

## **WESLEY ON DRESS.**

If you could be as humble when you chose rich apparel (which I flatly deny) yet you could not be as beneficent, as plenteous in good works. Therefore every shilling which you needlessly spend on your apparel, is in effect stolen from the poor! For what end did you want these ornaments? To please God? No! – but to please your own fancy or to gain the admiration and applause of those who were no wiser than yourself. If so, what you wear you are in effect tearing from the back of the naked; and the costly and delicate food you eat, you are snatching from the mouth of the hungry. For mercy, for pity, for Christ's sake, for the honor of His Gospel, stay your hand! Do not throw this money away. Do not lay out on nothing, yea, worse than nothing, what may clothe your poor, naked, shivering fellow-creatures.

Many years ago, when I was at Oxford, on a cold winter's day, a young maid (one of those we keep at school), called upon me. I said, "You seem half-starved. Have you nothing to cover you but that thin gown?" She said, "Sir, this is all I have." I put my hand in my pocket, but found no money left, having just paid away what I had. It struck me, "Will thy Master say, 'Well done good and faithful steward. Thou hast adorned thy walls with the money which might have screened this poor creature from the cold.' O justice! O, mercy! are not these pictures the blood of the poor maid? See their expensive apparel in the same light; thy gown, hat, head-dress!"

Everything about thee which costs more than Christian duty required thee to lay out, is the blood of the poor! O! be wise for the time to come. Be more merciful; more faithful to God and man; more abundantly clad (like men and women professing godliness)

with good works. I conjure you all who have any regard for me, before I go hence, that I have not labored, even in this respect, in vain, for near half a century.

Let me see, before I die, a Methodist congregation full as plainly dressed as a Quaker congregation; only be more consistent with yourselves. Let your dress be cheap as well as plain. Otherwise you do but trifle with God and me, and your own souls. I pray let there be no costly silks among you, how grave soever they may be. Let not any of you who are rich in this world endeavor to excuse yourself from this by talking nonsense.

It is stark, staring nonsense to say, "Oh, I can afford this or that!" If you have regard to common sense, let that silly word never come into your mouth. No man living can afford to throw away any part of that food or raiment into the sea, which was lodged with him on purpose to feed the hungry and clothe the naked. And it is far worse than simple waste to spend any part of it in gay or costly apparel.

For this is no less than to turn wholesome food into deadly poison. It is giving so much money to poison both yourself and others as far as your example spreads, with pride, vanity, anger, lust, love of the world, and a thousand "foolish and hurtful desires" which tend to "pierce them through with many sorrows." O God, arise and maintain thy own cause! Let not men and devils any longer put out our eyes and lead us blindfold into the pit of destruction.

— Sermon by John Wesley.