

A Theological Response to Indecent Dressing Among Christian Youths in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined the theological response to indecent dressing among Christian youths in Nigeria. Indecent dressing is the dressing code that deviates from acceptable societal norms. It offends man and God and provokes sinful thought and desire that leads people to danger or destruction. Every dressing is a language, and it speaks to people about the personality of the wearer. Importantly, modesty in dressing and behavior is a sign of being responsible in a society like ours. Consequently one should dress the way he or she should be addressed. The church as the moral of the society, a corrective voice in the society, which praises what is good, condemns that which known to be evil and sets standard as found in the Bible upon which she passes judgment, should preach against indecent dressing with all sincerity and instill the right moral values as taught in the Bible into the citizens to bring sanity to our dressing code. Christians Parents and Church leaders should also join hands to eradicate this destructive vice.

Keywords: Indecent dressing, Church and Youths

Introduction

There is a well-liked witty expression that says, “Dress the way you want to be addressed”, meaning that the way one dresses

speaks a lot about one personality. The truth is that contemporary society has succeeded in turning a listening hear to this expression and count dressing to be “dress the way you like, it is your heart and motive that is important and not the dressing”. The major controversy over the issues of dressing and indecent dressing have continued to attract reactions of different people of varied backgrounds, orientation, values and culture internationally. Some see the laws against indecent dressing as the violation of human rights especially the rights of women because the issues of indecent dressing often centered mostly on the female gender, with no form of prejudice male gender are not free.⁵¹¹

Male gender also has the habit of dressing indecently when their boxers show above their trousers or there is no underwear and yet their trousers could barely hang on to their waists all in the name of a new fashion trend known as “sagging”. Thus, every country formulates laws that guide the smooth operation of their society. In formulating or legislating laws in any society, difficulty has always arisen as to whether the government or legislating authority has the power to legislate on issues that should be considered within the personal or private realm of individuals. The general question here is that, can the government or legislating authority deliberate on issues individuals consider as private or personal? One of such is the issues like dressing.⁵¹²

Thus, indecent dressing is a social problem in the society, but it is common and entrenched among Christian youths. Dressing has lost most of its value in our society. Certain styles of dressing are now serious threats to African societal

⁵¹¹ Alabi Adebayo Emmanuel, *Indecent Dressing "Virus" Killing Nigerian Youth* Retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/38184435/indecntdressng_docx accessed on 11 June 2022.

⁵¹² F. U. Nnadi, Religion and Moral Values among the Igbos of Eastern Nigeria in Ugwu C. O. T. (ed). *Nigeria Journal of Humanities and Social Science* Vol. 1 No. 22 (Nsukka Nigeria: Great, 2007).

cultural values and belief system. The threat of indecent dressing is gradually becoming a norm and those valuables which African society is known for, is gradually fading away. It is now becoming a custom that some people do not see anything wrong in dressing seductively Christian youths inclusive. Some forms of indecent dressing are products over exposure to foreign media, especially modeling of top movie stars. Sometimes, these movie stars dress to complement the parts they play in a movie.

As it is today, our girls are known for putting on very short skirts, towel-like linens which barely covered their breasts, leaving the rest of the body untended. It is on these issues raised that this paper hopes to provide a theological response to indecent dressing among Christian youths in Nigeria.

Theological Response to Indecent Dressing among Christian Youths in Nigeria

In the original plan of God, dressing means to cover nakedness. But, in recent times that is not the case, this is because people dress in different ways for different reasons. Having said that one who understands this time we see that indecent dressing has successfully find it way to the Church and the greatest problem is that some of the church leaders says less or nothing about it. Frankly speaking, those who talked about it do not emphasize it as they suppose to do. To be candid, indecent dressing has come to tabernacle with us in the present-day church; the dress pattern of many youths in Nigeria is getting from bad to worst on a daily basis, especially among the Christian's youths. It is very alarming that the church pays less attention to this issue. It is very hard to find a city in Nigeria that is void of this problem of dressing indecently. The way these Christian youths particularly the female ones dress seductively cannot be over emphasized and it is very disheartening. What the girls call skirts that they wear is just one inch longer than their pants. When they put on such dresses, they struggle to sit down, find

it difficult in climbing motorcycles, cross covet as well as pick anything from the ground.⁵¹³

Significantly, apart from the tight-fitting nature of these dresses, they are again transparent, revealing certain parts of the bodies that under normal dressing patterns ought to be hidden away from the glare of people and therefore the boys are struggling this day even in the church of Christ. On the contrary, in the case of boys, their pattern of dressing is different, it makes them to look so dirty and very unattractive with unkempt hairs and dirty jeans that has pockets of holes deliberately created around the knees and the lower part of the trousers allowed to flow on the ground because they go through their heels into their legs as socks.⁵¹⁴

The waist of their trousers is lowered and fastened tightly at the middle of the bottom lobes to reveal their boxers' pants and when they are walking, they drag their legs and one of their hands particularly, the left one cupping their invisible scrotum as if they will fall to the ground if not supposed. Many of them because of how they dressed has at one time or the other become victims of rape, lured into prostitution, used for ritual purposes, unable to complete their education or training and also engaged in other ancillary social and moral problems like cultism, lying and other anti-social behavior. Although there are known universally acceptable way or ways of dressing, dresses are meant to serve some definable purpose, country or region notwithstanding.

Theological education is very essential this is because the task of studying Bible in its original languages cannot be overlooked. If Bible should speak to all areas of human life the

⁵¹³ Sola Olorunda, *Indecent Dressing among Youths in South-West, Nigeria* retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/323700764_Indecency_Dressing_among_Youths_in_South-West_Nigerian accessed on 11 June 2022.

⁵¹⁴ T. Olori, Culture-Nigeria: Indecent Dressing Banned on the Campus: *African International Journal* Vol. 2 No. 4 (2003): 20-28.

issues with indecent dressing cannot be disputed. In a direct word, dressing means to cover our nakedness, but many are void of this understanding and those who know refused to do what is right. It is very disheartening that contemporary youths have succeeded in moving from covering nakedness to expose their nakedness and this is very alarming because Christian's youths have obtained master's degrees on how to dress indecently. One needs to ask this question should we put the blame on Christian parents or the government.

The answer is yes and no this is because there are lots of teaching about dressing in the Bible in which Christians parents can teach their Children in order to represent God and their family, but poor parenting has crept into the Church today, parents are also dressing indecently what a generation we find ourselves, parents are oblivious of the fact that they cannot give what they do not have. In addition, government are not helpful so to say that this is because if there is justice in our nation Nigeria there should be a model way of dressing and if the government agency (like police) sees any youth dressing indecently there should be a punishment for that, but reverse is the case. Having said this, what should now be the theological response to the problem of indecent dressing that came to tabernacle with us in Christendom?

Looking at the concept of dressing from the Biblical point of view which is believed that dressing originated from the Garden of Eden where Adam and Eve used leaves to cover their nakedness. Right from then, dressing became part of humankind. In the Old Testament book of Genesis 3:7-10 after Adam and Eve sinned, they made coverings for themselves. We should note that, despite such coverings, they still felt naked. The Lord made tunics for them as we can see in the book of Genesis 3:21. "Also for Adam and his wife, the Lord God made tunics of skin, and clothed them". This shows

that God was not satisfied with the type of the coverings they had made.⁵¹⁵

Though the Bible speaks of nakedness occasionally to denote defenseless or destitution, the context is always associated with shame. The larger references to nakedness in Old Testament Scripture speak of bodily indecency and improper behavior. Nakedness is cast in a favorable light only in respect to that exposure in private as between husband and wife. We can see in Genesis 2:25 “And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed”. It is shameful to expose or draw attention to private parts of the body. Exposure of such parts was often a form of judgment intended to shame the wicked as we can see in book of Isaiah 3:16-17 Moreover, the Lord says, “Because the daughters of Zion are haughty and walking without stretched necks and want on eyes, walking mincing, as they go, making a jingling with their feet. Therefore the Lord will strike with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion. And the Lord will uncover their secret parts.

Also in the New Testament, Apostle Paul also collaborates the fact that some parts are “unpresentable and thus should be covered” as it is written in the 1 Corinthians 12:23-24: And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor, and our unpresentable parts have no need, but God composed the body, having greater honor to that part which lacks it. It is evident by societal tradition and norms that there are parts of the body that should remain private. We must not provide opportunities for fleshly lusts; provoking lust is clearly condemned in the scriptures. Romans 13:13-14: Let us walk properly as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its

⁵¹⁵ T. Onoyima, *Immodest Dressing: Talk Delivered to Catholic Women Organization* (C.W.O.) (Awka Diocese Nsukka: Oguson, 2006).

lusts. From the religious point of view, people are expected to dress modestly especially the women. This is to avoid attracting unnecessary attention which in turn arouses sexual urge from opposite sex. Before the fall of Adam, man was ignorant of his nakedness. The awareness of this, placed man in a position of seeing the need to covering the vital sensitive parts of their body. This type of fashion crazy has made people lose values and worth before others. It has brought about lapses in moral standard.⁵¹⁶

In addition, it has been observed that poor parenting is one the problems facing indecent dressing among the Christian youths, therefore, the eradication of indecent dressing among the Christian youth by the church leaders cannot be over emphasized as many leaders such as Pastors, Evangelists, Reverend, Fathers, Prophets, etc preach undiluted word of God against indecent dressing during sermon and revealed the consequence that is likely to occur when one indulges in such an abnormal act.⁵¹⁷ Thus, Christian literatures, magazines, textbooks, tracts, pamphlets etc are used to checkmate this issue of indecent dressing. The church leaders go to radio and television houses to preach against it so that the message against indecent dressing can reach majority of people in the society who are involved in it, in order to stop it. The church will continue to do her best to make sure that the society is free from such vice. Boniface states that, before any members of any denominations become a worker like usher, prayer warrior, chorister, deacon or deaconess etc. the person must be disciplined in all ramifications and such person cannot dress indecently because if found in such dress will be suspended or asked to leave the work force.

Conclusion

⁵¹⁶Alabi Adebayo Emmanuel, *Indecent Dressing "Virus" Killing Nigerian Youth*, 1-5.

⁵¹⁷ L. N. Ebede, *Indecent Dressing on Campus* (Benin: Forward Ever, 2013).

To this end, nudity or half naked dressing is not a norm but a practice of morally bankrupt deviants who enthrone moral depravity over virtues of our traditional system and teachings in the church. Indecent dressing offends God and provokes sinful taught and desire that leads people to danger or destruction. Every dressing is a language, and it speaks to people about who the wearer is. Therefore modesty in dressing and behavior is a sign of being responsible; clothes should hide the contour of the body rather than expose it. Hence, man ought to dress in order to cover their nakedness and to glorified God.

Recommendations

This paper recommends the following in order to curb indecent dressing that is rampant in our society.

- Christian parents should train their children on how to dress decently as they grow up
- Church leaders should preach against indecent dressing and immorality.
- The body of Christ should inculcate the right moral values into the citizens through their teaching to curb indecent dressing.
- The church leaders are encouraged to emphasis on the consequences of indecent dressing so that people will avoid indecent dressing.
- Theologians should spend time in exposing the truth about God's word so that people may know the truth and practice it.
- Parents and church leaders should join hands to curb this destructive vice that has crept into the church.

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