

Is Makeup a Sin?

Part 3: Makeup & Adornment in 1 Timothy 2:9 & 1 Peter 3:3

"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 Tim. 2:9)

"Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel;"

(1 Peter 3:3)

The above texts, and the definition of "modest" in dress and adornment, must be understood within their correct historical era and culture. The article on these Scriptures under "Jewelry" should be studied in combination with this one.

The Apostles Paul and Peter do not mention makeup specifically, but it is alluded to in the Greek text and evidenced in history as part of adornment.

Cosmetics and perfumes formed part of what clothed the body. The display of self, the expression of identity, of gender, of social belonging, of ethnicity and power, all of which have been interpreted through clothing worn in Roman times, can also be seen in the use of makeup and scent.¹

In studying adornment we must include perfume with makeup. Cosmetics AND perfume were used, as they still are today, to enhance appearance – that is – to make oneself attractive. Applying makeup is a clearly visible means of enhancing one's appearance, but perfumes can be used to beautify too. There are images that show women applying perfume, although, of course, it is not possible to see its effect. Also, perfume containers appear in art as part of toilette scenes, evidence of their part in the beauty process. Although a perfume cannot be said to contribute in any literal way (that is, physical or visual) to the adornment of the body, it can convey an aura of attractiveness. Indeed, scent formed a key element in the written descriptions of great beauty.



Let us consider the definition of the word "cosmetic" as found in *Webster's New World Dictionary*

– “adj. [< Gr. *Kosmetikos*, skilled in arranging < *kosmos*, order], beautifying or designed to beautify. *n.* any such preparation for application to the skin, hair, etc.” Another source tells us the word derives from the Greek *kosmetike tekhnē*, meaning “technique of dress and ornament”, from *kosmetikos*, “skilled in ordering or arranging” and that from *kosmos*, meaning amongst others “order” and “ornament”.ⁱⁱ

So, the English word “adorn” in the above texts, translated from the Greek, *kosmeo*, meaning to *decorate*,ⁱⁱⁱ is the origin of the English word, “cosmetic.” *Kosmeo* comes from the root word *komeo*, which means “to *tend*, i.e. take care of”.^{iv} *Komao* (“have long hair”) and *kome* (*locks*, as *ornamental*)^v derive from this same root along with *kompso*, “well dressed, i.e. nice”^{vi}; and *kosmios*, “orderly, i.e. decorous”^{vii}.

The English word, “modest”, is the Greek *kosmios*. The English word, “decorum”, means propriety and good taste in dress.^{viii} The English word, “orderly”, means “neat; well-arranged.”^{ix} Another English word to consider is “decent”, which means “not immodest; not obscene; conforming to approved social standards; respectable.”^x

The Roman Empire had a class system we do not have, and people dressed their social class. In classical antiquity, you were what you wore. Roman jurisprudence distinguished between respectable married women and prostitutes by means of their appearance, which was defined in terms of apparel and adornment, with dress codes.^{xi} Roman law defined modesty and immodesty based on appearance.^{xii}

Sumptuary laws limited the amount of money that could be spent on clothes and personal adornment, and the amount of “showing off” which women could do in public, but prostitutes were exempt, in fact, it was only the *hetaerae* who could ignore the tabus of society because they did not apply to them.^{xiii} (Colonial America had sumptuary laws, also Japan.)^{xiv} **Only harlots were permitted the adornment proscribed in 1 Tim. 2:9 and 1 Peter 3:3.**^{xv}

Pudicitia, or purity and modesty of manner, was the chief virtue of a Roman *matrona*.^{xvi} The Romans believed chastity and modesty should be expressed in every moment of an honest woman’s life. The much-prized virtue of modesty epitomized the married woman. Women of ancient Greece also dressed modestly.^{xvii} The Apostles did not use the word, *kosmios*, “modest” in a different manner than was understood by all Greek speaking people. “Modest apparel” was not a “holiness standard” for the Church but the **social convention** of the time. The Apostles did not create a dress code for Christian women that would cause them to stand out as a separate social class in clothing and adornment differently from the rest of society.

In early Republican Rome a woman, when out of doors, revealed no more of her body than does a Nun today.^{xviii} Matrons and the Vestal Virgins, who ran the State Cult of Rome, were often closely associated. Chastity and modesty were their distinguishing characteristics. The ritual vestments of the Virgins included some of the same garments worn by matrons to indicate their married status. The Vestal Virgins wore the nuptial

veil and headdress, as well as the long gown and sash of a married woman; thus their virginal status was defined by the same symbolic garments as those worn by matrons.^{xix}

David K. Bernard, UPCI author of *Practical Holiness a Second Look*, p175, writes, "Since the primary effect of makeup is to highlight sex appeal, we reject makeup as immodest." This is personal opinion of Church leaders and the basis of their "bylaw." It is totally unsubstantiated by historical evidence.

It was only the Vestal Virgins who could NOT wear ANY makeup and little to no jewelry. This fate was decided as early as 420 BC when Postumia, a Vestal Virgin, was tried for incest, a crime of which she was not guilty, but suspicion had been raised by the fact that she was always pretty in makeup and jewelry (Latin *cultus*), and she had a wit which was a little too loose for a Virgin. After an adjournment she was found Not Guilty. The High Priest delivered judgment on behalf of the College of Pontiffs and told her to stop making jokes, and in her dress and appearance, to aim at looking "HOLY" rather than looking "smart".^{xx} Matrons were described as "modest" and wore makeup and jewelry, but the Vestal Virgins were required to look "HOLY". Later on, "Christian" women were given similar instruction from their teachers. Tertullian abhorred makeup; it was an attempt to improve on the handiwork of God.^{xxi}



This picture of a painting of a family group from Brescia in Italy shows one of the women wearing eyeliner. Although this particular image has an eastern flavor to it, and the use of kohl products was originally an eastern practice, the dress is Roman and assimilation of ideas and makeup products from the eastern part of the Empire is well documented and reflects the cosmopolitanism of the Empire. Women probably used eyeliner of this type across the Roman world. We can take this as a typical example of contemporary eye makeup worn by respectable

women.^{xxii}

The wearing of modest clothing was a concern for the philosophical schools (frequent bathing was viewed as a prelude to seduction, along with EXCESSIVE USE OF MAKEUP and fine clothing) and a social convention for respectable married women. Secular authors also adopted "adornment" terminology to describe behavior rather than clothing. Aristotle said, "Silence is the adornment of women." (Aristotle, Politics, 1, 13)^{xxiii}

The **excessive** use of cosmetics and sexually provocative dress style is contrasted by Seneca with "the great honour of modesty."^{xxiv} In a letter to his mother, written c. A.D. 41-49, Seneca bears witness to the social pressure on his mother and other modest wives in the time of Claudius. The Apostle Peter in 1 Peter 3:1-2 assures NT Gentile converts their husbands will be won to Christianity by the wife's chaste conversation and not by copying or trying to outdo the prostitutes competing for their husbands' attention. Modesty and self-control express the discretion and decorum befitting the Christian woman which stands in contrast to the seductiveness and wealth displayed by the *hetairai*. The *hetairai* not only wore more clothes than other women, but finer ones. In comparison, a competitor for her husband's attention dressed better, more visibly, more expensively, more showily than other women.^{xxv} If a woman wished to be considered respectable, she did not dress **ostentatiously**.

From the evidence that survives, women can be defined most clearly in the roles of *meretrices* and *matronae*; that is, either as prostitutes or as married women. Conventionally, women were described as belonging to one or other social group, at either end of the social scale, with all the implications of good or bad that went with these extremes. The status of the common prostitute was in direct apposition to the Roman matron.^{xxvi}

Prostitutes (*meretrices*) were no more difficult to recognize in Roman antiquity than in the modern world. Many of them were foreigners, women from Syria and Egypt. Their faces were **HEAVILY MADE UP**, they wore no bands in their hair and their clothes – a **short tunica** and a **toga** (the stigma also of women who had been detected in adultery – they were obliged by law to wear), for naturally they did not wear the long gown, the *stola*, of the respectable matron, -- were usually in outrageously bright colours. According to T.A.J. McGinn in *Prostitution, Sexuality, and the Law*, "The *lex Iulia* specified certain articles of clothing – such as the *stola* and *vittae* – as peculiar to *matronae* and forbade these to be worn by prostitutes." Dr. Lindsay Allason-Jones, former Director of the Archaeological Museums at Newcastle University has worked extensively all over the Roman Empire, says that "Prostitutes in Italy were often of Syrian



or Egyptian origin, and were identifiable by their **HEAVY MAKEUP**, the lack of bands in their hair, and their **short tunics** and brightly coloured togas.^{xxvii} *Hetaerae* quite often wore translucent dresses.^{xxviii} Seneca wrote that it was "the kind of dress that exposed no greater nakedness by being removed."^{xxix} Such garments of airy delicacy were called "Coan" because they were imported from Cos into Greece and Rome. [Pliny N.H. xi 22 (26)].^{xxx} According to Sarah B. Pomeroy, in *Goddess, Whores, Wives, and Slaves*, p83,

prostitutes wore saffron-dyed material of gauzelike transparency.

The respectable woman's outer garments were a *tunica*, which from the 1st century B.C. came to be called *stola*, and a *palla*. Respectable women in no circumstances at all wore the toga. A woman's *stola* extended to the ground; her *palla* might cover her head. The picture of the matron on the left is wearing a *palla* with fringe.



The modern descendant of the *tunica/stola* is a dress with kimono sleeves. The top of the garment was gathered or laid in folds on the shoulders – the gathered portions sewed together or held by brooches. A girdle was tied just below the bust. The *stola* could have short sleeves, but not set in sleeves as in modern times, or it could be sleeveless.

The moralist, Cato, held a “Victorian” outlook toward women and the repeal of the *lex Oppia* in 195 B.C., which severely restricted the amount of jewelry and costly goods women could own. Emperor Augustus, like Cato, upheld the moralist tradition with reference to the days of the Republic when Romans led their austere lives, before Rome became a wealthy Empire. Augustus enacted legislation for dress codes which would distinguish the modest wife from the adulteress and prostitute.^{xxxii}

G. Davies in an essay, *Clothes as Sign: The Case of the Large and Small Herculaneum Women*, pp 228, 237-38 draws attention to distinct statue types prevalent in the 1st century. In statues depicting the modest married woman she was portrayed clothed in a long dress with a large mantle drawn around her which she used to cover the back of her head to form the marriage veil. Her right arm was drawn across her body to hold her veil in place on her head so that the right breast was hidden from view. Davies observes that these statues were “heavily draped, not much body showing, [posing] defensive gestures [with the right arm above their breasts], with their modesty often reinforced by a lowered gaze and [in all statues reproduced in this type] veiled.” The long dress falling down to her feet and the large mantle drawn over the head epitomized modesty. The matron pictured on the right is known as the little woman of Herculaneum. Wealthy Roman matrons could go unveiled, perhaps to show their hair-style. This matron's hair is in the “melon” style. Certainly, “modest” under Augustus' rule was quite RADICAL in comparison to today, also POLITICAL, honoring Augustus.



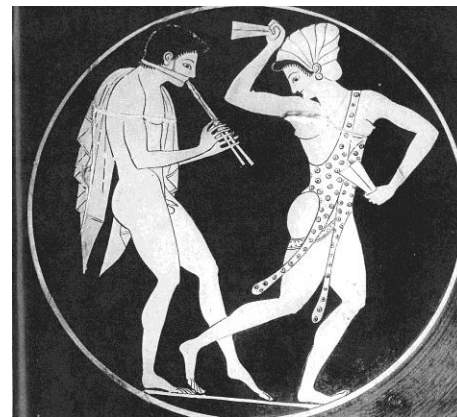


In many images of husbands and wives, the woman's eyes are turned away, or cast down as a sign of modesty, like this Roman woman who lived in Egypt in about A.D. 170.

How did the dress of the immodest woman differ from that of the modest wife? Two bronze statues found in a house in Herculaneum are now located in the Museum of Classical Archaeology, University of Cambridge. They portray two dancing girls who wear no veils or mantles; one, in fact, is depicted undoing her *chiton* so as to expose her shoulder and part of her breast. These were clearly struck to convey the exact opposite of the married wife.^{xxxii} Clothing which distinguished respectable married women from *hetairai* was not new in Roman society.



Hetairai are often portrayed nude. The dancing one on the right is wearing a panther skin.



Prostitutes were attached to most of the temples of oriental divinities in Rome. There were thousands of sacred prostitutes attached to Diana's Shrine at Ephesus. The women in 1 Tim. 2:9 were dressed like *hetaerae*, although they may not have been wearing panther skins or transparent dresses with nothing underneath! It would have really taken nerve to show up for a Christian prayer service in an obscene manner. It is possible to understand "modest" in more than one way. It meant a "toning down" from "ostentation" referring to the AMOUNT of jewelry, cosmetics and price of apparel, but also meant a sense of propriety and decency, not obscene and keeping with the conventions of society.

Even though "modesty" in dress and adornment was the **social convention**, such was not always the case in the *pagan religious context*. The worship of Diana involved a gross immorality. The Apostle Peter in 1 Peter 3:5-6 did not refer to any *pagan* social class of women in the Empire for Christian women to emulate, but he referred to the HEBREW women of old, even to Sarah, the wife of Abraham. This was not because Hebrew women were plain in their appearance and wore no ornamentation; their only beauty was an inner one. Hebrew women dressed similarly to Greeks and Romans. Scripture texts, archaeological discoveries and *Talmudic* literature evidence the facts that Hebrew women also wore jewelry, makeup, rich clothing, braids, fancy hair-styles and perfume. But, their beauty was not the mere, outward adornment of *pagan* women but included an inner peaceful and tranquil spirit and the ability to get along with their husbands. The high-class *hetaerae* had nothing but OUTWARD beauty and **ruled over men** to whom they granted favors; women, in general, bear the upper hand over men in the *pagan cults* and were loud, boisterous and drunk.

The meaning of "modest" in dress and adornment must be seen within the appropriate **culture and historical era**. It has its bearing in social conventions. If we dressed according to the definition of "modest" as it was understood in the Roman Empire, in which the Early Church lived, we would dress in a **loose gown to the feet and cover our heads** in public, for this was considered the epitome of "modesty". We might even cover our breasts with an arm and never look directly into the eyes of a man. We could be sleeveless, except in public when we would be wrapped in a cloak, but we could wear jewelry, makeup and perfume. (The young woman at the top of this article pouring perfume is from the late Augustan era. The painting is from a fresco in a Roman villa. She is wearing a double-girdled, sleeveless *chiton* and is veiled. She is wearing earrings and bracelets. She was legally "modest".) "Immodest" applied to **prostitutes**.

UPCI author of *Practical Holiness a Second Look*, p184, addresses the view, "*Our culture now accepts the use of makeup; the negative connotations of makeup no longer exist*" and replies with, "Perhaps society does not associate makeup with harlotry as it used to, but does this mean God no longer thinks of those associations? Are the

illustrations of the prophets no longer relevant?" Bernard seriously lacks a study on the history of makeup. How societies have viewed makeup down through time has not been the same. From so early as Classical Greece, the "negative connotations" of makeup were toward the EXAGGERATED AND HEAVY APPLICATION, which was typical of prostitutes. It also applied to the OVERUSE of perfume and all other cosmetic products. But, there was a casual acceptance of the reasonable, everyday use of makeup and beauty products not used "ostentatiously." Queen Victoria, who was somewhat like the moralists of the Roman Empire, who disdained women, ruled against the wearing of all makeup, so in our country, throughout the Victorian Era, makeup was not very popular but gained wider approval as women won more legal rights.

The Scriptural references to eye "paint" in OT prophecies are not commandments against makeup. It was not God who defined the look of a prostitute, but this was determined in CULTURE.

Conclusion

The issues that concern Pentecostal/Apostolic women so much: clothing, hair length and hair styles, jewelry, makeup and women's rights all fall under the category of **culture** and not salvation. We must separate commandments of God from **cultural concepts**.

Makeup, esp foundation, has some very useful purposes, like that of covering abnormal skin conditions: scars, tattoos, skin blotchiness, rosacea, which does not heighten "sex appeal" but actually helps acquire a look of "normalcy" to the skin. The skilled, artful and reasonable use of makeup, to enhance natural beauty, is not "immodest" and does not violate 1 Tim. 2:9 and 1 Peter 3:3.

The Apostles did not formulate "dress codes" for Christian women that would cause them to have to alter or re-design their clothing and eliminate ornaments and beauty products in order to look separate from the "world". A woman could not dress or adorn herself any more modestly than the manner in which the class of respectable women did so. The "separation" was with the dress and adornment of prostitutes.

We cannot over-look the fact that dress and adornment in the Scripture texts of 1 Tim. 2:9 and 1 Peter 3:3 is referring to that worn in a *pagan context in worship of idols*. There is no direct parallel to **sacred** prostitution in our culture and historical era. Women, who are Spirit filled modern day believers, are not going to come to church looking like today's common prostitutes. We use our own good sense to dress conservatively and in good taste for worship. We do not need man-made, old-fashioned, RADICAL "dress codes" – "bylaws" – to keep us in line and under the control of male leaders!

If you have read anything in this article that has helped you, please take the time to send me your feedback. I would love to hear from you.

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- ⁱ "Cosmetics & Perfumes in the Roman World", by Susan Stewart
- ⁱⁱ "Cosmetics" – Wikipedia; <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Makeup>
- ⁱⁱⁱ "Strong's Expanded Dictionary of Bible Words" #2885
- ^{iv} "Strong's Expanded Dictionary of Bible Words" #2865
- ^v "Strong's Expanded Dictionary of Bible Words" #2864
- ^{vi} "Strong's Expanded Dictionary of Bible Words" #2866
- ^{vii} "Strong's Expanded Dictionary of Bible Words" #2887
- ^{viii} "Webster's New World Dictionary"
- ^{ix} "Webster's New World Dictionary"
- ^x "Webster's New World Dictionary"
- ^{xi} "Roman Wives, Roman Widows", by Bruce W. Winter, p4
- ^{xii} "Roman Wives, Woman Widows," by Bruce W. Winter, p77
- ^{xiii} "Women in Greece and Rome", by Verena Zinserling, p24
- ^{xiv} "Sumptuary Law", Britannica Online Encyclopedia
- ^{xv} "I Suffer Not a Woman", by Catherine and Richard Kroeger
- ^{xvi} "Roman Women", by Augusto Frascchetti, p45-46
- ^{xvii} "History of Clothing Around the World" http://encarta.msn.com/text_761569657_10/Clothing.html
- ^{xviii} "Roman Women Their History and Habits", by J.P.V.D. Baldson, p252
- ^{xix} "Roman Women", by Augusto Frascchetti, p30
- ^{xx} "Roman Women Their History and Habits", by J.P.V.D. Baldson, p261
- ^{xxi} "Roman Women Their History and Habits", by J.P.V.D. Baldson, p261
- ^{xxii} "Cosmetics and Perfumes in the Roman World", by Susan Stewart, p32
- ^{xxiii} "Women in Greece and Rome", by Verena Zinserling, p26
- ^{xxiv} "Roman Wives, Roman Widows", by Bruce W. Winter, p99
- ^{xxv} "Levels of Concealment: the Dress of the *Hetairai* and *Pornai* in Greek Texts", by Dalby
- ^{xxvi} "Cosmetics and Perfumes in the Roman World", by Susan Stewart
- ^{xxvii} "Did Prostitutes in Rome Wear Red and Yellow?" <http://www.romanarmy.net/prostitutes.htm>
- ^{xxviii} "Women in Greece and Rome", by Verena Zinserling, p38
- ^{xxix} "Roman Women, Roman Widows", by Bruce W. Winter, p101
- ^{xxx} "Did Prostitutes in Rome wear Red and Yellow?" <http://www.romanarmy.net/prostitutes.htm>
- ^{xxxi} "Roman Clothing and Fashion", by A.T. Croom
- ^{xxxii} "Roman Wives, Roman Widows", by Bruce W. Winter, p80-81