

“I AM”
GOD OF
FASHION

**RECONCILING THE FASHION
INDUSTRY BACK TO ITS CREATOR**

ANASTACIA PLASTININA

“I AM” God of Fashion: Reconciling the Fashion Industry Back to Its Creator
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*You shall not make idols for yourselves ...
for I am the Lord your God.*

Leviticus 26:1

Table of Contents

Preface: Why This Book?	1
Introduction	3
PART I. Man's Construct	7
Chapter 1. Body	9
Chapter 2. Soul	17
“Fashion Soul”	21
Mind, Will, and Emotions	24
Chapter 3. Spirit	29
Appendix. Spirit & Soul Navigator	39
PART II. Many Faces of Fashion	41
Chapter 1. Fashion Essentials	43
Creative Factor	43
Brands	47
Commerciality of Fashion	49

Chapter 2. Legions of Fashion	53
Fashion Luxury	53
Fashion Ladder	62
Fast Fashion.	67
Chapter 3. Fashion as Business.	75
PART III. “I AM” of Fashion. Solutions	81
Chapter 1. Fashion and Identity	83
Chapter 2. Materialism	93
Chapter 3. Fashion as an Idol	103
Conclusion: What to Do Next?	111
Invitation.	113
Notes.	117

PREFACE:
Why This Book?

I do not actually see many books on fashion and Christianity.ⁱ Perhaps, the question that might bother you: “Why are you looking at all?” And the fact of the matter is that yes, actually, I have been. Of course, this pursuit of mine undoubtedly stems from the simple fact that I work in fashion and I am a born again Christian. Nothing mysterious about it, I guess. Nevertheless, I cannot help but feel perplexed as to how it is possible that such a vast pool of rich material as fashion is largely left unattended by the church, Christ’s body on earth.

Nowadays, everybody speaks about fashion. In recent decades, the fashion industry has outgrown its original

ⁱ I use the word “Christianity” here, with the specific meaning, to the best of my ability, marrying it with the gospel of Jesus Christ and the Word of God (The Bible). Other understanding of the word may include “Christianity as a religion” or “Christianity as a historical discourse”. Although being true, they, however, are not the central to the pages of this book.

habitat of one's closet to rise as a new superpower of social influence. The fashion personalities as well as brand names, the very knowledge of which some twenty years ago was a prerogative of only exclusive circles, are on everyone's lips now. Everybody seems to have their own opinion on fashion trends, hypes, fads ... look how incredibly descriptive our fashion vocabulary has become! Fashion has permeated deeply into our very lives and it is second to none in its ability to rule over our looks, behaviors, and minds. I cannot agree more with this brilliant quote,

Fashion is "a total social fact" ... that involves individuals and social groups deeply, and whose understanding reflects human life in its entirety ... Fashion is a total social fact since it is simultaneously artistic, economic, political, sociological ... and it touches upon issues of social identity expression.¹

Indeed, from whatever perspective we choose to look at it, it is clear that fashion plays a tremendous role in modern society², controlling and governing human masses. And with this reality taking place, for a believer, it is only natural to wonder where the Lord Jesus Christ, "the First and the Last, the Beginning and the Completion" (Revelation 22:13 TPT), is in all that ... because He must be there somewhere.

Introduction

Typically, once people learn that I work in fashion, they become excited. More often than not, they immediately start sharing with me their personal love for clothes and design. Do not get me wrong, I can totally understand why. The thread between fashion and clothing design, excuse the pun, is self-explanatory. But I have to say that personally, it is not the part of fashion that makes my heart beat. And as a girl, in my Home Economics class at school, I was very average. "What are you then?" you would ask. "I am a fashion marketer." And fashion marketing is exactly where the most interesting things are hidden ... at least for me. And here is my reason *why*.

Fashion is an industry like any other: "Tom is in banking. Anastacia works in fashion." Fair enough! In recent decades, however, the fashion industry has rapidly accelerated its development, branching out to newer and previously unconnected fields of knowledge and expertise (e.g. technology). Besides, fashion's traditional link to the

entertainment and music fields has been strengthened and lifted to new levels, making this union even more powerful and hard to ignore.

Marketing is a software of any industry. Being a marketer allows you to feel, and in many ways define the heartbeat of it. Being a fashion marketer specifically puts one in the position of being able to recognize the key realities of fashion and make them work for the benefit of all interested parties. Not only that. On a personal level, being in the fashion business constantly challenges you to learn and redefine your skills. And for a curious and resourceful mind, what a unique and privileged position that is!

I would imagine that no one can comprehensively embody all that which fashion stands for. That is why on the pages of this book, I will spare you the standard definition one may find in a dictionary. Fashion may indeed mean many things to many people.

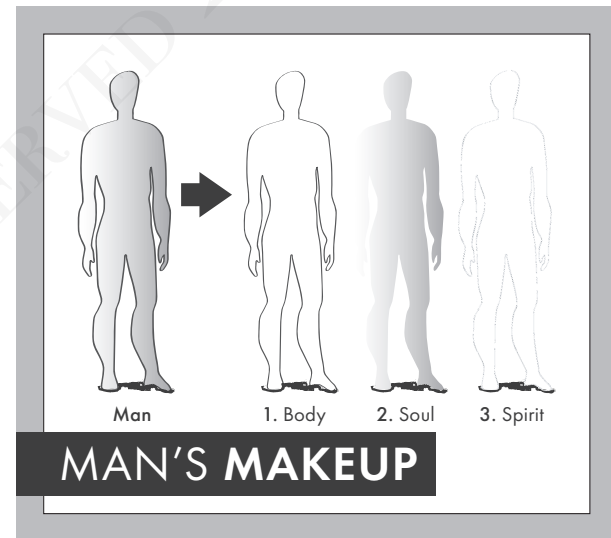
Speaking of fashion as an industry, for insiders, it is their occupation—a field of their everyday work with its rules, routines, tasks, and issues. For outsiders, and in the mind of consumers, fashion, however, may mean something else. Too often, we see how fashion is idolized and regarded as something it is not. Millions of people, primarily youngsters¹, are so misled by fashion with its broadcasted glamour and propagated prestige. In this fallen world, *'niente è come sembra'* ('nothing is the way it seems' in Italian) and oh, how we need the Spirit of God to come and show us the Truth² and the Way!

Due to its strong spiritual denotation, the nature

of fashion in all of its expressions—as a concept, phenomenon, or even industry—is evasive. In fact, the nature of fashion is so obscure that it is hard to pinpoint the Lord Jesus there right away (hence, a popular yet mistaken opinion of fashion as something “God-forsaken”). Nevertheless, He is there! “Nothing in all creation is hidden from God” (Hebrews 4:13 NLT). The enemy of our souls, satan³, is a created being and has nothing of his own. Whatever he plays at (and subsequently perverts) has originally belonged to God.

It is time for the Lord's body— His hands and feet on earth—to rise above this treachery. As we reconcile our souls back to Him, equipping ourselves with the necessary knowledge through His Holy Spirit, the enigma of fashion will be broken. And all creative industries, along with its millions of admirers and fans, will be redeemed and brought into the kingdom. Oh, what days those will be!

CHAPTER 1.
Body



Man's construct is three-fold and while here on earth, we cannot live without any one component. In a Christian life, we are to glorify the Lord with all three of them as the Lord commands us

to give ourselves fully for the sole purpose of loving Him.

Matthew 22:36-37

"Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" And Jesus replied to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind."

Our bodies are "a temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 6:19 ESV) and should be regarded as such. It is apostle John, a servant of God—not the latest edition of a fashion magazine—who bestows success, prosperity along with good health over church members. "Just as your soul is prospering" (3 John 1:2 TPT)! It is a key fundamental truth and God's will for us to enjoy a healthy body and to take care of it. How to do it, though?

However important and "wonderfully and fearfully made" (Psalm 139:14) human bodies are, the truth is they are only our earthly suits (1 Corinthians 15:47). We need them to live and operate in this reality, but we also know that they do not truly represent us. In other words, we are not our body. And every time we grieve at someone's funeral, we are to remember that the true life is in the soul and spirit.

Being a substance of this fallen realm, by default, human bodies are perishable (1 Corinthians 15:42) and a subject to the consequences of the fall (Romans 8:18-25), e.g. aging, changing, and contracting diseases. The Scripture emphatically states that at the resurrection of saints, our earthly bodies will be left down here and that in eternity, we will be given new heavenly, infallible bodies to clothe our true selves (1 Corinthians 15:50-53).

Wherever there is no God, there cannot be a permanent solution because He is the Solution. "I am the Way" (John 14:6 TPT). The problem with our bodies begins when we start regarding them as something more (or something less) than they are according to the Creator. Making the body an idol, seeking beauty and youth before everything else, is hard work. Often, frustrating too. On the contrary, depriving the body of regular exercise, proper care, and healthy nutrition represents the other end of the spectrum. Needless to say, extremes are never good because they are deemed to always miss the target.

Interestingly, people who are overly preoccupied with their physical appearance are not actually exempt from being disappointed on its account. Why? Because they may not necessarily do what they do *the God's way*. Please bear with me; by itself, there is nothing wrong with looking after yourself. Yet, when we get fixated on attaining the perfect physique at the expense of other life priorities, we somehow mysteriously lose it. Even the joy of the journey for that matter. Believe me, I have seen such people, and so have you. Oh, truly the Lord said when we are too keen on something, we will never obtain it. However, if we submit our desires to Him, He Himself will be sure to see them through. What an amazing God!

Matthew 10:39

whoever finds his life [in this world] will [eventually] lose it [through death], and whoever loses his life [in this world] for My sake will find it [that is, life with Me for all eternity].

The saddest part for me, where I see people in ditches left and right, is the simple fact that we are often too blind to understand ourselves and accurately discern the real motives for our actions. Or even our true desires. Instead, we are quick to jump “for a fix” on anything and everything offered to us in the marketplace. We are often deceived into believing that this or that “new thing” is *the thing*. And as a result, we waste our precious lives chasing after the wind of endless marketing campaigns and the myriad of brands that promise us fulfillment yet rarely deliver it. Of course, it is a whole different story when we are not actually after the solution, but just want to enjoy the ride and have fun. We will cover this aspect in Part III.

Our physical state is not an isolated part of the equation. Rather, it is directly linked to the state of our soul (mind, will, and emotions) and spirit. And what we need to be truly after is a healthy body, coupled with a joyful soul, sealed and governed by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Another example of the New Age Movement in the Church would be the practice of yoga, which is controversial, but just at the least, definitionally, [what] Hinduism in practice is. I would say, “Go to a kinesiologist, go to a chiropractor, get some back stretches from a local personal trainer.” Scientifically, they’ve been shown to be just as effective in alleviating back pain as yoga. Now, what’s scary, Sid, and what’s dangerous is a lot of these practices. They’re actually named after the gods of Hinduism. When you hold these postures, what is meant to do is invoke the character, the properties, and

the essences of these certain gods...If you don’t have the discernment to know in advance ... what spirits coming through from the other side ... don’t go there.¹

One may become “obsessed” with his or her appearance not because of the presence of some serious flaws there, but because of the soul’s insecurity, deeply rooted within that person. Perhaps, the source of the insecurity is:

- *a hurt*, inflicted in childhood, which made you reject how you look (with this non-acceptance going on for years). For example, a peer’s comment at school on your bad hair day.
- *a temptation of comparison* of yourself to the impossible standards of fashion, beauty, and show business.
- *a common lie* of satan that you are not enough and you “do not measure up” which pushed you over the brink to work hard on yourself, constantly seeking improvements.
- *a half-truth* that better looks will give you true happiness, acceptance by people, and brighter prospects in life. *The full truth*, however, is that true virtues and benefits in life have more to them than meets the eye. And looks are just one of a dozen points which you need “to score up” on. Moreover, putting too much stress on one point will automatically mean a loss on another.

- *a family trait* (a generational curse) of depression, mood swings, and defeatist attitudes that have been going on for ages which would, undoubtedly, wreck your whole perception of self as well as that of others.
- *an act of physical assault or abuse* that deeply wounded you.

As we can clearly see, our over-enthusiasm for the physical appearance oftentimes may have nothing to do with our actual body per se and in such instances, we risk being governed by “mind over matter.”

She was rejected by modeling agents 42 times. Her nose was all wrong, she was told. And her mouth, legs, waist and breasts. After which, there wasn't much left to criticize. Her elbows, maybe? But whatever Ms. Bündchen's motto may be, it is not, “If at first, or at your 42nd try, you don't succeed, give up.” So she persisted, finally landed an agent and is now the highest paid model in the world. Soon, she will be the first supermodel billionaire ever, and in survey after survey, hers is constantly voted The Most Desired Body. Even with those elbows? Seems so.²

Dear reader, if you recognize yourself as someone on this list, congratulations, this is your hour for freedom. Turn to God, ask for His help, and once and for all, find your healing. I would encourage you to seek counseling and deliverance as well as to pray earnestly in order to fully understand whom God created you to be and the amazing love He has for you. Without this revelation,

you will not be able to be truly free and fulfill the mission you are called for (and we all have one).

Ephesians 2:10

For we are His workmanship [His own master work, a work of art], created in Christ Jesus [reborn from above—spiritually transformed, renewed, ready to be used] for good works, which God prepared [for us] beforehand [taking paths which He set], so that we would walk in them [living the good life which He prearranged and made ready for us].

The true transformation in us and total elimination of inner insecurities are only able to take place after we receive the revelation of the Truth of God. Once again, that is to say a profound, no-going-back transformation. Yes, a deep personal revelation on:

- who God says He is;
- God's love for us;
- the identity of the children of God; and
- who you personally are in Him and how much He loves you.

Psalm 139:16

Your eyes have seen my unformed substance;
And in Your book were all written
The days that were appointed for me,
When as yet there was not one of them [even taking shape].

CHAPTER 1.
Fashion Essentials

Creative Factor

The fashion industry is exciting to work in. And not purely for the obvious reasons one may conclude (e.g. glamour, beautiful clothes, and parties). In fact, believe it or not, for some people, that scene is not quite their cup of tea. To me, the fashion industry is inspiring because it navigates between two seemingly contradictory ingredients at once—creativity and business. And it, therefore, requires a unique blend of versatile skills.

Creativity is the heart of fashion because this industry is intrinsically built on the imagination, originality, and skills of the designer. The business element is what disciplines the creative process, “wrapping it up” for the audience in the marketplace. To successfully run a fashion company means to be able

to juggle these two components together simultaneously.ⁱ

First and foremost, creativity in fashion is expressed in design, which presents a unique solution for the clothes' look through a color paletteⁱⁱ, print, embellishments, etc. Apart from these features, design, equally aims to pursue comfortable patterns and precise cuts, fitting to the given figure and size. At first sight, a consumer might become interested in a certain piece because of its look. Yet, if upon fitting, he or she does not feel pleasant and comfortable enough wearing it, the purchase will not happen. And it all ends before it begins.

Interestingly, although we wear one size, that same size's scale and fit may slightly vary from brand to brand. Is this variation normal? Yes, and it is because brands on various strata of fashion ranks furnish their pattern-making processes differently. Another reason for such a gap could be related to marketing and brand's target audience. For instance, while one womenswear brand would specifically cater to curvier forms, addressing this particular feature by adding a body shapewear effect to its design, another may not necessarily have such an orientation. As a result, the latter brand would produce

ⁱ Probably, one of the very best examples of such is Miuccia Prada and Patrizio Bertelli, being a creative and business head of Prada Group, correspondingly, for over 40 years. They are also a wife and husband.

ⁱⁱ Back in Old Testament days, color was something very symbolic (Numbers 15:38-40) and understandably hard to produce. Much later in history, there were some pursuits in this area that were plain dangerous (consider the account of a 'Paris green' pigment in the nineteenth century). And although gained over the centuries experience in dying and coloring has provided the modern fabric manufacturing industry with enough expertise, certain colors, or rather certain hues, could be still as difficult to produce. Especially, if we talk about the top luxury brands which distinct color became key in their brand identity. E.g. 'Tiffany blue', 'Schiaparelli shocking pink', 'Louboutin red' and others.

the very same piece in the exact size as the first one, yet setting it more linear. What a great example of how creativity is not something detached from the reality, but rather a reflection of the designer's technical training as well as his or her business sense.

Secondly, creativity in design deals with the garment's touch, texture, and feel, and these parameters are largely dependent on the fabric that is used. Certain designs can only be realized through specific types of fabrics and not others (think of evening gowns or outerwear). In the case of outerwear, for example, not only would a designer consider the final look and fit of the piece, but also its physical properties, such as breathability, lightness, resistance to precipitation, etc.ⁱ

At last, "the creative awareness" of the designer may also include the component of the so-called "performance coefficient."ⁱⁱ Or in plain English, how durable the clothes are. And that is where a lot of questions arise. Here is why.

Ever since the dawn of fast fashion in the early '90s, we have all been able to witness two parallel processes in action. While the variety and number of items quickly increased, the quality declined, leading us directly away from the notions of durability and performance. One simply cannot be interested in purchasing a tee that comes out of its very first wash already faded and with loose stitches, can one? Sounds too exaggerated, yet today, that is the case for many of us. This topic is

ⁱ A fitting illustration here can be The North Face® and GORE-TEX® revolutionary membrane technology.

ⁱⁱ This simple formula may bring a notion of practicality in shopping to a whole new level. Price/Times worn = Performance coefficient

definitely worthy to expand more on and we will be sure to do so further down on the pages of this book.

All in all, a true creative mind, especially in this day and age in fashion, will always look for the most optimal solution while considering a combination of multiple factors involved. So, as an encouragement to the kids who are interested in studying fashion design as well as their parents—no need to worry, after enrolling in the right design school, the left “mathematical” part of your brain will be as much in training as your right “creative” one.

Speaking of a creative factor that we expect from fashion, historically, the ranking of fashion brands (or rather, individual designer figures) was directly linked to the quality and craftsmanship as demonstrated by the artist’s final products. Now, the class of fashion brands is decided under the heavy influence of marketing. In the present day, marketing is powerful enough in its storytelling to create a well-engineered enigma. Oftentimes, this exercise offers us nothing more than just a beautiful gimmick. And it certainly can tell us all the wonderful things we’d like to hear *about* the product, but in fact, not be *in it*.¹ How can this be?

¹ It actually reminds me of a very interesting illustration that Joyce Meyer once gave in one of her sermons. When the Lord was on earth, He was physically present with the disciples, and that was good. Yet now, having the Holy Spirit, living on the inside of us, we have God in us, and it is even better.

“Everything was better a while ago, when there were less resources available. Today material values come before spiritual ones.”

—Pliny the Elder, a Roman author of the first century AD¹

Brands

Brands came to their prominence in the early twentieth century as a helpful guide for consumers to navigate among the proliferation of options offered in the market. In regard to the dawn of fashion branding specifically, we are accustomed to think of Charles Frederick Worth (1825-1895) and of course, Paul Poiret (1879-1944) as the forefathers. At different times, these couturiers immensely influenced the Parisian fashion scene not only with their designs, but also their innovative approach to fashion field trade in general.

Conceptually, brand was to embody a few best features of the product it represented, furnishing the product with its individual name, mark, and label. In doing so, brands acted as a pledge, given to the consumer, guaranteeing a safe, precise, and speedy choice ... while bestowing a certain mark of public recognition to its owner in return. The link between a brand and its product was supposed to be transparent, direct, and uninterrupted, because brands were to merely broadcast the inner qualities of the product they offered. The problem began when this connection became loose and brands ended up separate entities in themselves, having less and less to do with the products they originally stood for.

A brand is an ethereal matter—hence, you cannot really feel it. Yes, one can hold his or her Prada bag, but the bag is not the brand, it is simply one product thereof. When the brand-product link is healthy, the brand always finds its adequate expression through the physical properties of the product. Quite often, sadly, it is not the case, and company's marketing efforts may be too focused on the brand, leaving the product behind. As a result, we have to deal with products that are an unequal match to their brands character-, quality-, and investment-wise.

The brand's fame may blind consumers into believing in something the brand is not. For example, we often judge people by the brands they wear. We may even start associating ourselves with the brands we buy, which is plain wrong and spiritually dangerous. Chanel is classic, Volvo is secure, and Nike's "Just Do It" knows no defeat (the list goes on)! In fact, brands are not very much different from the ancient gods (small "g") throughout history.

Not being an objector to fashion branding (or any branding for that matter), I, however, strongly believe that as consumers, we need to be sober-minded to clearly understand what we deal with. And pay for. It's about time we educated ourselves with the untainted knowledge of the true creativity, quality, and value.

Commerciality of Fashion

There are a lot of unhappy opinions on the commerciality of fashion nowadays. I am sure you can relate. "How can a dress cost this much? Is it made of gold?" Of course it turns out that it is not. And while some may focus their remarks on the financial aspect, others would address the creative side of fashion pursuits, deeming certain pieces to be outlandish, impractical, and simply vain. Well, clearly, "agree to disagree" may come in very handy here. But still, let us discuss—Does fashion indeed have a problem with the unjustified pricing and uncalled-for designs?

The way to succeed in pretty much anything is to take and operate things according to the purpose which God created them with (Proverbs 16:4). That is—not to create some other goals for objects, let alone people, nor to manipulate the components of that purpose. But instead, to closely adhere to the original plan, ordained by God the Creator, maintaining peace and balance. Why? Because once the purpose of something stops living up to itself, technically speaking, it is the beginning of the end.²

We do not use the word *harmony* in Christian circles a lot, do we? Laughably, it is almost like this word is not Christian enough. We would probably expect to hear it more from a psychologist or a "new age" follower, but not so much in church. Actually, it is not funny how easily sometimes we would give certain God-created concepts away to the enemy's camp simply because of the religious

prejudice (may the Lord give us more wisdom). The truth, however, is that the concept of harmony denotes the very word of peace ('shalom' in Hebrew).

All of the other blessings are useless without the establishment of inner peace, and therefore, it is the seal of the blessing. 'Shalom' is not simply the absence of strife, but a balance and harmony between the finite and infinite, the temporal and the eternal, the material and the spiritual realms. Shalom is a gift from Sar Shalom, the Prince of Peace.³

Fashion is a business and any player in the industry is, by definition, commercially-driven. To expect otherwise is erroneous. The purpose of any business is twofold and it is to offer its products to consumers and to provide an economic return to its shareholders. When either of these two components gets "bullied" by the other, *the shalom* gets compromised and things start falling apart.

In the case of the fashion industry, the discord happens when a creative product gets overtaken by the interest of financial gain. Or, when the opposite happens, and the creative part goes out of touch with the financial reality of the brand. These scenarios are equally damaging to a fashion business and represent a classic case study for any fall that there ever was in fashion.

In the industry, we have the expression 'commercial collection', which means that a certain collection has been

designed with a clear understanding of the market and what consumers are after. Simply put, the collection can sell. In fact for any brand, a commercial collection is the perfect optimum, both artistically and financially. The problem starts when the brands begin to compromise the optimum ratio in favor of the financial component by overcharging consumers and asking them to pay more than what the piece is worth. It is especially troubling when this deviation starts to permeate the practices of those brands which are supposed to "know better" and carry the torch of being exemplary for the whole industry.

So, is there any real problem with the commerciality of fashion? Intrinsicly, no, because it is a business and it should be taken as such. The true heart of the issue is when commerciality becomes greed because money by itself is not evil. The love for it is (1 Timothy 6:10).

CHAPTER 1.
Fashion and Identity

God's solutions always work. And what I appreciate even more about our God is that He is willing to help.

James 1:5

If any of you lacks wisdom [to guide him through a decision or circumstance], he is to ask of [our benevolent] God, who gives to everyone generously and without rebuke or blame, and it will be given to him.

Besides, He is categorically against us constantly walking around the same mountain, over and over without results and fruits in our lives, “always learning but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth” (2 Timothy 3:7 NIV). Our God is not an armchair philosopher who is willing to talk all day long without any clear lessons learnt for His children. No, our God is the best teacher. And since this is true, we can be sure that He, indeed, has answers for us.

Through the first two parts of this book, we were able to somewhat track how this beautiful and powerful industry has become a citadel of the enemy and how we all fell with it.

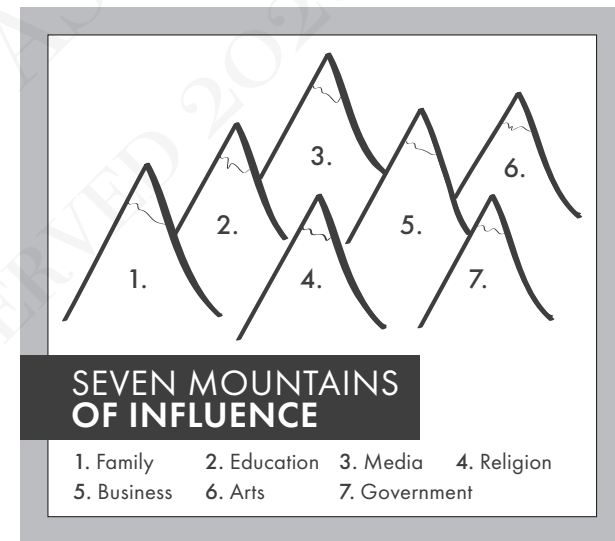
“Not many people understand what is happening to our world and economy right now ... It seems we are massively entering a quarantine of consumption where we will learn how to be happy just with a simple dress, rediscovering old favourites we own, reading a forgotten book, and cooking up a storm to make life beautiful. The impact of the virus will be cultural and crucial to building an alternative and profoundly different world.”¹

It truly pains me to see fashion consumers becoming fashion victims. What is even more infuriating though is that brands blatantly promise to furnish us with something that they simply do not have. And we give in.¹ As consumers, we use the veil of certain brands' prestige to justify our bad taste or lack of involvement. We buy more to conceal our inner pain and take our minds off things that actually need our attention and resolution. How could we get it so terribly wrong?

To be honest, it equally pains me to witness the abuse, happening inside this industry, as well. This field has been entrusted with so much! The number of variables it encompasses within itself is astounding: economical, social, political, psychological, spiritual, what else? Fashion is truly the litmus test of humanity.

¹ *'I Shop Therefore I Am'*, adapted from the French philosopher Rene Descartes' *'I Think Therefore I Am'*, is a classic anti-consumerism movement slogan, originally depicted and popularized by the artwork imagery of Barbara Kruger in 1987.

God is in business of saving people (John 3:16). This is His first and only goal. He seeks to reconcile the humanity with Himself through Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:18) and restore the original order of things by giving us His very best. As His children, we need to recognize this priority in our Father's heart and call upon His Name on all *seven mountains of influence*.



From a psychological perspective, clothes are a way of self-expression and how we announce ourselves unto the outside world. In itself, it is absolutely healthy and neutral. Have you noticed how one and the same set of items can give forth a different impression depending on its wearer? This is because we are all unique and contrary to the common human wisdom, it is man who

defines the look, not the other way around.

Fashion and our clothing choice have a lot to do with our identity—the very core of who and how we are. Which is the trickiest part because often, we do not know who we *truly* are as measured against the original design of the God Creator. As mentioned before, I find it so very interesting that although our mothers brought us into this world, they did not create us. Needless to say, we did not create ourselves either—think of how many times you cannot fully understand yourself. The reason for it is the simple fact that our original design was not up to us, but to the One who created us, fully knowing who He had in mind.

When it comes to our identity, psychology says that there is more than one face to it. Speaking practically, our identity is directly linked to how aware we are of ourselves and how much we are willing to express this knowledge before others. Without either of these components, what we are most likely to produce in our behavior is manipulation or deception—either for our own benefit or that of others. Both of these “hacks” are unpleasing to the Lord and open doors for the enemy who, knowing the power of our true identity, seeks to keep it further away from us. Think of how often skillfully applied makeup can turn us into a whole different person ... for better or for worse.

There is no such tool in the world of fashion that is going to transform you into someone you were not created

to be.ⁱ You are who you are. This actually reminds me of “I AM WHO I AM” (Exodus 3:14 NIV). In the context of consumer behavior, despite how much we shop in order to elevate our emotional state, we continue to remain exactly the same person after the purchase as we were before it.

I have a close friend who is a sister in Christ. Appearance-wise, she is tall and slim and looks very much like a supermodel. Not only that, her inner state is equally glamorous. What I see different in her though is that she is not trying to be glamorous to benefit from the recent trends. Nor is she acting as someone she is not. She is genuinely glamorous! And you know what, the studded jeans with Swarovski crystals look great on her in the daytime and on a workday ... in fact, even when it rains. And that is why, the bath gel with 24K gold particles seemed like an appropriate gift for her birthday. What I am trying to say here is that the power of identity is much more conspicuous than we think. In fact, it is very easy to spot up a fake (and I am not referring to a counterfeit brand here). Yes, it is easy, but also incredibly disheartening because God would never have created a fake in the first place.

The most healthy way to coincide your identity with what you wear is *the principle of shalom* which we have already discussed earlier. That is, when one’s

ⁱ Having said that, we are not to undermine the significance of fashion. Otherwise, why write this book? On the contrary, we are to know exactly where it begins and ends. And how it is a servant, not a master, to humans, the genius of God’s creation. Indeed, anything when compared to the marvel of human life simply fades away. May we have eyes to see more of this miracle.

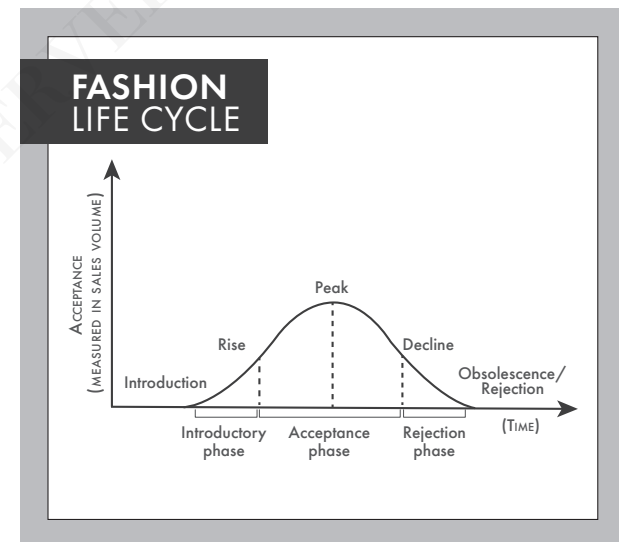
identity and the clothes he or she wears are in a perfect hierarchy, gently complementing each other. Clothes (and for women, your makeup) should highlight the best of you while concealing imperfections—which we all have—in a moderate and appropriate way. I like the word *appropriate* because even the best outfit would look disastrous if it does not suit the wearer, circumstances or surroundings.¹

Does this seem like a hard task with multiple elements to it then? Well, it is. In fact, it is only the impression (and a false one at that!) that fashion is frivolous and needs no substantial depth. To me, that is a plain lie because every significant area of our lives always requires wisdom, attention, and investment. The old proverb says it best, “The only free cheese is in the mousetrap.” And the “model-off-duty” look, with its tousled hair and a plain white tee and jeans, may only seem nonchalant and “couldn’t-care-less” when in fact, it was introduced by professionals—the very ones who are at the center of the industry, perfectly knowing what they are going for.

There are trends for everything. One day, you wake up to the hype of superfoods and immediately forget how life could ever be bearable before only soon to realize that *this too shall pass*. To me, trends are actual spiritual winds (i.e. *zeitgeist*, “spirit of the age” in German), ordering control and periodical direction. Knowing from

the Scripture that God does not change (Malachi 3:6) and that trends do—in fact, they are all about change—we may conclude that trends could hardly have originated in Him.

Speaking about fashion trends specifically, they are temporary, “corrective”, and highly cyclical.² Not only do they define what to wear, but also *how* to wear a particular piece of clothing. With the latter ability, fashion trends have an interesting tendency to influence our gestures, postures, and even overall behavior as well. So fashion is far beyond the plain physicality of things. Just a thought.



¹ Historically, costumes and outfits have always been dependent on the specific occasion, lifestyle, or the profession of one's. See for yourself: evening gowns, countryside look, and a military style. All of these sprang up from their practical role, which we tend to forget about, along with the notions of looks being proper and suitable.