On the Apparel of Women

Tertullian (c. AD 155–220)

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Chapter I.-Introduction. Modesty in Apparel Becoming to Women, in Memory of the Introduction of Sin into the World Through a Woman.

If there dwelt upon earth a faith as great as is the reward of faith which is expected in the heavens, no one of you at all, best beloved sisters, from the time that she had first "known the Lord," and learned (the truth) concerning her own (that is, woman's) condition, would have desired too gladsome (not to say too ostentatious) a style of dress; so as not rather to go about in humble garb, and rather to affect meanness of appearance, walking about as Eve mourning and repentant, in order that by every garb of penitence she might the more fully expiate that which she derives from Eve,-the ignominy, I mean, of the first sin, and the odium (attaching to her as the cause) of human perdition. "In pains and in anxieties dost thou bear (children), woman; and toward thine husband (is) thy inclination, and he lords It over thee. And do you not know that you are (each) an Eve? The sentence of God on this sex of yours lives in this age: the guilt must of necessity live too. You are the devil's gateway: you are the unsealer of that (forbidden) tree: you are the first deserter of the divine law: you are she who persuaded him whom the devil was not valiant enough to attack. You destroyed so easily God's image, man. On account of your desert-that is, death-even the Son of God had to die. And do you think about adorning yourself over and above your tunics of skins? Come, now;

if from the beginning of the world the Milesians sheared sheep, and the Serians spun trees, and the Tyrians dyed, and the Phrygians embroidered with the needle, and the Babylonians with the loom, and pearls gleamed, and onyx-stones flashed; if gold itself also had already issued, with the cupidity (which accompanies it), from the ground; if the mirror, too, already had licence to lie so largely, Eve, expelled from paradise, (Eve) already dead, would also have coveted these things, I imagine! No more, then, ought she now to crave, or be acquainted with (if she desires to live again), what, when she was living, she had neither had nor known.

Accordingly these things are all the baggage of woman in her condemned and dead state, instituted as if to swell the pomp of her funeral.

Chapter II.-The Origin of Female Ornamentation, Traced Back to the Angels Who Had Fallen.

For they, withal, who instituted them are assigned, under condemnation, to the penalty of death,-those angels, to wit, who rushed from heaven on the daughters of men; so that this ignominy also attaches to woman. For when to an age much more ignorant (than ours) they had disclosed certain well-concealed material substances, and several not well-revealed scientific arts-if it is true that they had laid bare the operations of metallurgy, and had divulged the natural properties of herbs, and had promulgated the powers of enchantments, and had traced out every curious art, even to the interpretation of the stars-they conferred properly and as it were peculiarly upon women that instrumental mean of womanly ostentation, the radiances of jewels wherewith necklaces are variegated, and the circlets of gold wherewith the arms are compressed, and the medicaments of orchil with which wools are coloured, and that black powder itself wherewith the eyelids and eyelashes are made prominent. What is the quality of these things may be declared meantime, even at this point, from the quality and condition of their teachers: in that sinners could never have either shown or supplied anything conducive to integrity, unlawful lovers anything conducive to chastity, renegade spirits anything conducive to the fear of God. If (these things) are to be called teachings, ill masters must of necessity have taught ill; if as wages of lust, there is nothing base of which the wages are honourable. But why was it of so much importance to show these things as well as to confer them?

Was it that women, without material causes of splendour, and without ingenious contrivances of grace, could not please men, who, while still unadorned, and uncouth and-so to say-crude and rude, had moved (the mind of) angels? or was it that the lovers would appear sordid and-through gratuitous use-contumelious, if they had conferred no (compensating) gift on the women who had been enticed into connubial connection with them? But these questions admit of no calculation. Women who possessed angels (as husbands) could desire nothing more; they had, forsooth, made a grand match! Assuredly they who, of course, did sometimes think whence they had fallen, and, after the heated impulses of their lusts,

looked up toward heaven, thus requited that very excellence of women, natural beauty, as (having proved) a cause of evil, in order that their good fortune might profit them nothing; but that, being turned from simplicity and sincerity, they, together with (the angels) themselves, might become offensive to God. Sure they were that all ostentation, and ambition, and love of pleasing by carnal means, was displeasing to God. And these are the angels whom we are destined to judge: these are the angels whom in baptism we renounce: these, of course, are the reasons why they have deserved to be judged by man. What business, then, have their things with their judges? What commerce have they who are to condemn with them who are to be condemned? The same, I take it, as Christ has with Belial.

With what consistency do we mount that (future) judgment-seat to pronounce sentence against those whose gifts we (now) seek after? For you too, (women as you are,) have the self-same angelic nature promised as your reward, the self-same sex as men: the self-same advancement to the dignity of judging, does (the Lord) promise you. Unless, then, we begin even here to prejudge, by pre-condemning their things, which we are hereafter to condemn in themselves, they will rather judge and condemn us.

Chapter III.-Concerning the Genuineness of "The Prophecy of Enoch."

I am aware that the Scripture of Enoch, which has assigned this order (of action) to angels, is not received by some, because it is not admitted into the Jewish canon either. I suppose they did not think that, having been published before the deluge, it could have safely survived that world-wide calamity, the abolisher of all things. If that is the reason (for rejecting it), let them recall to their memory that Noah, the survivor of the deluge, was the great-grandson of Enoch himself; and he, of course, had heard and remembered, from domestic renown and hereditary tradition, concerning his own great-grandfather's "grace in the sight of God," and concerning all his preachings; since Enoch had given no other charge to Methuselah than that he should hand on the knowledge of them to his posterity. Noah therefore, no doubt, might have succeeded in the trusteeship of (his) preaching; or, had the case been otherwise, he would not have been silent alike concerning the disposition (of things) made by God, his Preserver, and concerning the particular glory of his own house.

If (Noah) had not had this (conservative power) by so short a route, there would (still) be this (consideration) to warrant our assertion of (the genuineness of) this Scripture: he could equally have renewed it, under the Spirit's inspiration, after it had been destroyed by the violence of the deluge, as, after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonian storming of it, every document of the Jewish literature is generally agreed to have been restored through Ezra. But since Enoch in the same Scripture has preached likewise concerning the Lord, nothing at all must be rejected by us which pertains to us; and we read that "every Scripture suitable for edification is divinely inspired. By the Jews it may now seem to have been rejected for that (very) reason, just like all the other (portions) nearly which tell of Christ. Nor, of course, is this fact wonderful, that they did not receive some Scriptures which spake of Him whom even in person, speaking in their presence, they were not to receive. To these considerations is added the fact that Enoch possesses a testimony in the Apostle Jude.

Chapter IV.-Waiving the Question of the Authors, Tertullian Proposes to Consider the Things on Their Own Merits.

Grant now that no mark of pre-condemnation has been branded on womanly pomp by the (fact of the) fate of its authors; let nothing be imputed to those angels besides their repudiation of heaven and (their) carnal marriage: let us examine the qualities of the things themselves, in order that we may detect the purposes also for which they are eagerly desired. Female habit carries with it a twofold idea-dress and ornament. By ”dress” we mean what they call ”womanly gracing; ” by ”ornament,” what it is suitable should be called ”womanly disgracing.” The former is accounted (to consist) in gold, and silver, and gems, and garments; the latter in care of the hair, and of the skin, and of those parts of the body which attract the eye. Against the one we lay the charge of ambition, against the other of prostitution; so that even from this early stage (of our discussion) you may look forward and see what, out of (all) these, is suitable, handmaid of God, to your discipline, inasmuch as you are assessed on different principles (from other women),-those, namely, of humility and chastity.

Chapter V.-Gold and Silver Not Superior in Origin or in Utility to Other Metals.

Gold and silver, the principal material causes of worldly splendour, must necessarily be identical (in nature) with that out of which they have their being: (they must be) earth, that is; (which earth itself is) plainly more glorious (than they), inasmuch as it is only after it has been tearfully wrought by penal labour in the deadly laboratories of accursed mines, and there left its name of "earth" in the fire behind it, that, as a fugitive from the mine, it passes from torments to ornaments, from punishments to embellishments, from ignominies to honours. But iron, and brass, and other the vilest material substances, enjoy a parity of condition (with silver and gold), both as to earthly origin and metallurgic operation; in order that, in the estimation of nature, the substance of gold and of silver may be judged not a whit more noble (than theirs). But if it is from the quality of utility that gold and silver derive their glory, why, iron and brass excel them; whose usefulness is so disposed (by the Creator), that they not only discharge functions of their own more numerous and more necessary to human affairs, but do also none the less serve the turn of gold and silver, by dint of their own powers, in the service of juster causes. For not only are rings made of iron, but the memory of antiquity still preserves (the fame of) certain vessels for eating and drinking made out of brass.

Let the insane plenteousness of gold and silver look to it, if it serves to make utensils even for foul purposes. At all events, neither is the field tilled by means of gold, nor the ship fastened together by the strength of silver. No mattock plunges a golden edge into the ground; no nail drives a silver point into planks. I leave unnoticed the fact that the needs of our whole life are dependent upon iron and brass; whereas those rich materials themselves, requiring both to be dug up out of mines, and needing a forging process in every use (to which they are put), are helpless without the laborious vigour of iron and brass. Already, therefore, we must judge whence it is that so high dignity accrues to gold and silver, since they get precedence over material substances which are not only cousin-german to them in point of origin, but more powerful in point of usefulness.

Chapter VI.-Of Precious Stones and Pearls.

But, in the next place, what am I to interpret those jewels to be which vie with gold in haughtiness, except little pebbles and stones and paltry particles of the self-same earth; but yet not necessary either for laying down foundations, or rearing party-walls, or supporting pediments, or giving density to roofs? The only edifice which they know how to rear is this silly pride of women: because they require slow rubbing that they may shine, and artful underlaying that they may show to advantage, and careful piercing that they may hang; and (because they) render to gold a mutual assistance in meretricious allurement. But whatever it is that ambition fishes up from the British or the Indian sea, it is a kind of conch not more pleasing in savour than-I do not say the oyster and the sea-snail, but-even the giant muscle. For let me add that I know conchs (which axe) sweet fruits of the sea. But if that (foreign) conch suffers from some internal pustule, that ought to be regarded rather as its defect than as its glory; and although it be called "pearl," still something else must be understood than some hard, round excrescence of the fish. Some say, too, that gems are culled from the foreheads of dragons, just as in the brains of fishes there is a certain stony substance. This also was wanting to the Christian woman, that she may add a grace to herself from the serpent! Is it thus that she will set her heel on the devil's head," while she heaps ornaments (taken) from his head on her own neck, or on her very head?

Chapter VII.-Rarity the Only Cause Which Makes Such Things Valuable.

It is only from their rarity and outlandishness that all these things possess their grace; in short, within their own native limits they are not held of so high worth. Abundance is always contumelious toward itself. There are some barbarians with whom, because gold is indigenous and plentiful, it is customary to keep (the criminals) in their convict establishments chained with gold, and to lade the wicked with riches-the more guilty, the more wealthy. At last there has really been found a way to prevent even gold from being loved! We have also seen at Rome the nobility of gems blushing in the presence of our matrons at the contemptuous usage of the Parthians and Medes, and the rest of their own fellow-countrymen, only that (their gems) are not generally worn with a view to ostentation. Emeralds lurk in their belts; and the sword (that hangs) below their bosom alone is witness to the cylindrical stones that decorate its hilt; and the massive single pearls on their boots are fain to get lifted out of the mud! In short, they carry nothing so richly gemmed as that which ought not to be gemmed if it is (either) not conspicuous, or else is conspicuous only that it may be shown to be also neglected.

Chapter VIII.-The Same Rule Holds with Regard to Colours. God's Creatures Generally Not to Be Used, Except for the Purposes to Which He Has Appointed Them.

Similarly, too, do even the servants of those barbarians cause the glory to fade from the colours of our garments (by wearing the like); nay, even their party-walls use slightingly, to supply the place of painting, the Tyrian and the violet-coloured and the grand royal hangings, which you laboriously undo and metamorphose. Purple with them is more paltry than red ochre; (and justly,) for what legitimate honour can garments derive from adulteration with illegitimate colours? That which He Himself has not produced is not pleasing to God, unless He was unable to order sheep to be born with purple and sky-blue fleeces! If He was able, then plainly He was unwilling: what God willed not, of course ought not to be fashioned. Those things, then, are not the best by nature which are not from God, the Author of nature. Thus they are understood to be from the devil, from the corrupter of nature: for there is no other whose they can be, if they are not God's; because what are not God's must necessarily be His rival's. But, beside the devil and his angels, other rival of God there is none. Again, if the material substances are of God, it does not immediately follow that such ways of enjoying them among men (are so too). It is matter for inquiry not only whence come conchs, but what sphere of embellishment is assigned them, and where it is that they exhibit their beauty.

For all those profane pleasures of worldly shows-as we have already published a volume of their own about them -(ay, and) even idolatry itself, derive their material causes from the creatures of God. Yet a Christian ought not to attach himself to the frenzies of the racecourse, or the atrocities of the arena, or the turpitudes of the stage, simply because God has given to man the horse, and the panther, and the power of speech: just as a Christian cannot commit idolatry with impunity either, because the incense, and the wine, and the fire

which feeds (thereon), and the animals which are made the victims, are God's workmanship; since even the material thing which is adored is God's (creature). Thus then, too, with regard to their active use, does the origin of the material substances, which descends from God, excuse (that use) as foreign to God, as guilty forsooth of worldly glory!

Chapter IX.-God's Distribution Must Regulate Our Desires, Otherwise We Become the Prey of Ambition and Its Attendant Evils.

For, as some particular things distributed by God over certain individual lands, and some one particular tract of sea, are mutually foreign one to the other, they are reciprocally either neglected or desired: (desired) among foreigners, as being rarities; neglected (rightly), if anywhere, among their own compatriots, because in them there is no such fervid longing for a glory which, among its own home-folk, is frigid. But, however, the rareness and outlandishness which arise out of that distribution of possessions which God has ordered as He willed, ever finding favour in the eyes of strangers, excites, from the simple fact of not having what God has made native to other places, the concupiscence of having it. Hence is educed another vice-that of immoderate having; because although, perhaps, having may be permissible, still a limit is bound (to be observed). This (second vice) will be ambition; and hence, too, its name is to be interpreted, in that from concupiscence ambient in the mind it is born, with a view to the desire of glory,-a grand desire, forsooth, which (as we have said) is recommended neither by nature nor by truth, but by a vicious passion of the mind,-(namely,) concupiscence. And there are other vices connected with ambition and glory. Thus they have withal enhanced the cost of things, in order that (thereby) they might add fuel to themselves also; for concupiscence becomes proportionably greater as it has set a higher value upon the thing which it has eagerly desired. From the smallest caskets is produced an ample patrimony. On a single thread is suspended a million of sesterces. One delicate neck carries about it forests and islands. The slender lobes of the ears exhaust a fortune; and the left hand, with its every finger, sports with a several money-bag. Such is the strength of ambition-(equal) to bearing on one small body, and that a woman's, the product of so copious wealth:

Chapter I.-Introduction. Modesty to Be Observed Not Only in Its Essence, But in Its Accessories.

Handmaids of the living God, my fellow-servants and sisters, the right which I enjoy with you-I, the most meanest in that right of fellow-servantship and brotherhood-emboldens me to address to you a discourse, not, of course, of affection, but paving the way for affection in the cause of your salvation. That salvation-and not (the salvation) of women only, but likewise of men-consists in the exhibition principally of modesty. For since, by the introduction into an appropriation (in) us of the Holy Spirit, we are all" the temple of God," Modesty is the sacristan and priestess of that temple, who is to suffer nothing unclean or profane to be introduced (into it), for fear that the God who inhabits it should be offended, and quite forsake the polluted abode. But on the present occasion we (are to speak) not about modesty, for the enjoining and exacting of which the divine precepts which press (upon us) on every side are sufficient; but about the matters which pertain to it, that is, the manner in which it behoves you to walk. For most women (which very thing I trust God may permit me, with a view, of course, to my own personal censure, to censure in all), either from simple ignorance or else from dissimulation, have the hardihood so to walk as if modesty consisted only in the (bare) integrity of the flesh, and in turning away from (actual) fornication;

and there were no need for anything extrinsic to boot-in the matter (I mean) of the arrangement of dress and ornament, the studied graces of form and brilliance:-wearing in their gait the self-same appearance as the women of the nations, from whom the sense of true modesty is absent, because in those who know not God, the Guardian and Master of truth, there is nothing true. For if any modesty can be believed (to exist) in Gentiles, it is plain that it must be imperfect and undisciplined to such a degree that, although it be actively tenacious of itself in the mind up to a certain point, it yet allows itself to relax into licentious extravagances of attire; just in accordance with Gentile perversity, in craving after that of which it carefully shuns the effect. How many a one, in short, is there who does not earnestly desire even to look pleasing to strangers? who does not on that very account take care to have herself painted out, and denies that she has (ever) been an object of (carnal)

appetite? And yet, granting that even this is a practice familiar to Gentile modesty-(namely,) not actually to commit the sin, but still to be willing to do so; or even not to be willing, yet still not quite to refuse-what wonder? for all things which are not God's are perverse. Let those women therefore look to it, who, by not holding fast the whole good, easily mingle with evil even what they do hold fast.

Necessary it is that you turn aside from them, as in all other things, so also in your gait; since you ought to be "perfect, as (is) your Father who is in the heavens."

Chapter II.-Perfect Modesty Will Abstain from Whatever Tends to Sin, as Well as from Sin Itself. Difference Between Trust and Presumption. If Secure Ourselves, We Must Not Put Temptation in the Way of Others. We Must Love Our Neighbour as Ourself.

You must know that in the eye of perfect, that is, Christian, modesty, (carnal) desire of one's self (on the part of others) is not only not to be desired, but even execrated, by you: first, because the study of making personal grace (which we know to be naturally the inviter of lust) a mean of pleasing does not spring from a sound conscience: why therefore excite toward yourself that evil (passion)? why invite (that) to which you profess yourself a stranger? secondly, because we ought not to open a way to temptations, which, by their instancy, sometimes achieve (a wickedness) which God expels from them who are His; (or,) at all events, put the spirit into a thorough tumult by (presenting) a stumbling-block (to it). We ought indeed to walk so holily, and with so entire substantiality of faith, as to be confident and secure in regard of our own conscience, desiring that that (gift) may abide in us to the end, yet not presuming (that it will). For he who presumes feels less apprehension; he who feels less apprehension takes less precaution; he who takes less precaution runs more risk. Fear is the foundation of salvation; presumption is an impediment to fear. More useful, then, is it to apprehend that we may possibly fail, than to presume that we cannot; for apprehending will lead us to fear, fearing to caution, and caution to salvation. On the other hand, if we presume, there will be neither fear nor caution to save us.

He who acts securely, and not at the same time warily, possesses no safe and firm security; whereas he who is wary will be truly able to be secure. For His own servants, may the Lord by His mercy take care that to them it may be lawful even to presume on His goodness! But why are we a (source of) danger to our neighbour? why do we import concupiscence into our neighbour? which concupiscence, if God, in "amplifying the law," do not dissociate in (the way of) penalty from the actual commission of fornication, I know not whether He allows impunity to him who has been the cause of perdition to some other. For that other, as soon as he has felt concupiscence after your beauty, and has mentally already committed (the deed) which his concupiscence pointed to, perishes; and you have been made the sword which destroys him: so that, albeit you be free from the (actual) crime, you are not free from the odium (attaching to it); as, when a robbery has been committed on some man's estate, the (actual) crime indeed will not be laid to the owner's charge, while yet the domain is branded with ignominy, (and) the owner himself aspersed with the infamy. Are we to paint ourselves out that our neighbours may perish? Where, then, is (the command), "Thou shall

love thy neighbour as thyself? " "Care not merely about your own (things), but (about your) neighbour's?

" No enunciation of the Holy Spirit ought to be (confined) to the subject immediately in hand merely, and not applied and carried out with a view to every occasion to which its application is useful. Since, therefore, both our own interest and that of others is implicated in the studious pursuit of most perilous (outward) comeliness, it is time for you to know that not merely must the pageantry of fictitious and elaborate beauty be rejected by you; but that of even natural grace must be obliterated by concealment and negligence, as equally dangerous to the glances of (the beholder's) eyes. For, albeit comeliness is not to be censured, as being a bodily happiness, as being an additional outlay of the divine plastic art, as being a kind of goodly garment of the soul; yet it is to be feared, just on account of the injuriousness and violence of suitors: which (injuriousness and violence) even the father of the faith, Abraham, greatly feared in regard of his own wife's grace; and Isaac, by falsely representing Rebecca as his sister, purchased safety by insult!

Chapter III.-Grant that Beauty Be Not to Be Feared: Still It is to Be Shunned as Unnecessary and Vainglorious,

Let it now be granted that excellence of form be not to be feared, as neither troublesome to its possessors, nor destructive to its desirers, nor perilous to its compartners; let it be thought (to be) not exposed to temptations, not surrounded by stumbling-blocks: it is enough that to angels of God it is not necessary. For, where modesty is, there beauty is idle; because properly the use and fruit of beauty is voluptuousness, unless any one thinks that there is some other harvest for bodily grace to reap. Are women who think that, in furnishing to their neighbour that which is demanded of beauty, they are furnishing it to themselves also, to augment that (beauty) when (naturally) given them, and to strive after it when not (thus) given? Some one will say, ”Why, then, if voluptuousness be shut out and chastity let in, may (we) not enjoy the praise of beauty alone, and glory in a bodily good? ”Let whoever finds pleasure in ”glorying in the flesh” see to that. To us in the first place, there is no studious pursuit of ”glory,” because ”glory” is the essence of exaltation. Now exaltation is incongruous for professors of humility according to God’s precepts. Secondly, if all ”glory” is ”vain” and insensate, how much more (glory) in the flesh, especially to us? For even if ”glorying” is (allowable), we ought to wish our sphere of pleasing to lie in the graces of the Spirit, not in the flesh; because we are ”suitors” of things spiritual.

In those things wherein our sphere of labour lies, let our joy lie. From the sources whence we hope for salvation, let us cull our ”glory. Plainly, a Christian will ”glory” even in the flesh; but (it will be) when it has endured laceration for Christ’s sake, in order that the spirit may be crowned in it, not in order that it may draw the eyes and sighs of youths after it. Thus (a thing) which, from whatever point you look at it, is in your case superfluous, you may justly disdain if you have it not, and neglect if you have. Let a holy woman, if naturally beautiful, give none so great occasion (for carnal appetite). Certainly, if even she be so, she ought not to set off (her beauty), but even to obscure it.

Chapter IV.-Concerning the Plea of ”Pleasing the Husband.”

As if I were speaking to Gentiles, addressing you with a Gentile precept, and (one which is) common to all, (I would say,) ”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. Every husband is the exactor of chastity; but beauty, a believing (husband) does not require, because we are not captivated by the same graces which the Gentiles think (to be) graces: an unbelieving one, on the other hand, even regards with suspicion, just from that infamous opinion of us which the Gentiles have. For whom, then, is it that you cherish your beauty? If for a believer, he does not exact it: if for an unbeliever, he does not believe in it unless it be artless. Why are you eager to please either one who is suspicious, or else one who desires it not?

Chapter V.-Some Refinements in Dress and Personal Appearance Lawful, Some Unlawful. Pigments Come Under the Latter Head.

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, sin against Him. To them, I suppose, the plastic skill of God is displeasing! In their own persons, I suppose, they convict, they censure, the Artificer of all things! For censure they, do when they amend, when they add to, (His work;) taking these their additions, of course, from the adversary artificer. That adversary artificer is the devil. For who would show the way to change the body, but he who by wickedness transfigured man's spirit? He it is, undoubtedly, who adapted ingenious devices of this kind; that in your persons it may be apparent that you, in a certain sense, do violence to God. 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! Our servants borrow nothing from our personal enemies: soldiers eagerly desire nothing from the foes of their own general;

for, to demand for (your own) use anything from the adversary of Him in whose hand you are, is a transgression. Shall a Christian be assisted in anything by that evil one? (If he do,) I know not whether this name (of "Christian") will continue (to belong) to him; for he will be his in whose lore he eagerly desires to be instructed. 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?

Chapter VI.-Of Dyeing the Hair.

I see some (women) turn (the colour of) their hair with saffron. They are ashamed even of their own nation, (ashamed) that their procreation did not assign them to Germany and to Gaul: thus, as it is, they transfer their hair (thither)! Ill, ay, most ill, do they augur for themselves with their flame-coloured head, and think that graceful which (in fact) they are polluting! Nay, moreover, the force of the cosmetics burns ruin into the hair; and the constant application of even any undrugged moisture, lays up a store of harm for the head; while the sun's warmth, too, so desirable for imparting to the hair at once growth and dryness, is hurtful. What "grace" is compatible with "injury? "What "beauty" with "impurities? "Shall a Christian woman heap saffron on her head, as upon an altar? For, whatever is wont to be burned to the honour of the unclean spirit, that-unless it is applied for honest, and necessary, and salutary uses, for which God's creature was provided-may seem to be a sacrifice. But, however, God saith, "Which of you can make a white hair black, or out of a black a white? " And so they refute the Lord! "Behold! say they, "instead of white or black, we make it yellow,-more winning in grace. And yet such as repent of having lived to old age do attempt to change it even from white to black! O temerity! The age which is the object of our wishes and prayers blushes (for itself)! a theft is effected!

youth, wherein we have sinned, is sighed after! the opportunity of sobriety is spoiled! Far from Wisdom's daughters be folly so great! The more old age tries to conceal itself, the more will it be detected. Here is a veritable eternity, in the (perennial) youth of your head! Here we have an "incorruptibility" to "put on," with a view to the new house of the Lord which the divine monarchy promises! Well do you speed toward the Lord; well do you hasten to be quit of this most iniquitous world, to whom it is unsightly to approach (your own) end!

Chapter VII.-Of Elaborate Dressing of the Hair in Other Ways, and Its Bearing Upon Salvation.

What service, again, does all the labour spent in arranging the hair render to salvation? Why is no rest allowed to your hair, which must now be bound, now loosed, now cultivated, now thinned out? Some are anxious to force their hair into curls, some to let it hang loose and flying; not with good simplicity: beside which, you affix I know not what enormities of subtle and textile perukes; now, after the manner of a helmet of undressed hide, as it were a sheath for the head and a covering for the crown; now, a mass (drawn) backward toward the neck. The wonder is, that there is no (open) contending against the Lord's prescripts! It has been pronounced that no one can add to his own stature. You, however, do add to your weight some kind of rolls, or shield-bosses, to be piled upon your necks! If you feel no shame at the enormity, feel some at the pollution; for fear you may be fitting on a holy and Christian head the slough of some one else's head, unclean perchance, guilty perchance and destined to hell. Nay, rather banish quite away from your "free" head all this slavery of ornamentation. In vain do you labour to seem adorned: in vain do you call in the aid of all the most skilful manufacturers of false hair. God bids you "be veiled. I believe (He does so) for fear the heads of some should be seen!

And oh that in "that day" of Christian exultation, I, most miserable (as I am), may elevate my head, even though below (the level of) your heels! I shall (then) see whether you will rise with (your) ceruse and rouge and saffron, and in all that parade of headgear: whether it will be women thus tricked out whom the angels carry up to meet Christ in the air If these (decorations) are now good, and of God, they will then also present themselves to the rising bodies, and will recognise their several places. But nothing can rise except flesh and spirit sole and pure. Whatever, therefore, does not rise in (the form of) spirit and flesh is condemned, because it is not of God. From things which are condemned abstain, even at the present day. At the present day let God see you such as He will see you then.

Chapter VIII.-Men Not Excluded from These Remarks on Personal Adornment.

Of course, now, I, a man, as being envious of women, am banishing them quite from their own (domains). Are there, in our case too, some things which, in respect of the sobriety we are to maintain on account of the fear due to God, are disallowed? If it is true, (as it is,) that in men, for the sake of women (just as in women for the sake of men), there is implanted, by a defect of nature, the will to please; and if this sex of ours acknowledges to itself deceptive trickeries of form peculiarly its own,-(such as) to cut the beard too sharply; to pluck it out here and there; to shave round about (the mouth); to arrange the hair, and disguise its hoariness by dyes; to remove all the incipient down all over the body; to fix (each particular hair) in its place with (some) womanly pigment; to smooth all the rest of the body by the aid of some rough powder or other: then, further, to take every opportunity for consulting the minor; to gaze anxiously into it: -while yet, when (once) the knowledge of God has put an end to all wish to please by means of voluptuous attraction, all these things are rejected as frivolous, as hostile to modesty. For where God is, there modesty is; there is sobriety her assistant and ally. How, then, shall we practise modesty without her instrumental mean, that is, without sobriety? How, moreover, shall we bring sobriety to bear on the discharge of (the functions of) modesty, unless seriousness in appearance and in countenance, and in the general aspect of the entire man, mark our carriage?

Chapter IX.-Excess in Dress, as Well as in Personal Culture, to Be Shunned. Arguments Drawn from I Cor. VII.

Wherefore, with regard to clothing also, and all the remaining lumber of your self-elaboration, the like pruning off and retrenchment of too redundant splendour must be the object of your care. For what boots it to exhibit in your face temperance and unaffectedness, and a simplicity altogether worthy of the divine discipline, but to invest all the other parts of the body with the luxurious absurdities of pomps and delicacies? How intimate is the connection which these pomps have with the business of voluptuousness, and how they interfere with modesty, is easily discernible from the fact that it is by the allied aid of dress that they prostitute the grace of personal comeliness: so plain is it that if (the pomps) be wanting, they render (that grace) bootless and thankless, as if it were disarmed and wrecked. On the other hand, if natural beauty fails, the supporting aid of outward embellishment supplies a grace, as it were, from its own inherent power. Those times of life, in fact, which are at last blest with quiet and withdrawn into the harbour of modesty, the splendour and dignity of dress lure away (from that rest and that harbour), and disquiet seriousness by seductions of appetite, which compensate for the chili of age by the provocative charms of apparel. First, then, blessed (sisters), (take heed) that you admit not to your use meretricious and prostitutionary garbs and garments:

and, in the next place, if there are any of you whom the exigencies of riches, or birth, or past dignities, compel to appear in public so gorgeously arrayed as not to appear to have attained wisdom, take heed to temper an evil of this kind; lest, under the pretext of necessity, you give the rein without stint to the indulgence of licence. For how will you be able to fulfil (the requirements of) humility, which our (school) profess, if you do not keep within bounds the enjoyment of your riches and elegancies, which tend so much to ”glory? ”Now it has ever been the wont of glory to exalt, not to humble. ”Why, shall we not use what is our own? ”Who prohibits your using it? Yet (it must be) in accordance with the apostle, who warns

us ”to use this world as if we abuse it not; for the fashion of this world is passing away. And ”they who buy are so to act as if they possessed not. Why so? Because he had laid down the premiss, saying, ”The time is wound up. If, then he shows plainly that even wives themselves are so to be had as if they be not had, on account of the straits of the times, what would be his sentiments about these vain appliances of theirs? Why, are there not many, withal, who so do, and seal themselves up to eunuchhood for the sake of the kingdom of God, spontaneously relinquishing a pleasure so honourable, and (as we know) permitted?

Are there not some who prohibit to themselves (the use of) the very ”creature of God,” abstaining from wine and animal food, the enjoyments of which border upon no peril or solicitude; but they sacrifice to God the humility of their soul even in the chastened use of food? Sufficiently, therefore, have you, too, used your riches and your delicacies; sufficiently have you cut down the fruits of your dowries, before (receiving) the knowledge of saving disciplines. We are they ”upon whom the ends of the ages have met, having ended their course. We have been predestined by God, before the world was, (to arise) in the extreme end of the times. And so we are trained by God for the purpose of chastising, and (so to say) emasculating, the world. We are the circumcision -spiritual and carnal-of all things; for both in the spirit and in the flesh we circumcise worldly principles.

Chapter X.-Tertullian Refers Again to the Question of the Origin of All These Ornaments and Embellishments.

It was God, no doubt, who showed the way to dye wools with the juices of herbs and the humours of conchs! It had escaped Him, when He was bidding the universe to come into being, to issue a command for (the production of) purple and scarlet sheep! It was God, too, who devised by careful thought the manufactures of those very garments which, light and thin (in themselves), were to be heavy in price alone; God who produced such grand implements of gold for confining or parting the hair; God who introduced (the fashion of) finely-cut wounds for the ears, and set so high a value upon the tormenting of His own work and the tortures of innocent infancy, learning to suffer with its earliest breath, in order that from those scars of the body-born for the steel!-should hang I know not what (precious) grains, which, as we may plainly see, the Parthians insert, in place of studs, upon their very shoes! And yet even the gold itself, the "glory" of which carries you away, serves a certain race (so Gentile literature. tells us) for chains! So true is it that it is not intrinsic worth, but rarity, which constitutes the goodness (of these things): the excessive labour, moreover, of working them with arts introduced by the means of the sinful angels, who were the revealers withal of the material substances themselves, joined with their rarity, excited their costliness, and hence a lust on the part of women to possess (that) costliness.

But, if the self-same angels who disclosed both the material substances of this kind and their charms-of gold, I mean, and lustrous stones-and taught men how to work them, and by and by instructed them, among their other (instructions), in (the virtues of) eyelid-powder and the dyeings of fleeces, have been condemned by God, as Enoch tells us, how shall we please God while we joy in the things of those (angels) who, on these accounts, have provoked the anger and the vengeance of God?

Now, granting that God did foresee these things; that God permitted them; that Esaias finds fault with no garment of purple, represses no coil, reprobates no crescent-shaped neck

ornaments; still let us not, as the Gentiles do, flatter ourselves with thinking that God is merely a Creator, not likewise a Downlooker on His own creatures. For how far more usefully and cautiously shall we act, if we hazard the presumption that all these things were indeed provided at the beginning and placed in the world by God, in order that there should now be means of putting to the proof the discipline of His servants, in order that the licence of using should be the means whereby the experimental trials of continence should be conducted? Do not wise heads of families purposely offer and permit some things to their servants in order to try whether and how they will use the things thus permitted whether (they will do so) with honesty, or with moderation? But how far more praiseworthy (the servant) who abstains entirely; who has a wholesome fear even of his lord's indulgence! Thus, therefore, the apostle too: "All things," says he, "are lawful, but not all are expedient." How much more easily will he fear what is unlawful who has a reverent dread of what is lawful?

Chapter XI.-Christian Women, Further, Have Not the Same Causes for Appearing in Public, and Hence for Dressing in Fine Array as Gentiles. On the Contrary, Their Appearance Should Always Distinguish Them from Such.

Moreover, what causes have you for appearing in public in excessive grandeur, removed as you are from the occasions which call for such exhibitions? For you neither make the circuit of the temples, nor demand (to be present at) public shows, nor have any acquaintance with the holy days of the Gentiles. Now it is for the sake of all these public gatherings, and of much seeing and being seen, that all pomps (of dress) are exhibited before the public eye; either for the purpose of transacting the trade of voluptuousness, or else of inflating "glory. You, however, have no cause of appearing in public, except such as is serious. Either some brother who is sick is visited, or else the sacrifice is offered, or else the word of God is dispensed. Whichever of these you like to name is a business of sobriety and sanctity, requiring no extraordinary attire, with (studious) arrangement and (wanton) negligence. And if the requirements of Gentile friendships and of kindly offices call you, why not go forth clad in your own armour; (and) all the more, in that (you have to go) to such as are strangers to the faith? so that between the handmaids of God and of the devil there may be a difference; so that you may be an example to them, and they may be edified in you; so that (as the apostle says) "God may be magnified in your body. But magnified He is in the body through modesty: of course, too, through attire suitable to modesty.

Well, but it is urged by some, "Let not the Name be blasphemed in us, if we make any derogatory change from our old style and dress. Let us, then, not abolish our old vices! let

us maintain the same character, if we must maintain the same appearance (as before); and then truly the nations will not blaspheme! A grand blasphemy is that by which it is said, "Ever since she became a Christian, she walks in poorer garb! Will you fear to appear poorer, from the time that you have been made more wealthy; and fouler, from the time when you have been made more clean? Is it according to the decree of Gentiles, or according to the decree of God, that it becomes Christians to walk?

Chapter XII.-Such Outward Adornments Meretricious, and Therefore Unsuitable to Modest Women.

Let us only wish that we may be no cause for just blasphemy! But how much more provocative of blasphemy is it that you, who are called modesty's priestesses, should appear in public decked and painted out after the manner of the immodest? Else, (if you so do,) what inferiority would the poor unhappy victims of the public lusts have (beneath you)? whom, albeit some laws were (formerly) wont to restrain them from (the use of) matrimonial and matronly decorations, now, at all events, the daily increasing depravity of the age has raised so nearly to an equality with all the most honourable women, that the difficulty is to distinguish them. And yet, even the Scriptures suggest (to us the reflection), that meretricious attractivenesses of form are invariably conjoined with and appropriate to bodily prostitution. That powerful state which presides over the seven mountains and very many waters, has merited from the Lord the appellation of a prostitute. But what kind of garb is the instrumental mean of her comparison with that appellation? She sits, to be sure, "in purple, and scarlet, and gold, and precious stone. How accursed are the things without (the aid of) which an accursed prostitute could not have been described!

It was the fact that Thamar "had painted out and adorned herself" that led Judah to regard her as a harlot, and thus, because she was hidden beneath her "veil,"-the quality of her garb belying her as if she had been a harlot,-he judged (her to be one), and addressed and bargained with (her as such). Whence we gather an additional confirmation of the lesson, that provision must be made in every way. against all immodest associations and suspicions. For why is the integrity of a chaste mind defiled by its neighbour's suspicion? Why is a thing from which I am averse hoped for in me? Why does not my garb pre-announce my character, to prevent my spirit from being wounded by shamelessness through (the channel of) nay ears? Grant that it be lawful to assume the appearance of a modest woman: to assume that of an immodest is, at all events, not lawful.

Chapter XIII.-It is Not Enough that God Know Us to Be Chaste: We Must Seem So Before Men. Especially in These Times of Persecution We Must Inure Our Bodies to the Hardships Which They May Not Improbably Be Called to Suffer.

Perhaps some (woman) will say: "To me it is not necessary to be approved by men; for I do not require the testimony of men: God is the inspector of the heart. (That) we all know; provided, however, we remember what the same (God) has said through the apostle: "Let your probity appear before men. For what purpose, except that malice may have no access at all to you, or that you may be an example and testimony to the evil? Else, what is (that): "Let your works shine? " Why, moreover, does the Lord call us the light of the world; why has He compared us to a city built upon a mountain; if we do not shine in (the midst of) darkness, and stand eminent amid them who are sunk down? If you hide your lamp beneath a bushel, you must necessarily be left quite in darkness, and be run against by many. The things which make us luminaries of the world are these-our good works. What is good, moreover, provided it be true and full, loves not darkness: it joys in being seen, and exults over the very pointings which are made at it. To Christian modesty it is not enough to be so, but to seem so too. For so great ought its plenitude to be, that it may flow out from the mind to the garb, and burst out from the conscience to the outward appearance;

so that even from the outside it may gaze, as it were, upon its own furniture, -(a furniture) such as to be suited to retain faith as its inmate perpetually. For such delicacies as tend by their softness and effeminacy to unman the manliness of faith are to be discarded. Otherwise, I know not whether the wrist that has been wont to be surrounded with the palmleaf-like bracelet will endure till it grow into the numb hardness of its own chain! I know not whether the leg that has rejoiced in the anklet will suffer itself to be squeezed into the gyve! I fear the neck, beset with pearl and emerald nooses, will give no room to the broadsword! Wherefore, blessed (sisters), let us meditate on hardships, and we shall not feel them; let us abandon luxuries, and we shall not regret them. Let us stand ready to endure every violence, having nothing which we may fear to leave behind. It is these things which are the bonds which retard our hope. Let us cast away earthly ornaments if we desire heavenly. Love not gold; in which (one substance) are branded all the sins of the people of Israel. You ought to hate what mined your fathers; what was adored by them who were forsaking God. Even then (we find) gold is food for the fire. But Christians always, and now more than ever, pass their times not in gold but in iron: the stoles of martyrdom are (now) preparing:

the angels who are to carry us are (now) being awaited! Do you go forth (to meet them) already arrayed in the cosmetics and ornaments of prophets and apostles; drawing your whiteness from simplicity, your ruddy hue from modesty; painting your eyes with bashfulness, and your mouth with silence; implanting in your ears the words of God; fitting on your necks the yoke of Christ. Submit your head to your husbands, and you will be enough adorned. Busy your hands with spinning; keep your feet at home; and you will "please" better than (by arraying yourselves) in gold. Clothe yourselves with the silk of uprightness,

the fine linen of holiness, the purple of modesty. Thus painted, you will have God as your Lover!

Source. English translation: an older public-domain translation as collected in the Writings-Database (HistoricalChristianFaith), mostly from the Ante-Nicene, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers and similar nineteenth-century editions. SermonIndex has only divided it into chapters and short sections; the wording is the translator's own. Square brackets, Greek or Latin words and footnote-free text are as the source file prints them, and a transcription error may remain. No Greek or Latin text is shown beside it yet, and no modern English version has been made.