

The King's Highway

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Let's Face It

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"The show of their countenance doth witness against them." Isa. 3:9a.

Last week an evangelical minister was asked by an earnest Christian woman what his view point was on the matter of lipstick. It was not a flippant inquiry but stemmed from a heart deeply desirous of pleasing God in every detail of life. The minister's answer was embodied in his sermon the following Sunday; actually the word answer is a misnomer for he completely evaded the issue by saying, "Now about paint—I don't use it, personally . . ." Guffaws of laughter could be heard over the radio as his listeners applauded.

The serious question arises, Can the practice be dealt with that humorously? Is it, as the minister so airily indicated, a matter of little moment? Are there any moral issues involved? Or is it so peripheral as to require no sustained attention in these days of cataclysmic consequences? Have we any teaching in the Scriptures which might direct our thinking and lead us to inductions which honor the Lord Jesus?

This issue has been discussed pro and con for many years, indeed, for many centuries. That indicates to me that God quite probably has kept the minds of Christian people exercised about this so-called "fine point". In 1777 Sheridan wrote a satirization of gossip and hypocrisy which is classic. The dramatis personae includes such names as Crabtree, Backbite, Snake and Surface. In *The School for Scandal* (Act 2, Scene 2) Mrs. Candour says of Miss Vermillion, "She has a charming fresh color." Lady Teazle replies, "Yes, when it is fresh put on." In another section Sir Benjamin Backbite wisecracks, "Ah, there's no judging by her looks unless one could see her face . . . Nay now, Mrs. Sneerwell, you are severe upon the widow. Come, tis not that she paints so ill; but when she has finished her face, she joins it so badly to her neck that she looks like a mended statue in which the connoisseur may see at once that the head's modern though the trunk's antique."

One oft-advanced argument for the use of this commodity, the cost of which is yearly in the millions of dollars, runs like this: "I must influence my unsaved friends." Now doubtless those who make such statements are in some instances motivated by worthy purposes. In many other cases the writer has found this to be pure hypocrisy and camouflage. For the sake of the truly sincere it may be pointed out that we should make every legitimate adjustment in an effort to reach our friends with the Gospel. Indeed, Paul was made all things to all men for the express goal of saving some. Mark this well, though, the apostle made no concessions which ran counter to the declaration of Scripture or which caused another to stumble. The same great soul-winner averred, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." Reader, please reread that verse and don't fail to see that the painted woman is conforming to the system, the attitude and the practice of the world. In striking con-

tradistinction, the number one Christian of the New Testament was dead to the world's fads and fancies. Rather, as the same chapter shows, three verses beyond the one quoted above, the apostle bore branded on his body the marks (stigmata) of the Saviour. (See Galatians 6:14, 17.)

How often young ladies have been heard to explain, "God expects us to look our best in the body He has provided." There usually follows also a bitter remark about the "palefaces". Certainly our Creator and Designer wants us to be neat, clean and attractive but suffer a kindly question: Does the use of the little red stick actually improve the scenery of the surroundings? The writer is a college professor as well as a minister and as such has heard the confidential comments of many a young man on this subject. Not only so, but in hotels, on trains and planes, and in countless other places he has kept his ear tuned to the remarks of men upon watching the ladies pass. Conclusion: the author would hesitate to say that painting really is as much appreciated as my lady dares to think.

Perhaps Ben Jonson "had something" when in 1616 he scribbled *Simplex Munditiis*,

Still to be neat, still to be dressed,
As you were going to a feast;
Still to be powdered, still perfumed;
Lady, it is to be presumed,
Though art's hid causes are not found,
All is not sweet, all is not sound.

Give me a look, give me a face
That makes simplicity a grace;
Robes loosely flowing, hair as free.
Such sweet neglect more taketh me
Than all the adulteries of art;
They strike mine eyes, but not my heart.

. . . Variance of opinion? Yes, there is. What is likely to help us arrive at a satisfactory and satisfying conclusion? The wonderful Word of God, of course—the matchless, immutable Book given to us to aid in everything pertaining to life and godliness. The Bible is the sole rule of faith and practice, not our supposedly smart and sage cerebration.

Let me anticipate your objection by saying flatly that there is germane teaching in the Scriptures. The writer was astounded to hear the dean of a Christian College once assert, "Well this can't be very important or the Bible would have something to say about it." How abysmally illiterate we can all be about areas of investigation outside the pale of our own majors, and especially the Bible, knowing that Satan wishes to keep our spiritual eyes from seeing!

Take the example of Jezebel. Read II Kings 9. Precisely why would the Divine Penman take time to observe, ". . . Jezebel . . . painted her face, and tired her head,

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