Greeks."*] These **"Barbarians of the North" wore pants** under a long, belted garment that had long sleeves – a caftan which has survived for more than three millennia. Great horsemen, known for their taste for entertainment and luxury...the Persians, who were dignitaries of the Achaemenian Empire, a paradise...appeared to have worn **pants** in response to their passion for hunting. "They hunted on horseback..." as historians from Herodotus to Xenophon would write. Some accounts emphasize Persian **women** who, without ever having been depicted on a bas-relief, inspired portraits of **horsemwomen** more than prisoners, in contrast to the Greeks, for example [*Greek women lived secluded as virtual prisoners in their own homes*]... **The warrior and nomadic tradition was a part of the life of royal princesses.** Ctesias cited the example of Roxanne [*Persian princess and warrior and wife of Alexander the Great*] in his work Persica. "She was very beautiful and most adept in the art of the javelin." In the court of Darius III, princesses were attended by **"women on horseback"** and their travel rations were no different from the men's. They were trained in the traditional martial arts."

Mary G. Houston in *Ancient Egyptian, Assyrian and Persian Costumes and Decorations*, p79, states, "...an interesting fact is that we have a representation of the Queen of a Persian King who is wearing trousers, which, it will be remembered, are worn by Persian women of the present day."

Who was the first to wear pants, men or women? Surprisingly to many, **throughout most of history trousers have NOT been associated with MEN!** In China both men and women wore trousers. In the Ottoman Empire (based in what is not Turkey) women wore trousers. In Pakistan, which was once part of India, women wear very full-cut trousers under, or in place of, the wrapped *sari*. The *dhoti* is also a rectangular cloth that can be wrapped around the legs to form a skirt or wrapped and brought up between the legs to form loose pants. **ONLY IN EUROPEAN CULTURES** did trousers become associated with men.<sup>iii</sup> (More on this later.) Our country's first *feminists* did their historical research, and we need only go back to their writings in newspapers and magazines. Ellen Battelle Dietrick in the magazine, the *Arena*, wrote in 1894:

"It is a pity to have to shatter an illusion so dear to millions of men... The truth is, man did not invent, nor did he first wear, that bifurcated [*divided into two parts*] garment which is variously designated as 'trousers,' 'breeches,' or 'pantaloons.'..."

The earliest allusion to this garment is by a historian who lived in Greece about 450 B.C. He is describing the costume of various troops...but the PERSIANS, he tells us, 'wore on their legs loose trousers,' and the MEDES marched equipped in the same manner as the Persians.' ...another Greek historian supplies a missing link by the information that this peculiarly feminine fashion which the Persians copied from the Medes, was **the invention of Queen Medea**, who gave her name to, and ruled that portion of the human race known to us as the Medes."

Within the ancient kingdom of Persia where women and men BOTH wore pants we need to look at the position of women. Zoroastrian [*Zoroastrianism was Persia's religion*] texts such as the Avesta clearly define the status of Persian women and reveal that a time when many women in the world were

deprived of their basic rights, Persian women enjoyed social and legal freedom and were treated with great respect. Avestan texts mention both genders asking them to share responsibility and make decisions together. Avestan texts address the issue of leadership and tell us that a ruler may be a woman as well as a man. Persian women were free to choose their spouses.<sup>iv</sup>

Men, women and children worked in ancient Persia to support a diverse economy. Female supervisors were paid more than the men working under them.<sup>v</sup> Historical documents show that male and female workers received equal pay and that there were an equal number of workers from both genders.<sup>vi</sup>

The king was the ultimate source of authority and the royal women acted within a clearly defined spectrum of norms and standards set by the king. However, within the spectrum they enjoyed economic independence, were involved in the administration of economic affairs, traveled and controlled their wealth and position by being active, resolute and enterprising.

The “rations” workers received were based on skill and the level of responsibility they assumed in the workplace. The amount of “rations” were not differentiated based on their gender.<sup>vii</sup>

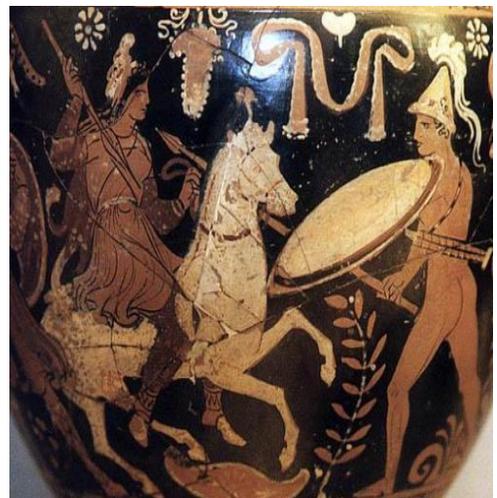
Documents in Babylonia show that women owned properties, which they could sell or lease. After the death of her husband, the widowed wife inherited from the deceased even if she did not have children. Wives retained their own property in marriage and after divorce. Women had employment opportunities, earned wages and as a result were able to be economically independent. Many women even had their own seals. Seals in antiquity were often symbols of power and authority.<sup>viii</sup> Although the Patriarchal system prevailed, polygamy and concubines existed, women in ancient Iran were not an undifferentiated mass leading a secluded life behind high walls without any function and purpose other than child rearing.<sup>ix</sup>

Women in the ancient Persian Empire were valuable beings; they often had important positions in the Courthouse, Ministries, Military, State Department and other official administrations.<sup>x</sup> Throughout history women warriors have fought and led troops into battle. We know of one woman in Israel who

was a Judge and a Prophetess and led into battle, and that was Deborah. (Judges 4-5) The role of ancient Persian female warriors can be traced back at



least to the time of the Parthians (250 B.C. – 224 A.D.) The women warriors, known as “Amazons” by the ancient Greeks, were typical of such fighters who prevailed in Iran’s north and northwest as early as the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. or earlier. The ancient Greek vase (right) depicts an Amazon female warrior. Note the Medo-Persian style **trousers**, tunic, footwear, etc. Women warriors were also among the Scythians, Sarmatians and Celts at the time of the Achaemenids. The Amazon on



the left, wearing **trousers** and carrying a shield and quiver, is from an ancient Greek Attic, white-ground alabastron, c. 470 B.C., British Museum, London.

A significant fact to point out is that pants existed in Biblical OT times but were worn by BOTH sexes of **heathen nations** and not by the Hebrews.

**BRACCAE**



In the NT era pants continued to be worn by the “**barbarians of the north**”. *Braccae*, the Latin word for, and ancestor of the English word, “breeches,” were common to all the nations which encircled the Greek and Roman population, extending from the Indian to the Atlantic Ocean. We are informed of the use of trousers or pantaloons [*the word, “pants”, comes from “pantaloons”*] among the following nations: the Medes and Persians; the Parthians; the Phrygians; the Sacae; the Sarmatae; the Dacians and Getae; the Teutones; the Belgae; the Britons; the Gauls; and the Celts.<sup>xi</sup> In ancient monuments we find the above-mentioned people constantly exhibited in trousers, thus clearly distinguishing them from Greeks and Romans. The figures depicted on ancient Roman armoured breastplates often include barbarian warriors in shirts and trousers.

Pictured are the Sarmatians in their long trousers – *braccae* – taken from the column of Trajan.<sup>xii</sup>

The Western ancient world had a long-held aversion to pants and considered them indecent. The Greeks seem never to have worn *braccae*. The wearing of tight-fitting pants was restricted to the slaves of the Greeks (both sexes), probably to indicate their “barbarian” origins. Pants, however, ended up becoming essential in the eyes of Alexander when he formed his cavalry.<sup>xiii</sup> When the ancient Greeks saw Persian men wearing pants for the first time the Greeks thought of them as *effeminate* and mocked the Persians. They also knew that pants were worn by BOTH ancient Persian men and women.<sup>xiv</sup>

During the Roman Republic pants were scorned by the Romans. The ancient Romans were aware that their clothing differed from that of other peoples. In particular, they noted the long trousers worn by people they considered “barbarians from the north,” including the Germanic Franks and Goths. They would have been horrified that sewn, fitted clothing replaced their draped garments.<sup>xv</sup> But, in spite of their longtime bias against any kind of trousers, during the Roman Empire in the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D., Roman soldiers ventured further and further north in pursuit of conquest. Eventually, they made their way to Britain where many men wore pants to protect themselves from the cold. Soon Roman auxiliary soldiers, esp horsemen, adopted the short, close-fitting pants of the “barbarians”, and they returned home with them. The most famous Roman to wear *braccae* was the Emperor Augustus Caesar (63 B.C.-14 A.D.), who wore them through the winter to protect his sometimes fragile health. The Roman Emperor Nero, who ordered the executions of the Apostles Peter and Paul, wore tight pants under his tunic!<sup>xvi</sup>

There were two types of trousers worn by the peoples conquered by Rome. The pants of the SCYTHES, introduced by the Germans and the Celts, and served as the model for the GAULS, were a sort of breeches called *femoralia*. These long **leggings** were referred to by the Greek historian, Polybius, in 325 B.C., by the Greek word *peison*, or **Persian pants**. They can be seen on the coins of the Santons and the Pictons, as well as on the *arc de triomphe* in Orange. After first having found them rather odd, the Romans adopted them for their troops – *Gallia braccata*. The Romans called a part of transalpine Gaul by this condescending term.<sup>xvii</sup>

During the 2<sup>nd</sup> cen. B.C., breeches reached the Romans from the Gauls, having first passed through Germania. **ROMAN WOMEN** took to wearing short underpants, almost panties, called *sugbligatus*, as can be seen in the mosaics of the Villa Casale in Sicily (4<sup>th</sup> cen. A.D.) Initially used only by acrobats and gymnasts, a two-piece outfit composed of a brassiere and panties was adopted by both matronly and free-minded women, as was revealed during the 19<sup>th</sup> cen. with the excavation of Pompeii. “Thighs were covered in a fine cloth fashioned into a veritable pair of leggings,” as was



noted in an article on the frescoes of Pompeii in *La Revue des Deux Mondes* in July, 1970. “On the thighs, very fine leggings can be perceived, in contrast with the coarse fabric of the rest of the clothing.”<sup>xviii</sup> (The Roman Attis is pictured in leggings.)

Concerning the leggings of the Romans, Alexandra Croom, author of *Roman Clothing and Fashion*, states, “In the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries town-dwelling Romans would have generally been bare-legged. Full-length **trousers were considered the costume of barbarians**, and would not have been worn, even in cold weather; instead, wrappings of cloth were used on both upper and lower legs. The rural population, including rich men out hunting, had more need of protection for their legs, not only from the weather but from undergrowth and plants, and often had their lower legs covered with one form of *puttee* or another, possibly including strips of cloth wrapped round in the manner of a bandage.



It is clear that women would wear some form of *puttee* on occasion. The word used is *fascia* or *fasciola* (little strip/bandage), suggesting some form of *puttee* or piece of cloth, folded round the foot in the modern Russian manner. Cicero refers to a woman’s house-shoes and purple puttees’ (*fasciolis*; *Response to the Soothsayers*, 21.44).

In the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries the introduction of the long-sleeved, decorated tunic was accompanied by a new form of leg covering. They were not trousers in the modern sense, but were closer to medieval hose, being tight-fitting, following the shape of the leg, and with integral feet. A 4<sup>th</sup> century wall-painting depicts a slave carrying a pair over his shoulder (pictured at left). The leggings could have been skin-tight or cut from woolen cloth, as in the medieval period. Hose continued to be worn until the end of the Roman period.

The other type of trousers worn by the “barbarians” were the *braccae* – crude woolen trousers secured at the waist with a leather tie and often tied at the ankles as well. *Braccae* never came into use in Rome. In fact, they seemed so strange and foreign that one of the ways that Roman sculptors and painters identified foreigners was to depict them wearing *braccae*.<sup>xix</sup>

A major point that must be made is the fact that the Apostle Paul, who had **Roman citizenship**, would have known about pants. He was an educated man who traveled extensively and would have known about the dress of other nationalities. He did missionary work in some of the countries where people wore pants. He was imprisoned for 4 years at one time in Rome and probably saw Roman soldiers in short pants. He was probably aware that the Roman Emperor wore pants. In Col. 3:11 he mentions the Scythian along with the “barbarian.” (“Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, **Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free...**”) **Paul would have known the “barbarians” wore pants, and that WOMEN “barbarians” wore pants.** The Apostle Paul was at home in the Greco-Roman culture and probably held a similar aversion to pants typical of the rest of the Empire. **He would NOT have worn the “garb of the barbarian,”** neither did he regard pants as *masculine* and the *kethoneth/chiton/tunica* as *feminine* attire, neither did he preach against women wearing pants.

Diaspora Jews, present on the day of Pentecost, had been scattered into countries where people wore pants. In fact, by 20 B.C.-A.D. 50 an estimated one million Jews had settled in both PERSIA and Asia Minor. Judaea was under Seleucid Persian rule prior to coming under Roman rule. Jerusalem was over-run by Antiochus IV and soldiers in pants who desecrated the temple.<sup>xx</sup> There were many instances in history that would have brought Jews into contact with pants, but the **Romans had never seen pants until they invaded northern Europe – NOT when Pompey conquered Judaea!**

According to Croom, “There are no contemporary portraits of Jews in the province during the Roman period, so an understanding of their costume has to come from a study of a few surviving garments and literary evidence.

Men’s costume was **very similar to the basic Greek costume** used extensively in the eastern Empire, consisting of a tunic and mantle. The usual set of a man’s everyday clothing can be seen in a list giving the order in which clothes were removed at a bath: ‘first he removes his shoes, then the hat, then the mantle, then he unfastens the girdle, then his tunic, and after he unties the undergarment’ (*Tosefta Derech Eretz, Perek Ha Niknas D*). Surviving examples of tunics from a collection of c. 135 in the Cave

of Letters show that they were made of two rectangles of cloth sewn together, decorated with two stripes. The mantle was rectangular, and was distinguished from those worn by other races by the fact that it had a tassel on each of the four corners (*Deuteronomy 22:12*), while examples from the Cave show that by the mid-2<sup>nd</sup> century, mantles had the L-shaped corner decorations used throughout the Empire.”

The provinces of the Roman Empire covered a great many different nations and tribes. The Romans imposed their rule on these people, set up an administrative system and demanded taxes, but they also accepted that different people had different CULTURES and did not attempt to convert them all to an Italian Roman way of life. Living a Roman way of life did not mean everyone had to wear Mediterranean styles of clothing. It was recognized that different nationalities wore different style of clothes. In the 6<sup>th</sup> century St. Isidore of Seville wrote, “Each nationality has its own costume belonging to it, such as the Parthians and their wide, flowing trousers, the Gauls and their soft square mantles, the Germans and their shaggy coverings, the Spaniards and their *stringes*, the Sardinians and their garments of wild animal hides...Nationalities are distinguished by their costume just as they differ in their languages...” (*Etymologies, 19.23.1-3,6*).<sup>xxi</sup>

“Barbarians” of either sex, who may have accepted the Gospel, would not have dressed like Greeks and Romans or Hebrews as a result of their conversion but would have continued to wear their pants.

## SHADRACH, MESHACH AND OBEDNEGO

*Daniel 3:21* “Then these men were bound in their coats, their **hosen**, and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.”

After the overthrow of Babylonia by the Persian Empire, the Persian king, Cyrus the Mede, gave Jews permission to return to their homeland in 538 B.C.<sup>xxii</sup> History sources commonly place the appearance of pants in the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C., but pants were characteristic of the Achaemenid Period, dating mainly from the 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C. The Achaemenid Empire was created by Cyrus the Great (559-530 B.C.)<sup>xxiii</sup> The book of Daniel was likely written between 540 and 530 B.C.<sup>xxiv</sup> Daniel 3:21 is Biblical proof of the historical origin of pants.

*B.W. Johnson’s Commentary* on v21 states:

“The language shows their **dress was Babylonian, rather than Jewish**. The “coat” was a kind of mantle...the “hosen” were not socks, but **drawers or trousers**, the entire covering of the lower limbs; the “hats” were turbans, or tiarias, such as are now worn in the same country.”

*Easton’s Bible Dictionary* confirms the **dress of the Persians** is described in Daniel 3:21.<sup>xxv</sup>

*Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary* states:

“coats . hosen . hats – Herodutus [*famous Greek historian*] [1.195] says that the Babylonian costume consisted of three parts: (1) wide, long **pantaloons**; (2) a woolen shirt; (3) an outer mantle with a girdle round it. So these are specified by Gesenius [*author of the Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon and referred to as the father of modern Hebrew lexicography*] “their pantaloons, inner tunics (hosen, or stockings are not commonly worn in the east) and outer mantles.”

*The Homiletic Commentary on the book of Daniel*, by Thomas Robinson, states:

“According to Herodotus, the garments **worn by the Babylonians** were...threefold...found on **Babylonian cylinders** [*‘picture stories’ engraved generally on wet clay*]. Symmachus [*author of one of*

the Greek versions of the OT] renders by a word denoting **drawers** or **breeches reaching down to the feet**, such as were worn by the PERSIANS and SCYTHIANS.”

The *Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia* states:

“Hosen” is used ONLY in Daniel 3:21. The Aramaic word, *petash*, means “**undergarments, breeches.**”

We have a variety of meanings for the word “hosen”: drawers, trousers, pantaloons, breeches, breeches reaching to the feet and undergarments. The “hosen” could not have been all of these, but we do know they were Persian and not Jewish. We can enter still yet another translation, that of Pagninus, an Italian of great skill in Oriental languages and Biblical learning. He was deeply and accurately skilled in the Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Chaldee and Arabic tongues.<sup>xxvi</sup> Pagninus translates into the Latin *cum femoralibus*.<sup>xxvii</sup> The *femoralia* were previously described as “leggings” – a type of Persian pants.

The Babylonian cylinder seals are a part of the Oxus treasure, which consists of about 170 objects from the Achaemenid Empire and are displayed in the British Museum. Men are depicted on the cylinder seals wearing “nomadic” garments consisting of a thigh-length tunic and baggy trousers or “leggings” with criss-cross designs on them. They are seen alongside men in long, loose gowns or the Persian robe. Persian men also wore long PLEATED skirts. Dr. St. J. Simpson of the Department of the Middle East British Museum was able to verify the date for the cylinder seals.



“Two different types of costume were worn in Achaemenid Iran during the 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C. and are popularly regarded as Persian and Median dress. Both are depicted on reliefs of this period from Persepolis, in Iran, of which we have selected 19<sup>th</sup> century plaster casts on display here in the British Museum...The first type, often referred to as a Persian robe, consists of a loose gown whereas the so-called Median dress is a **riding costume** with belted tunic over **loose trousers**. It is very unlikely that only Persians wore one type and Medes the other, and it is probably better to regard them as different types of costume used for **courtly** versus practical **riding** purposes.”

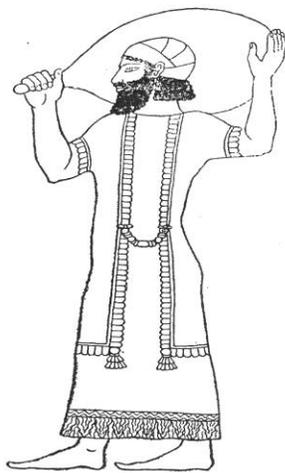


Fig. 45

Considering the nature of the English word, “hosen,” and the *femoralia*, the 3 Hebrew children were most likely to have been wearing “leggings” rather than wide pantaloons or baggy trousers. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (and Daniel) were in position close to the King and probably rode horses. They would not have been the only Jews who wore Babylonian dress. This picture is considered to be that of a Jewish captive of the Persian conqueror.<sup>xxviii</sup>

Bible history.com states Queen Esther ascended to the queenship ca. 478 B.C.<sup>xxix</sup> She too wore Persian clothing, and she reigned over a kingdom in which **WOMEN WORE PANTS AND HAD RIGHTS!** [The King’s offering to her of HALF the kingdom is a hint into how women were regarded in ancient Persia (Esther 7:2).]

When Joseph was instigated next to the Pharaoh over Egypt he would have dressed like an Egyptian ruler, likewise, Moses while living in the Pharaoh’s palace, dressed like an Egyptian. When the Jews returned to their homeland after the captivity they went back to dressing like Jews,

which is all proof that clothing is not **theological**; clothing is not salvational; worshipping heathen gods was salvational; but, clothing is part of the CULTURE of a country. The climate of Israel did not call for warm coats and pants. Tunics could be both cool and warm in a country where the temperature can vary considerably. The flowing tunic allowed air to circulate around the body in the hot sunshine; at night it could be wrapped closely round the body like a blanket for warmth.<sup>xxx</sup>

## PANTS ON MEN; DRESSES ON WOMEN

After the “fall of Rome” in the 5<sup>th</sup> century (476 A.D.) the T-shaped tunic remained the basic garment for European men and women until **1340**. This is the date, according to historians, that the difference in masculine and feminine attire became clear.<sup>xxxii</sup> **PRIOR TO THIS DATE BOTH SEXES WORE DRESSES**<sup>xxxii</sup>. Three factors influenced this transformation: (1) men in TIGHTS, or HOSE (2) the *braccae* (3) the influence of the Roman Catholic Church on European culture, politics and society.

A change in style of armor put men into TIGHTS. These military-style breeches soon disappeared as in Italy, they were transformed into luxurious leggings fashioned, for the first time, out of knitting.<sup>xxxiii</sup> Once this costume became general, clothing for European men and women began to diverge dramatically. **FOR THE FIRST TIME the long robe or dress became associated with femininity**. The female body became defined by garments that allowed the shoulders and the throat to be seen above a low-cut neck. The breasts and the belly, symbols of femininity and maternity, were accentuated. Dresses were very long, close-fitting at the bust, clinching at the waist, and with plunging necklines. The idea was to make a woman look constantly pregnant, thus **symbolizing fertility**. The CHURCH disapproved of the plunging necklines, but alas, the controversy over pants took off!<sup>xxxiv</sup>

The *braccae*, worn by BOTH sexes of the “barbarians”, referred to as “the kind of pants worn by different peoples of Antiquity”, and the ancestor of modern day pants, crept slowly into use, worn under a blouse or a tunic that



went down almost to the feet. Engravings dating from the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries show married couples quarrelling over pants. “I’m the one wearing the pants!” says the man. Because pants allow freedom of movement to the legs, they came to symbolize freedom. An old proverb went like this, “He who has pants, has freedom.” **A power struggle arose** as the quarrel of the pants lay bare the war of the sexes.<sup>xxxv</sup> How many times has the old saying been quoted, as **though it were in the Bible**, but the person quoting it had absolutely no idea where the saying came from? The author of the UPCI book, *The Girl in the Dress*, p95, uses it as support for the UPCI doctrine against women’s pants. The author has nothing to say about the historical origin of such a saying : “Scripture along with our cultural history, backs up the basis for the old question, “Who wears the pants in the family?” The answer is supposed to be the man.” **Scripture?** The basis for this saying lay in the cruel manner in which women were treated during the Medieval period when the Roman Catholic Church was the major influence on European politics, culture and society<sup>xxxvi</sup> – **not the Bible**.

The HOSE worn by men were at first two separate pieces, but as time went by, the two hose were joined, first in the back then across the front. It became necessary (and required by the CHURCH) for men to have a “**codpiece**.” Clothing historian, Lois Banner, in *The Fashionable Sex, 1100-1600*, explains:

“The emphasis on parts of the body associated with sexuality began in the late 11<sup>th</sup> cen. It spread to the 14<sup>th</sup> cen., when exposure of the shape of the genitals became the vogue. The **codpiece**, a sheath which enclosed the male organ, was also developed in this period. Long, lean legs, covered with fitted tights or tight trousers continued to be in vogue until **the mid-19<sup>th</sup> cen., when long, unfitted trousers finally became predominant and remained so until the present.**



The erotic display of portions of men’s bodies was often analogous to what women were wearing to delineate bosoms...The male display, with its open showing of the shape of the legs and the male organ, was in many ways more bold than that of women.”



The **codpiece** may have been invented to protect the genitals during battle, but whatever the initial reason, it drew attention to the male sexual organ. The word, ‘cod,’ itself originally meant scrotum. Men began having the codpiece accentuated. *Fashions of the Past*, editor Elizabeth Drury, p126, states that the “codpiece” assumed an exaggeratedly protruberant form. As the codpiece ceaselessly swelled, taking on the appearance of a **metal shell** or a **padded crotch** (stuffed with a cotton called “bombast”), sarcastic engravings multiplied, associating a woman in pants with an undesirable crazy person.<sup>xxxvii</sup> The pants became a “**symbol of virility**”, which men flaunted, seemingly daring women to “cross-dress.” **Although the CHURCH disapproved of stuffed codpieces and plunging necklines, differentiation between pants as a male garment and the dress as a female garment was created!**

Clothing historian Banner presents three reasons for differentiating between men’s and women’s clothing in this manner:

- (1) The eroticized young male body had a homoerotic dimension. In a culture with a homosexuality tradition dating back to the Greeks, same-sex male attraction was endemic. By the 14<sup>th</sup> cen., however, homosexuals became a persecuted minority. That young men then began to expose their legs may reflect the **seeming triumph of heterosexuality**. From the late 11<sup>th</sup> cen. to the early 14<sup>th</sup> cen. men had worn **long, loose-fitting gowns** which had an androgynous look to them. **Now men definitively took up wearing the bifurcated garments that would become for centuries the hallmark of gender difference in fashion.** It was not that same-sex love disappeared. It was that the widespread legal codes, which were enacted against its existence, and the condemnatory statements about sodomy consistently in prescriptive literature, may have propelled men to expose their bodies as a way of showing their difference from women’s bodies.
- (2) ...the new exposure of male legs (a major change in style of dress) indicated a new resolve to **dominate over women** to reassert control. This new assertion of authority would be in line with what many historians of women have identified as a **worsening of women’s position** from the late medieval period onward.
- (3) The tights were not an entirely new item of dress. For several centuries under their long robes and tunics men had worn leg coverings known as *braies*. (Women, on the other hand,

often wore no such coverings because of the fear that they might provoke, by friction, some sudden “heat” in the genitals of overly-sexual women.) To expose the *braies* as tights was to bring to light long-hidden body differentiation in the area of gender. It was also to put an end to the medieval jokes about domineering women constructed around word plays on who, in a marriage, was wearing the pants. It was now evident, at least from costume, who were the men and who were the women.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

We must take a look at woman’s position during the late Medieval period when pants were designated a male garment and given the symbolism of his authority. A study into this subject will reveal just how cruelly women were treated.



All a husband had to do was accuse his wife of *nagging*, and she would be tortured with a metal face mask called a **brank** or **bride’s scold**. Any movement of the tongue would cause severe injuries to the mouth. Women who disagreed with their husbands, or were found guilty of gossiping, or of any other minor offense had to wear the **branks**. The woman was then tied to the **pillory**. The **ducking stool** was a punishment for women whose speech was considered too brash and brazen or too free. The Catholic Church cruelly punished many women for being “witches.” Scalding liquids

or objects were shoved down the woman’s throat and even **fire brands**.<sup>xxxix</sup>

Now let us look at how the Catholic Church came to disdain women. A system of philosophy that maintains that females are in all ways inferior to males began in Athens, Greece. Attitudes toward women throughout the Roman Empire were inherited from the Greeks. Greek mythology taught that women were created by Zeus as a curse against the human race, which prior to offending the gods, was strictly male.<sup>xi</sup> In the Greek mind masculinity equated humanity.

It was Socrates who immortalized the Athenian disdain toward women. He argued that being born a woman is a divine punishment, since woman is halfway between a man and an animal. The teachings of Socrates were transferred to his star pupil, Plato, and Plato’s most distinguished disciple was Aristotle. Aristotle taught a female is a deformed male. Aristotle argued that women are inferior to men in their ability to reason. A man’s courage is in commanding, a woman’s in obeying, asserted Aristotle. To explain the difference between husband and wife, Aristotle used the same analogy to defend the practice of slavery and define the relationship of **master and slave**. Aristotle laid a lasting philosophical foundation for the notion that females are inferior to males.<sup>xii</sup>

From the Stoic philosophers came the conviction that women are a distraction and temptation to men. Tertullian, a “Church Father”, was a Roman lawyer schooled in Stoic philosophy. His attitude toward women reflects that Greek heritage. To the “Church Fathers” woman became sin personified. The “Fathers” determined that if woman had not sinned, faultless man would still be enjoying himself in the Garden of Eden in perfect harmony with God. Canonized Peter Damian’s [born in or around 1007] view toward woman was typically representative: “I speak to you, O charmers of the clergy, appetizing flesh of the devil, that castaway from Paradise, poison of minds, death of souls, companions of the very stuff of sin, the cause of our ruin. You, I say, I exhort women of the ancient enemy, you\_\_\_\_, sows, screech-owls, night-owls, blood-suckers, she-wolves,...come now, hear me harlots, prostitutes, with your lascivious kisses, you wallowing places for fat pigs, couches for unclean spirits.”<sup>xlii</sup> Clement, another “Church Father”, regarded marriage as simple prostitution and a practice introduced by the devil. The idea that women are the property of their husbands came from pagan Greek philosophy.<sup>xliii</sup>

A tendency to interpret Scripture from the viewpoint of Greek philosophy was given highest expression in the 13<sup>th</sup> cen. in the writings of Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas did more than any other to systematize Christian beliefs and to harmonize them with Greek philosophy. The present day system of theology of the Roman Catholic Church was developed by Aquinas. Aquinas interpreted the writings of

Paul concerning women and marriage through the mind of Aristotle, and the Greek **deprecation of women** became solidly infused within Christian theology.<sup>xliv</sup>

The Church's **hatred of women** eventually **culminated in the "witch craze"** that began in the 12<sup>th</sup> cen. and did not end until the 17<sup>th</sup> cen. It is estimated upwards from one million women were burned at the stake and often after first suffering other public atrocities such as having their breasts hacked off.<sup>xlv</sup>

**The CATHOLIC CHURCH settled the argument over who would wear the pants.** From the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century Venice took measure against gender "cross-dressing", and these measures extended to Rome and were the backing for all **denunciations.**<sup>xlvi</sup> But, many women kept wearing pants. Ladies of standing did not hesitate wearing "feminized" leggings while travelling, riding horses or hunting. But, by the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century a person could be hanged for dressing in clothes, **ruled by the Catholic Church**, as being for the opposite sex.<sup>xlvii</sup>

## CONCLUSION

A study on the history of pants is required in order to straighten out the issue of women's pants. History affirms that pants were characteristic of the Persian Empire, and that they were worn by BOTH sexes. Pants spread to many other countries. In the OT era the people who wore pants were heathen nations. In the NT Roman era these people were called the "barbarians." Had it pleased God to name pants a *masculine* garment, would not the Apostles have worn them? Would not they have preached against women "barbarians" wearing pants? But, the Jews were part of the Empire, and the people of the Roman Empire held an aversion to pants. Pants did not take on male association until after the "fall of Rome," and **the Catholic Church enforced pants as a male garment and the dress as a female garment.**

The historical account of the manner in which the separation of men in pants and women in dresses occurred is NOT a "holiness" picture! The root of the concept was man's **sinful abuse of power** over woman. During this time the Catholic Church tortured and massacred women along with Church "heretics." For both sexes to dress in clothing styles of similar form represents more of a side-by-side relationship of man and woman than the hierarchical one of the Catholic Church.

For both sexes to wear pants is essentially no different than it was for both sexes to wear tunics. We can say that there are as many distinctions between men's and women's pants today as there were distinctions between men's and women's robes in Biblical times. What is considered *masculine* and *feminine* in clothing styles is a matter of CULTURE – not Biblical mandates – and varies with historical era and nationality.

"Holiness" preachers, totally ignorant of the historical facts surrounding the creation of the separation of clothing styles into pants on men and dresses on women, regard this CULTURAL CONCEPT as though it were a DECREE FROM GOD and attempt to support it with Deuteronomy 22:5! This separation and distinction in clothing styles did NOT exist in the Bible, and God had NOTHING TO DO WITH THE CREATION OF IT! Before teaching on an issue that is based upon history, preachers need to do their "homework" and get the facts straight rather than teaching a theory, or assumption, they cannot prove.

To understand how the association of pants with male authority, dominance and superiority, prevalent in our culture, was destroyed read the next article.

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