



4: Modesty, Beauty and the Human Body

Modesty is not about covering up your body because you think it is ugly, modesty is realizing that God made the human body, *your* body, beautiful and that its beauty is something personal and meant to be enjoyed in intimate settings.

A. MODESTY BELIEVES THAT THE HUMAN BODY IS BEAUTIFUL

Fundamental to true Christian modesty is the belief that our bodies are incredibly good, incredibly beautiful. C.S. Lewis says that ‘Christianity is almost the only one of the great religions which thoroughly approves of the body – which believes that matter is good, that God Himself once took on a human body, that some kind of body is going to be given to us even in Heaven and is going to be an essential part of our happiness, our beauty and our energy.’¹

1. C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2001), p. 98.



WHAT'S UP WITH THE FIG LEAVES?

However, it is possible there has never been a time when so few women believed that their bodies are beautiful and this may explain the scandalously increasing immodesty of our time. This is true even of Christians because we pay so much attention to what the world says and so little attention to what God says.

Let's look at what God says. When God saw everything He had made, He said it was good (Gen. 1:31). One of the things He had made was the human body – and as yet there were no clothes on those bodies. The human body (and especially a woman's body) is one of the most beautiful sights there is and an appreciation for the beauty of a body is a pleasure that has been given to us by our good God, a pleasure designed to be enjoyed in its fullest in marriage. This is illustrated almost shockingly in the book of Song of Solomon:

How beautiful are your feet in sandals,
O prince's daughter!
The curves of your thighs are like jewels,
The work of the hands of a skillful workman.
Your navel is a rounded goblet;
It lacks no blended beverage.
Your waist is a heap of wheat
Set about with lilies.
Your two breasts are like two fawns,
Twins of a gazelle.
Your neck is like an ivory tower,
Your eyes like the pools in Heshbon
By the gate of Bath Rabbim.
Your nose is like the tower of Lebanon
Which looks toward Damascus.
Your head crowns you like Mount Carmel,
And the hair of your head is like purple;
A king is held captive by your tresses.
How fair and how pleasant you are,

MODESTY, BEAUTY AND THE HUMAN BODY



O love, with your delights!
This stature of yours is like a palm tree,
And your breasts like its clusters.
I said, 'I will go up to the palm tree,
I will take hold of its branches.'
Let now your breasts be like clusters of the vine,
The fragrance of your breath like apples,
And the roof of your mouth like the best wine.
The wine goes down smoothly for my beloved,
Moving gently the lips of sleepers. (Song 7:1-9)

It is true that after the Fall, sin entered the world and things are not perfect anymore. Even so, God's creation still bears the fingerprints of the God who created it, a God who delights in beauty. Nature may not be perfect anymore, but it is still often stunningly beautiful as a trip to the Grand Canyon or the Alps will prove. Likewise, even though no one's body is perfect, the human body still shows God's craftsmanship and has a wondrous beauty of its own. In 1 Corinthians 15:40 it says, 'There are also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one and the glory of the terrestrial is another.' Terrestrial, earthly bodies have a glory, a dignity, a beauty. True, it is not the same glory that our new bodies will have when we get to heaven, but they are still wonderfully and marvelously made.

This may be easy to believe when it comes to the human body in general, but what about when it comes to your body? Do you believe that your body shows God's craftsmanship and has a wondrous beauty of its own? It is true whether you believe it or not, but believing it is foundational to truly being modest.

The biggest reason it is so hard for women to believe that their bodies are beautiful is because they are too busy listening to the lies of the world. The world is constantly feeding us images of women who look more like Barbie dolls than real women and



WHAT'S UP WITH THE FIG LEAVES?

telling us that is what it means to be beautiful. Carolyn Mahaney describes today's situation well:

In previous centuries, women might have compared themselves with the other 10 women in the village; today women compare themselves with pictures of the supermodels put on display by the worldwide fashion industry. That image of beauty is so narrow in its range that most women feel unattractive in comparison.

Even worse is the deception in the fashion industry itself. Did you know that most of the models we see in the magazines don't even look like their own pictures? Fashion magazine editors admit that almost every photograph of a model has been digitally altered. So think about it: This alluring model has been toned by her personal trainer, had her hair done by a professional stylist, her face painted by a professional makeup artist, and her image captured by a professional photographer under ideal lightning. After this, if the model *still* doesn't look good enough, she is recast through computer graphics.²

But there is a deception even more basic than these things found in our very idea of beauty. Have you ever stopped to think about why we find some physical characteristics beautiful and others ugly? Why do people want a tan? Why do people of a healthy weight want to be thinner? Are these universal standards of beauty that people everywhere have sought after? As we will soon see, no, they are not. Valerie Steele writes, 'To a considerable extent, beauty is not even a physical given, but an artificial construct that varies from culture to culture.'³ This is not what beauty should be, but this is how beauty is popularly conceived.

2. Carolyn Mahaney, 'True Beauty' in *Biblical Womanhood in the Home* ed. Nancy Leigh DeMoss (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2002), p. 35.

3. Valerie Steele, *Fashion and Eroticism: Ideals of Feminine Beauty from the Victorian Era to the Jazz Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 41.



There is a general principle that whatever is difficult for the average person to obtain is likely to be considered beautiful. It is not the intrinsic value of a feature, but the time, money and effort required, that matters. Consider food for a moment. It is not that caviar tastes better than apples that gives it its prestige, but the fact that caviar is an indication of wealth while anyone can afford an apple. In the same way that caviar is more of a status symbol than something truly tasty, so some features considered beautiful are more of a status symbol than something truly beautiful.

In some places ridiculously long fingernails – to us they look more like claws – have been thought beautiful. Since they showed that the wearer didn't have to engage in manual labor, they suggested prosperity and refinement. One Chinese princess had intricately carved nail protectors to wear over her 6 inch long fingernails.⁴ In places in Africa it used to be a mark of beauty to have one's teeth filed to a point. For many years in China small feet, extremely small with the ideal being 2 inches, were considered beautiful. One observer wrote that 'the butler's little daughter, aged seven, is having her feet "bandaged" for the first time, and is in torture, but bears it bravely in the hope of "getting a rich husband."' ⁵ For the rest of their lives these girls would walk painfully on misshapen feet – all in the name of beauty.

There are many examples in our own backyard. Take the current premium on tans, for instance.

For many centuries, probably millennia, a tan was a sign of someone who did manual labor, which was usually outdoors, while white skin showed that you didn't have to work and were

4 Jane Bingham, *A History of Fashion and Costume, Volume 1: The Ancient World* (Bailey Publishing Associates, 2005), p. 48.

5 Valerie Steele and John S. Major, *China Chic: East Meets West* (Yale University Press, 1999), p. 42.



WHAT'S UP WITH THE FIG LEAVES?

more likely to be upper-class. Books often described a heroine's 'lily white' skin. When a lady was outdoors she carried a parasol to shield her face from the sun. As menial labor moved indoors, to factories and offices, white skin became the norm among the lower class. Now a tan implied, not that you worked out in the sun, but that you had money to lie around in the sun or, especially if you were tanned in the winter, to take vacations to the French Riviera or some other warm spot. Heroines in books started being described as having 'bronzed' skin. For a while the darker the tan, the more beautiful, but as the dangers of skin cancer became better known and as tanning beds made tans easier to achieve and thus less prestigious, the ideal color has become a medium tan.⁶

Perhaps the thing that has changed the most often in the history of beauty ideals is whether thin is beautiful or whether large is beautiful. Believe it or not, large has more often won the day. In the late nineteenth century the book *Beauty and How to Keep It* by Professional Beauty (that really is how the author's name is given!) stated, 'Extreme thinness is a much more cruel enemy to beauty than extreme stoutness.'⁷ At this time, a beautiful leg was considered to be a round and plump leg.⁸ There were creams on the market which promised to make the arm and neck fatter, as much, it was claimed, as 30 pounds fatter.⁹ And even 'extreme stoutness' has on occasion been 'in'. In Africa, in what is now Uganda, in the nineteenth century, obese was beautiful. The

6. Alison Lurie, *The Language of Clothes* (New York: Random House, 1981), p. 235.

7. A Professional Beauty, *Beauty and How to Keep It*, 47-49, quoted in Valerie Steele, *Fashion and Eroticism: Ideals of Feminine Beauty from the Victorian Era to the Jazz Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 108.

8. Steele, *Fashion and Eroticism*, p. 222.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 221.





kings wives were fed a beer and honey mixture until they were so fat they couldn't stand on their own two feet.

In our own day and land the desirable body image is youthful, very thin, with large breasts. This is a perfect example of the irrationality of cultural beauty ideals. In nature, thin and large breasts don't usually go together; to achieve this effect usually requires either surgery (one of the most popular cosmetic surgeries, increasingly given to young women as graduation gifts¹⁰) or a Wonder bra. Real beauty, however, is about proportion and that is how God has designed things: A large woman will usually have large breasts and a slender woman will usually have small breasts.

Robert Musil, an Austrian writer and nominee for the Nobel Prize, describes this state of affairs well in his novel, translated into English as *The Man Without Qualities*, 'There are, of course, in all periods all kinds of countenances, but only one type will be singled out by a period's taste as its ideal image of happiness and beauty while all the other faces do their best to copy it, and with the help of fashion and hairdressers even the ugly ones manage to approximate the ideal. But there are some faces that never succeed, faces born to a strange distinction of their own, unyieldingly expressing the regal and banished ideal beauty of an earlier period.'¹¹

If we can't, then, measure up to the current ideal of beauty, we can at least think of ourselves as having 'that regal and banished beauty' of a bygone era!

10. See the article by Robin Henig, 'The Price of Perfection' *Civilization* (April 1996). http://www.nasw.org/users/robinhenig/price_of_perfection.htm.

11 Robert Musil, *Mannen uten egenskaper: Volume 1*, (Solum, 2000), p. 20, quoted in Lars Svendsen, *Fashion: A Philosophy* tr. John Irons (London: Reaktion Books, 2006), pp. 80-81.



WHAT'S UP WITH THE FIG LEAVES?

Variety in Beauty

'Fair' the hymn 'Fairest Lord Jesus' says 'are the meadows, fairer still the woodlands, robed in the blooming garb of spring... Fair is the sunshine, fairer still the moonlight, and all the twinkling starry host... Jesus is fairer....' God is so beautiful and wonderful that He had to create many different types of beauty to try to display it all. Nothing is as beautiful and wonderful as God, but different things show a little piece of His beauty and wonder. Satan hates God, hates anything that reminds him of God. Could it be that he is behind the pitting of one form of beauty against another, brown skin against white skin, large figures against small figures; could he be behind the monstrosities which have been given the misnomer of beauty, everything from six inch long fingernails to two inch long feet, from anorexic girls with breast implants in America to obese women who can't walk without help in Africa?

God has given us the gift of variety, a variety of different ways to be beautiful. We are not living according to truth when we feel ugly because we do not measure up to the world's arbitrary, narrow and ultimately godless definition of beauty. We recognize in nature that there are many forms of beauty, the beauty of the seashore is one, the beauty of the meadows is another, and the beauty of the mountains is still another. What if one day a man decided that the mountains were the only thing beautiful and everything else should try as much as possible to look like mountains? People living by the seashore pay money to bring huge boulders to hide the sea from view, truck in a lot of dirt and plant some grass and trees. People living in the meadows follow his advice to mow down all the flowers, truck in as much dirt and rocks as possible to approximate a mountain and then plant some trees. Let's say this man writes best-selling books on how to landscape your yard to make your home look as much as possible as if it were in the mountains. All he would succeed in

70



MODESTY, BEAUTY AND THE HUMAN BODY



doing is robbing the seashore (and the meadows, the forest, the rolling hills, etc.) of their beauty. Now everywhere you look, all you see is strange, ugly mountains. And what about those people who prefer the seashore to the mountains? Who was this man to decide that the mountains and only the mountains were beautiful? He would justly deserve to be considered nothing less than a madman by all those who love nature.

As crazy as this would be, it is just as crazy to deny the beauty of different body types and try to make them all look alike. But this is exactly what the world does. It tells one person that their breasts are too big and sells them a minimizing bra, it tells the next person that their breasts are too small and sells them a maximizing bra. It may at one time sell curling irons to everyone with straight hair and at another time sell flattening irons to everyone with curly hair. It may on one side of the globe sell whitening creams to Asians while on the other side selling tanning creams to Caucasians. Women's magazines are filled with advice on how to buy jeans and bathing suits for whatever figure type you have in order to make it look more like the accepted figure type. It doesn't matter that men have different tastes and not all men like the same body type, the world has decided this or that is beautiful and everyone else needs to fall in line or feel bad about not being able to fall in line.

Let's personalize the seashore for a minute. What would we think if we found Miss Seashore glumly looking through catalogs filled with glossy, full-color, full-page photos of some of the world's most stunning mountains, not a tree out of place, then we watched as Miss Seashore trudged out to the store to buy some rocks and trees which the magazine told her might be able to 'enhance her landscape' all the while knowing it is a lost cause, that try as she might she will never look like those mountains in the magazine? Wouldn't we want her to understand that we think she is beautiful the way she is and that we



WHAT'S UP WITH THE FIG LEAVES?

don't want her to look like the mountains? Wouldn't we tell her that God made her that way and that there is much pleasure she can give just the way she is?

Shannon Ethridge has something helpful to say on this point: 'I'm...very selective about the women's magazines I pick up because so many of the messages aren't helpful to me. When I read pages and pages of advice on how to be skinnier and look at the pencil-thin models in their underwear, I feel dissatisfied and unhappy with my body. After looking at all of the smooth, tight abdomens scattered throughout the magazine, I can get pretty depressed just looking at myself in the mirror – let alone giving my husband the pleasure of watching me undress. But when I avoid comparing myself and appreciate the strong, healthy body God gave me, I feel much better about my figure to give myself more freely and joyfully to my husband.'¹²

This is not a self-esteem trick to try to convince everyone they are perfectly beautiful. None of us are perfectly beautiful and it is obvious that within our given body type some people are more beautiful than others, just like some mountains are more beautiful than other mountains, some beaches more beautiful than others beaches. But even though each of us has things about us that are not beautiful, we still have a beauty of our own. Just like our favorite spot in the woods, our favorite park or our favorite beach will all have things that are not perfect, and even though there may be other places that are technically more beautiful, yet our favorite place is appealing to us, it is beautiful to us in a way that no other place is, often through the memories we have there. Our bodies and our souls are connected in such a way that what we feel towards a person's soul affects how we

12. Shannon Ethridge, *Every Woman's Battle* (Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook Press, 2003), p. 77.



view their body. As ‘Dr. John Gray, author of *Mars and Venus in the Bedroom*, says, “When a man is in love and turned on by his wife, he is also totally entranced by the feminine beauty of her body, regardless of where the media would rank it on a scale of one to ten. When he is in love with his wife, he experiences the perfection of her body for him.”¹³

In the next chapter we will see that although physical beauty is a blessing to be enjoyed, yet there is a far greater and more valuable beauty of the inward man. And as David and Diane Vaughan write in *The Beauty of Modesty* ‘...although we have no biblical standard or ideal for what constitutes physical beauty, we do have a standard of what constitutes moral or inner beauty. That standard is nothing less than the very moral character of our Creator Himself, as reflected in the face of Jesus Christ.’¹⁴

Whatever physical beauty we have can be taken away from us – and, sadly, age has a way of doing that. It is comforting to know that our true value and beauty comes from the inside and that that can grow and grow as we age. What millions of dollars spent on wrinkle creams, surgeries and hair dyes have failed to accomplish, we as Christians have the secret to: becoming more beautiful as the years go by. When we really believe this, we won’t be so obsessed with how our physical bodies compare with those of others. We will see that physical beauty is fool’s gold, and who cares if someone has more fool’s gold than you do? It’s pretty, it sparkles, it excites you for a while, but in the end it’s not worth much (Prov. 31:30).

13. Linda Dillow and Lorraine Pintus, *Intimate Issues: 21 Questions Christian Women Ask About Sex* (Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook Press, 2009), p. 59. They quote Dr. John Gray from his book, *Mars and Venus in the Bedroom* (London: Vermilion, imprint of Penguin Random House UK, 2003).

14. Vaughan, *The Beauty of Modesty*, p. 64.



WHAT'S UP WITH THE FIG LEAVES?

It takes constantly renewing our minds by God's Word and rejecting the lies implied on billboards and magazine stands everywhere to recognize our natural beauty and be content with it, even though the world scorns it. Worldly thinking involves so much more than we commonly imagine it to be, it is not always obvious sins and heresies, sometimes it is something as simple as believing that our bodies are unattractive.

Feeling Beautiful

There is something in a woman that yearns to feel beautiful. This desire is good, but beauty is a lot like money. It's not how much you have that makes you happy, it's how much you appreciate what you have. There are many extraordinarily beautiful women who never feel pretty enough and there are 'plain Janes' who feel very pretty. God has given you some beauty. It may be more or less than the person next door but it is enough to be happy with. Don't believe that you would be pleased with the way you look if you were just a little prettier. A makeover may make you temporarily happier, just like a raise at work would, but eventually your expectations of what you need to be happy would change and you would go back to feeling like what you had wasn't enough.

Comparisons and competitions are the enemies to contentment. They convince us that we can't feel pretty unless we are prettier than the women around us. We begin to feel threatened when we see a woman prettier than we are. But a true, godly regard for beauty can be happy wherever it finds beauty, whether in oneself, in a sunset or in the woman next door. God has given each of us our own measure of beauty; let's be done with comparisons and competitions and be thankful for the beauty God gives us and equally thankful for the beauty He gives others.

A husband would do well to seek to meet this need by showering his wife with his own attention, delighting in her beauty and praising her appearance. Sadly, many husbands have



so feasted their eyes on other women, or even pornography, that they have little to no appreciation for the appearance of their wives. These women can have a particularly hard time feeling beautiful. They are tempted to think that if they could just be prettier their husbands would find them attractive and love them, but that is not true. The problem isn't with their bodies; it's with their husbands' minds. These are very painful situations, more painful than not having a husband at all. If this is you, pray that God will help you to see yourself as He sees you and not as your husband sees you. Seek to have it be enough that God finds you beautiful whether any other man, even your own husband, ever does. The God who has a special place in His heart for those women whose husbands are dead surely has a special place in His heart for those women whose husbands are dead to them.

B. MODESTY UNDERSTANDS THAT SOME BEAUTY IS PRIVATE Modesty not only appreciates the beauty of the human body, it appreciates the private nature of the greater part of that beauty. Sure, there are parts of our beauty, like our face, that everyone can see, but much of our beauty is not meant for public view. Some beautiful things are meant to be displayed openly – as anyone with a baby will illustrate! But there are also beautiful things that are private, like our sexual lives, which cannot be shared with everyone without losing something priceless. A woman has a God-given desire to share her beauty with a man. It is modest convictions that cause her to hold out to share it in the right time with the right man instead of accepting the more immediate, but ultimately unfulfilling and destructive, pleasure of showing it off now to any man who has eyes to leer. As Jason Evert says, dressing modestly is not hiding our bodies because they are dirty or bad, but 'because you are worth waiting to see.'¹⁵

15. 'Dressing for Love,' Youtube video, 3:16, posted by Jason Evert, May 27, 2011, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5_HHc1A3cw&feature=share.



WHAT'S UP WITH THE FIG LEAVES?

We've already looked at Song of Solomon 4:12 ('A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed'), but we haven't yet looked at its context. You might consider stopping now and reading the whole chapter, but here is a summary: the first seven verses praise the beauty of the Shulamite, verses 8-11 talk about how enraptured Solomon is with her beauty and her love, verse 12 speaks of her as a closed garden, the next three verses describe the delights offered in this garden, and the chapter ends with the Shulamite saying: 'Let my beloved come to his garden and eat its pleasant fruits.' A woman's body is a garden of delights for a man, but it should be kept as a private garden, not a public park. Modesty is the fence, charming as white pickets and daunting as barbed wire, which keeps it from being trampled by every man that comes along, saving it for her beloved alone. As for her beloved, he enjoys her garden all the more in the knowledge that it is his unique privilege to enjoy the fullness of its beauty.

C. MODESTY IS CONTENT TO BE BEAUTIFUL TO ONE MAN

Carolyn Mahaney makes an important point when she says that while it is our culture which 'puts forth a false standard of beauty and a false message about beauty', yet it is 'ultimately the wickedness already resident in the human heart... [that] motivates us to believe such lies and pursue them.'¹⁶

Perhaps the sin that makes us most susceptible to these lies is the sin of being discontent with being beautiful in the eyes of one man only. In a later chapter we will talk about how the desire to be seen as beautiful is part of the sexual makeup of a woman. As with other sexual desires, when this desire is directed to one's spouse, it is righteous and lovely, but when it is directed at others, it is sinful.

16. Mahaney, 'True Beauty' in *Biblical Womanhood*, p. 36.



The need to have other men find you attractive is not just sinful, it is hurtful. If you need other men to find you attractive in order to feel beautiful, you will always be insecure. It will be hard to appreciate the beauty God has given you. How freeing it can be to enjoy your husband's attraction to you without ever worrying what any other man thinks of your appearance. If you were to boil down female modesty to its essence, you might find that it is a delight in one's beauty that seeks to thrill one's husband and one's husband only.

For the same reason, a husband's delight in his wife must not devolve into parading her beauty Artaxerses-like before others¹⁷. A woman's beauty is not a trophy for her husband to flaunt smugly. Obviously others will see much of her beauty, she does not, after all, live behind convent walls, but a man should not go out of his way to make her seen in order to feed his own ego. It should be enough for a man to know how beautiful his wife is without needing other men to be admiring her too. Despite what Facebook would seem to indicate, romance was not meant to be a spectator sport.

Dannah Gresh tells young girls, 'Your body can really drive a guy crazy. And that's what God intended. Check out Proverbs 5:18-19 where it tells a man to 'rejoice in the wife of your youth.... May you ever be *captivated* by her love.' That word *captivated* would be better translated 'intoxicated' since that's what the Hebrew writer was trying to suggest.... Again and again, the Bible reconfirms that this intoxication is only to be shared with one guy... and after you're married. Until then, it's under wraps... a secret to be shared with your husband. Sure, you could 'have many men,' but God says 'just one.' Until then, the fullest secrets of the incredible masterpiece of your body are

17. Esther 1:10-11.



WHAT'S UP WITH THE FIG LEAVES?

to be your unique secret. . . . You were created to express God's beauty, and if His plan is for you to marry one day, part of your purpose is to "intoxicate" one man with that beauty.¹⁸

And what if we're not married? Nancy DeMoss Wolgemuth says to single women, and it has applications for single men as well, 'you have only one person to please: The Lord should be the object of your pursuit for beauty (1 Cor. 7:34). All your thoughts, motives, and actions related to beauty should be for the eyes of One and One only.'¹⁹ As Christians we all have Christ for our husband, but I Corinthians 7:32-34 says that singles are able to live for their heavenly husband in a way that those who are married cannot: 'He who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord – how he may please the Lord. But he who is married cares about the things of the world – how he may please his wife. There is a difference between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman cares about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But she who is married cares about the things of the world – how she may please her husband.'

The desire of a woman to share her beauty with a man and of a man to revel in a woman's beauty is as deep and as real as the desire for intimacy, companionship and children. The fact that we have a heavenly bridegroom does not obliterate these desires. But it can help us to think less of what we don't have and to remind ourselves more of what we do have, because what we have in Christ is priceless and 1 Corinthians tells singles that they can be particularly devoted to Him and His service.

Marriage is so beautiful and special because it is a picture of something beautiful and special, that of the relationship between Christ and the church. This picture of marriage is but a poor

18. Dannah Gresh, *Secret Keeper: The Delicate Power of Modesty* (Moody, 2005) pp. 20-21, 24.

19. Mahaney, 'True Beauty' in *Biblical Womanhood*, p. 40.



imitation of the real thing and yet we can be so consumed with the imitation that we don't appreciate the original. What would we think of a woman who had a diamond and though she liked it well enough and thought it was rather pretty, yet what she really wanted was a picture of a diamond and couldn't be happy until she had the picture and envied everyone else who did have the picture? Wouldn't we want to tell her, 'Um, look, don't you see that diamond you have there? Isn't it altogether lovely? Isn't it fairer than ten thousands of pictures?'

What is more, the very fact that singles are freed from the distractions of the picture means that they can devote themselves more wholeheartedly to the diamond. It is true that now we see this diamond through a veil darkly, it is true that as long as we live in this body the desires for a spouse will always be there, but let us look up and let us look forward, forward to the day when the veil will be taken away and we will see Him face to face, the One who is altogether lovely and fairer than ten thousand, to the day when people will no longer be given into marriage because the picture will have no purpose now that the reality is clearly seen. That day is coming and it is coming fast when marriage will hold no attraction to us because it has been so fully swallowed up by that which so far surpasses it: Jesus Christ.

The King there in His beauty, without a veil is seen:
It were a well spent journey, though seven deaths lay between:
The Lamb with His fair army, doth on Mount Zion stand,
And glory – glory dwelleth in Immanuel's land.

O Christ, He is the fountain, the deep, sweet well of love!
The streams on earth I've tasted more deep I'll drink above:
There to an ocean fullness His mercy doth expand,
And glory, glory dwelleth in Immanuel's land.²⁰

20. Anne R. Cousin, 'The Sands of Time are Sinking' (1857).