



# "Making my body my own again": Seven stories of Saints who've chosen to stop wearing garments

BY JANA · PUBLISHED MARCH 16, 2007 · UPDATED FEBRUARY 2, 2016



In speaking with many liberally-minded Mormons, I've discovered a range of attitudes toward wearing garments. For some, wearing the sacred underclothing isn't a trial and doesn't complicate their relationship with the church. However, it seems that most find garments uncomfortable, unwieldy, and unnecessary. Many, though still active in the Church, have chosen to stop wearing their garments or only wear them when they attend Church functions. Below are the anonymous stories of seven women and men

who have chosen to stop wearing their garments.

*[Note: In the comments section of this post, please feel free to discuss your own experiences with this topic. Any comments that criticize or condemn the authors of these anecdotes will be deleted.]*

1) I remember anxiously waiting to be endowed. Going through the temple and wearing the garment is one of the primary rites of passage into Mormon adulthood. I was highly aware of which peers of mine had already been endowed, and looked forward to joining the club. The line above my knee or on my back, or the white peeking out at my waistband or sleeve would be easily picked up by the trained LDS eye and would show that I was a full-fledged, card carrying adult member. I couldn't wait.

I remember coming home after receiving my endowment, changing into my pajamas, and looking down at these saggy garments I was wearing. I went into my mother's room and told her I thought they were too big. "No, that's how they're supposed to fit" she said. I wore my garments three sizes too big for the next couple of years. For some reason I accepted that it was normal for them to create huge bags around my waist, and that basically garments just weren't supposed to fit. To me this has become symbolic of many things about my church experience. A number of things didn't quite fit, and created discomfort, but I continued to accept them without questioning. I eventually did get garments that fit, and realized that I had been putting up with terrible discomfort for no reason at all, besides that I believed what my mother told me.

My ultimate decision to stop wearing the temple garment came after considerable angst and frustration. I was increasingly uncomfortable with the modesty rhetoric in the church, culminating with the infamous "walking porn" statement. I was frustrated with the way our bodies are oversexualized by the way youth of the church are taught to view them. I felt like the institution was trying to control my body, by saying what I could wear, what I could or could not eat and drink, having a say in my sexuality. I didn't have any particular desire to dress any differently than I had been, and I had no plans to do anything harmful to myself. However, it became very important to me to take my body back. Removing the garment made my body my own again and gave me a way to symbolically

reject demeaning attitudes toward women and their bodies that I have found in the church.

It was not a decision I made lightly. I have been guilty in the past of thinking highly judgmental thoughts about people who I knew had been endowed and were clearly not wearing their garments. At one time I had worn them day and night, and even at the gym. Now they are folded and put away in a box. I am at peace with my decision. My body is my own and I honor it in my own way. I try to spend more time focused on the state of my heart, and to see others for who they are, and focus less on outward appearances and orthoprax behavior.

2) I stopped wearing garments shortly after I went inactive in the church. Though I loved the initiatory ordinance when I received them, and I had fairly positive temple experiences overall, the garments began to symbolize the parts of the church that I resented. For example, I disliked temple recommend interviews when my Bishop would ask me about my underwear. I also felt that my body was a gift from God and I didn't feel happy with the way it looked clothed in garments –I often had to wear 4 layers of tops and long pants to cover them. More than anything, I could no longer trust in a God that cared so much about my underwear.

I still have my garments, though. They are in a box on my top closet shelf with my temple clothing. I don't know why I can't just throw them away. But there's some part of me that just needs to know that they are still there.

3) I HATE EVERYTHING about garments: the way they look; the way they feel; the pharisaical way we judge people who don't wear them; the ridiculous lengths we (especially women) go to find clothing that covers them up; the way they are never covered up (despite said ridiculous lengths); the urban legends that revolve around their protectiveness; and on and on and on...

Shopping for clothes with my wife is an exercise in futility. 95% of what I like (and she likes) cannot be worn with garments. I hate it when she

dresses “Mormon.” I see nothing skanky about seeing a woman’s upper arms, shoulders, back, or thighs. So now we’ve got women who wear one layer (garments), a second layer (i.e. a “shield”) to cover their garments, a third layer which is the shirt or blouse they would normally have worn as their first layer, but can’t because it doesn’t cover the garments, and even a fourth and fifth layer if it is cold outside. Amazing.

The fact that we might only have one go-round at life on earth and we spend it covering our beautiful bodies feels criminal. I’m not arguing for bad taste — I’m as disgusted by sleaze as anyone else — I’m just arguing for a little maturity and some common sense. Can I wear a T-shirt and shorts without two inches of white cotton fabric sticking out below my shorts hemline everytime I sit down, and an inch or more sticking out at my neckline? Must I essentially wear two shirts everytime I get dressed? Can my wife wear a tank top and shorts and not be mistaken for a prostitute, without setting Brother So-and-So’s heart aflame with wanton desire? Surely God, if s/he exists at all, looks down on this and just shakes his/her head in dismay.

We now only wear garments about 25% of the time, basically when we are around other Mormons. So we’ve maintained two sets of underwear throughout our marriage, our freaky Mormon underwear and our “normal” gentile underwear. It’s expensive, but helps to maintain our sanity.

4) I was raised in a mormon family in Utah, and am 6th generation mormon on some lines, so just expected to wear garments forever. Even the long time inactive folks in my family wore them– they’d usually attend church long enough to get married in the temple and then quit. I had seen temple clothing — my grandmothers used to embroider the aprons, and of course, you often see dead folks in temple clothes in Utah, if you go to the endless round of viewings and funerals.

Probably I wouldn’t have quit wearing mine if I’d had a better reaction to the temple. I’ve never been to a live session. Maybe going to a live session would have helped. I was also endowed before the changes of the 1990s. The first time I went to the temple, I had one of the worst migraines I’ve ever had. I couldn’t quite believe the penalties, etc. The sight of the men all

wearing baker's hats was also overwhelming, even though I suppose I'd see the hats before. It just hadn't quite sunk in. Anyway, it was a shock to find that these warm, kind, quaint folks I'd grown up with went off to the temple and took vows to ritually disembowel their enemies. I can't say that the rest of the ceremony was uplifting to me. I hate doing church by TV or movie, so that was off putting, and it seemed that most of the ceremony was boring, repetitive, and dull. Then weird or scary or creepy. And that's not even getting into the women's issues. The celestial room, which had always been described as wonderful, struck me as something out of a nice hotel lobby. But then I've been an architecture snob since I was ten or so. Anyway, that's all prelude: The temple has always been a problem for me, since then, but I managed to get around it by living in the midwest for a long time before the days of the "Templettes". So even though I was endowed 28 years ago, I don't think I've gone more than ten times.

I am tallish and was very thin when I first went through the temple, and it was still the days of the one piecer. My choices were wearing some that fit me horizontally, but gave me a perma-wedgie, or else buying them too big around, but long enough in the crotch, which is what I went with. Of course that was really unattractive without clothes, and left them all bunched up around the waist. Fabric then was either heavy cotton, or else nylon, and maybe a polyester blend. We moved off to the midwest the summer after we were married, and I suffered through with them. A couple of years later there was a switch to the two piecers, which was a great improvement. (A funny story—our bishop told us he didn't like the two piecers because he didn't like sitting on the cold toilet seat.) The two piecers at least were not TOTALLY weird, but they had their problems too. The tops never fit me then—my boobs were fairly high and perky then, and all the tops seemed designed for women whose boobs had dropped to half mast. (Like mine now). The bottoms seemed designed to give wedgies, and if you want to use a sanitary napkin with adhesive, you're doomed, since there's not a flat surface to adhere one to. Part of my mormon girl upbringing included learning to make underwear in home ec in middle school, and the garment bottoms break several of the good design rules I learned then.

We lived in student housing with no air conditioning, and there usually

was not air conditioning in the university buildings either. With very high humidity and heat, I really had a hard time. I don't deal with hot weather well at all, and the humidity was awful. So I gradually started not wearing my garments on the hot days, but sleeping in them. I noticed that a lot of people in the ward seemed to be doing the same thing. I think I stayed at that level for another 10 years, trying different varieties of design and finding most of them to be annoying or uncomfortable. We lived in Arizona for awhile, and that's when I pretty much gave up on them, since it was always hot. I'm not sure when I quit sleeping in them, but as I have become more and more uncomfortable with the temple ceremony and some other aspects of the church, I've also noticed that I didn't get struck by lightning for not wearing them. And I came to feel I'd be hypocritical to wear them. So even when I go to church, I don't wear them, but I also don't dress in a way that it's obvious. (Well unless someone's looking for the lines.) I will confess that when I go to visit my parents, I throw a few pairs in the suitcase and then throw them into the laundry. My mom still insists on helping with my laundry if I do it there, and it would really bother her if I didn't wear them anymore. I figured we've bothered them enough with both kids being totally inactive, so I just keep up appearances for her. And I am pretty much totally unable to feel comfortable in a tank top, or shorts, after all these years of wearing garment-friendly clothing.

5) I haven't worn garments for many months. I realized in the last trimester of my pregnancy when I was so hot and misshapen that garments were not going to happen. I felt ok about it because I had a medical reason. And then when I was breast feeding it was also easy to justify not wearing them.

Now that I've just about weaned my baby, I have to figure out what to do next. I know my husband would like it if I would wear them. And to me they do symbolize in some way my marriage. And, of course, there is the matter of me solemnly promising to wear them the rest of my life. But they also bring back unpleasant memories of the hearken covenant in the temple, and I've really enjoyed the freedom I've had this past year. And I can't imagine God cares enormously about my underwear. So I'm at a crossroads at the moment.

6) I don't wear Gs now. I did, for a long time. Then, I took a vacation with

my wife. Both of us left the Gs at home, and the vacation was sexy and exciting and provided us with a great connection as a couple. It helped us bond, and see each other in a new light; in a lot of ways, it saved our marriage. And since then, I've avoided Gs (and I like it when my wife does the same), because it reminds me of an important time in our marriage when we really connected, on a personal and a sexual level.

7) I don't think I was ever ashamed of my garments—even when I saw the 50s ad for men's underwear and they looked exactly like the two-piecers I wore daily. I was pretty open with my gentile coworkers when they asked (disrespectfully) about them.

“Do you wear that funny Mormon underwear?”

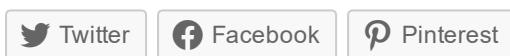
“Of course! You wanna see?”

My feigned untucking motions were usually enough to kill any further inquiry.

What's odd is that I felt more embarrassment immediately after I stopped wearing garments. What if my extended family members caught sight of the orange waistband of my boxers? Did my Elder's Quorum friends notice the lack of hanging, stretched out white cotton conspicuously peeking when I sat down in my baggy shorts?

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**Jana**

Jana is a university administrator and teaches History. Her soloblog is <http://janaremy.com>

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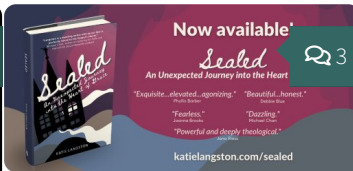
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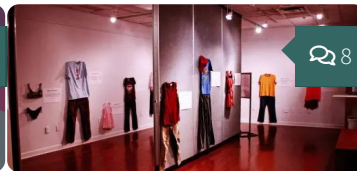
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liz [March 16, 2007 at 11:35 pm](#)

can't say they feel so sexy- that was a hard adjustment. but sexy isn't meant for the people I pass on the street, it's for the bedroom. 😊

in my own experience I have found the importance of remembering the blessings attached to the ritual// promises of receiving them and continues to offer me inner strength I didn't know I had.

interesting topic.

[Reply](#)



Anonymous [March 16, 2007 at 11:44 pm](#)





I grew up wearing tank tops and short shorts; however, wearing the garment has never been hard. When I first put them on it felt right. The garment is sacred to me.

I don't care if people don't wear garments, but they should be respectful to those who choose to.

My friend's step-mom and dad have decided not to wear their garments, and it greatly disturbs my friend. But their outward expression of not wearing the garment reflects an inward reflection to not honor their temple covenants.

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Anonymous  [March 16, 2007 at 11:45 pm](#)

I was endowed just before a mission at age 21. Garments, for me, soon became associated with the extreme drudgery of doing one's own laundry in a third-world country. Temple marriage soon followed, then we moved together to another third-world country. Again with the handwashing and line-drying of all that fabric.

Seeing how the church was run in both those areas (where I served and where we lived after marriage) started me questioning my faith. After study and prayer, when the doubts were confirmed, hubby and I bought other underwear and stopped wearing garments.

It felt like a huge burden was lifted. I felt younger, specifically like I had gone back in time to age 19 or 20. It was like I could show hubby...see, this is what I was like before you met me, wasn't I cute? I felt like summer vacation had just begun.

[Reply](#)



Julie M. Smith  [March 16, 2007 at 11:46 pm](#)

This is your blog and I suppose you can do what you want, but I'm disinclined to support a blog that presents seven versions of one side of an [extremely controversial] issue and asks that those voices not be criticized at all.

I would have hoped that you would have invited some feminist women who have very positive feelings about garments. I am sure I am but one of many who could have shared with you, from a specifically feminist perspective, why the garment can be viewed a blessing to LDS women.

[Reply](#)



Anonymous  [March 16, 2007 at 11:49 pm](#)

Let me be the first the welcome the blog to the DAMU.

[Reply](#)



AmyB  [March 17, 2007 at 12:32 am](#)



*But their outward expression of not wearing the garment reflects an inward reflection to not honor their temple covenants.*

I am aware no place in the temple where one covenants to wear the garments. I personally think it is very possible to choose not to wear the garment and continue to honor one's temple covenants.

Julie, if you would be so inclined to share, I would be interested in your point of view.

[Reply](#)



Caroline [March 17, 2007 at 12:32 am](#)

Julie,

While this was not the stated subject of the post, I (very sincerely) would love to hear why you, from a feminist perspective, like wearing garments. I am sympathetic to both sides.

[Reply](#)



jana [March 17, 2007 at 12:42 am](#)

Julie (and others):

I believe I did say in the post that I was interested in commenters sharing their experiences on this topic.

So please, do share.

[Reply](#)



jana [March 17, 2007 at 12:53 am](#)

FYI, from our comment policy:

“Try to stick with your personal experiences, ideas, and interpretations. This is not the place to question another's personal righteousness, to call people to repentance, or to disrespectfully refute people's personal religious beliefs.”

[Reply](#)



Anonymous [March 17, 2007 at 3:38 am](#)

I wore garments for 13 years, liking and disliking them in near equal measure.

I started studying church history, in response to some unanswered questions I was having and on one particular evening when I was especially fed up with the details that came to light regarding polygamy, I took them off. I was angry and it was a form of protest.

I worried what my husband might think, considering we'd worn them for so long. Within days, he took his off as well and neither one of us has worn them since.

[Reply](#)



liz [March 17, 2007 at 3:39 am](#)

Per Amby's comment- the first time you go through the temple for yourself you are given specific detail as to what you promise regarding this sacred under clothing.

Each temple recommend interview the question is raise if you uphold this promise.

[Reply](#)



EmilyCC [March 17, 2007 at 4:17 am](#)

Garments seem very feminist to me—it's the societal norms of dressing for each sex that's problematic, IMHO. I like that my garments have the same symbolism as the mens'; they represent the same covenants, the same blessings.

That said, it makes me really mad that people use garments as a way to judge righteousness. I remember one family reunion where everyone was buzzing about how a family member wasn't wearing his garments. Geeze! Why were they even looking?! And, how could it possibly concern them?

Oh, and I think garments also make really good pajamas 😊

[Reply](#)



Ana [March 17, 2007 at 4:23 am](#)

I have worn the garment for almost fourteen years. It's never been a burden for me. My body has always been my own. I make the choice every day to put them on.

If someone were to ask me why I wear them, I suppose I would answer that I do it because I promised in God's house that I would. I do believe I did that.

This post was a little surprising for me. I didn't realize there were active, endowed members of the Church who chose not to wear garments. The things one can learn on the Internet, eh?

[Reply](#)



Caroline [March 17, 2007 at 5:31 am](#)

I never struggled that much with my garments until late in my pregnancy. Like Emily, I liked that they were truly equivalent to men's and that they were officially the garments of the priesthood. That seems empowering.

I found ways to wear garments that worked for me. A tuck here, tug there, roll here...and I was usually able to be ok with them. I also highly recommend buying petite bottoms even if you're not exactly petite. From what I've heard, those fit most people a lot better.

[Reply](#)



Terrie  [March 17, 2007 at 7:01 am](#)

“I didn’t realize there were active, endowed members of the Church who chose not to wear garments.”

Ana, “active” can mean alot of different things. Some of the women running this blog no longer believe what the church teaches, and have asked to have their names removed from church records, yet still consider themselves “active” in the mormon community.

Different strokes for different folks.

[Reply](#)



Angry Mormon Liberal  [March 17, 2007 at 9:53 am](#)

Goodness...a lot of emotion tied up in this...

PK and I rarely wear our garments. She’s got her own reasons, I started not wearing them because it was easier to sleep without underwear when one is young and married ‘wink’.

I admit it’s different now. I’m very uncomfortable with the temple recommend interview questions. There are connections to my mission that I can’t shake, and submitting to authority in that way is no longer an option. Indeed, the battle over the temple recommend keeps pushing me outside the church.

Excellent article...much appreciated.

[Reply](#)



ECS  [March 17, 2007 at 2:13 pm](#)

Thanks for posting this thread, Jana. I attended an Exponent II retreat a few years ago where some of the women discussed their efforts to change the pattern of the garments in the early 1970s to be more pregnancy/nursing friendly. I think someone even mentioned that their efforts were one of the reasons that the garments were changed from one piece to two pieces.

Womens’ garments are obviously designed and approved by men, not women, so I wonder what other changes could be made to the garments to make them more comfortable for women. The comparison to mens’ garments is interesting theologically, but practically speaking, mens’ garments are equivalent to regular mens’ underwear. Not true for womens’.

Out of curiosity, for those of you who dislike wearing garments, what part of it is because of practical issues like discomfort, and what part of your choice to stop wearing garments was the theological/cultural basis for them?

[Reply](#)



jana  [March 17, 2007 at 2:28 pm](#)

Ana:

I was actually surprised to find active members who were no longer wearing garments, too. That's one reason that I wanted to write this post. Because this is a perspective that I haven't found elsewhere in the bloggernacle and I find it fascinating.

Terri:

As far as I know, none of the women running this blog have asked for their names to be removed from the church records. Including myself. 😊

[Reply](#)



Melanie  [March 17, 2007 at 4:12 pm](#)

I am surprised to hear that physical discomfort and inconvenience are such a common thread among these experiences. Even aside from the doctrinal/covenant issues involved, I find my garments much more comfortable than regular underwear. A while ago, I had a doctor's appointment and decided to skip the garments—I couldn't believe how itchy my bra and shirt were, and how I felt like I had elastic everywhere. Certainly when I was first endowed, it took some time to adjust to garments, but I don't regret the change at all—to anyone who's reading this, don't let these experiences scare you away from the temple.

That's not to say that I don't understand the inconvenience of garments. Shopping can be a chore, and when I stop to think about it, I always giggle at how many layers I have on. But since when is inconvenience a valid excuse for avoiding significant and worthwhile action? Most of the things that are really worth doing in life are inconvenient at least some of the time. It takes a great deal of effort to be a good friend, a good neighbor, a good family member, or a good citizen. I wouldn't stop brushing my teeth or cleaning my bathroom just because there are other things I'd rather be doing. And, given the covenants I've made, I believe that wearing my garments is just as essential to my spiritual health as those things are to my physical well-being.

[Reply](#)



Julie M. Smith  [March 17, 2007 at 7:33 pm](#)

“Womens’ garments are obviously designed and approved by men, not women, so I wonder what other changes could be made to the garments to make them more comfortable for women.”

The last major garment re-design was done by Rose Marie Reid, an LDS woman who was a big-shot bathing suit designer.

[Reply](#)



jana  [March 17, 2007 at 8:11 pm](#)

Do you know what year that was, Julie?

[Reply](#)



Julie M. Smith  [March 17, 2007 at 8:30 pm](#)

I'm thinking 70s but that might not be right. Sorry--my books are all packed. It is from her bio.

[Reply](#)



Kaimipono  [March 17, 2007 at 9:03 pm](#)

Julie,

This one isn't packed:

<http://www.timesandseasons.org/?p=3046>



[Reply](#)



ECS  [March 17, 2007 at 9:20 pm](#)

While Ms. Reid certainly had input into the garment design, she still had to conform to male expectations of what the finished product should look like.

[Reply](#)



jana  [March 17, 2007 at 9:21 pm](#)

I knew of the T&S post, Kaimi, but it doesn't give the year that she redesigned the garment. IMO, fashion, fabrics, and all kinds of sewing technologies have changed since the 50s/70s or whenever she designed G's. It seems that it might be time for a redesign! I do have to say how pleased I was that they began offering chemise tops w/o cups and w/o lacy necks. The lace gave me a nasty rash on my neck and thigh.

[Reply](#)



Paula  [March 17, 2007 at 10:39 pm](#)

I was endowed in 1979, and one piecers were the only thing available then. I'd guess that two piecers came out about 1982, but could be off by a year or so either way.

[Reply](#)



Paula  [March 17, 2007 at 10:50 pm](#)

It seems to me that people who see a different side to wearing garments could just present that side, rather than attacking Jana, this blog, or the people who wrote something for this. If it seems one sided, I don't see

anything wrong with that, since the topic seems to be about people who are active but choose to not wear their garments. I would guess that this is a fairly widespread practice, at least here in southern California, where we can all be ready to swim or exercise at a moment's notice. In Tucson, the women used to joke about how you could put on your swimsuit in the morning and just sort of never get around to getting in the pool, and thus it would be ok to not wear your garments all day. Maybe this is a threadjack, but it strikes me as being about as disrespectful to wear the garment in a sloppy way— meaning with the bottoms hanging out of knee-length shorts, or with sloppy tuckin jobs at the waist that leave the garments sticking out over the pants (both bottoms and tops sometimes sticking out), as it does to not wear it at all.

[Reply](#)



Anonymous  [March 18, 2007 at 3:28 am](#)

Like others who have commented here, the garment was not very comfortable for me when I first started wearing it. Within a week, however, I hardly noticed it. I wear them always, with the exception of sex, showering, swimming and some recreational activities. I do it because I feel I have covenanted to do so, and I take those covenants seriously.

[Reply](#)



Paula  [March 18, 2007 at 4:37 am](#)

I tried googling for the redesign of garments and only came up with this link: <http://www.i4m.com/think/temples/mormon-garments.htm> which contains material which may be offensive to some. I don't know how reliable it is, but it says that the change to 2 piece was announced in December 1979, so apparently my memory is faulty, or it took awhile for news to travel back east where I was, or I was too cheap to buy new garments for a couple of years.

[Reply](#)



ME  [March 18, 2007 at 6:08 am](#)

I love wearing the garments. I can't often get to the temple because of illness and so having those special symbols right next to my body means a lot to me. It reminds me of the Lord and what covenants I made with Him—and reminds me of the hope I have that if I am faithful in keeping them, the Lord will keep His promises to me as the part of His covenant with me. And sometimes when life gets hard, my garments remind me that I HAVE hope because of Him. I wasn't endowed until I was 35—it's a long story. But I think because I had such a long wait, it really meant something—and I might have been more prepared because I was 35, not 22. I felt such a feeling of homecoming when I

was finally clothed (my garments)  
in the temple the day I reached my goal of being endowed.

I'm short-waisted so I have petite bottoms—the nylon is better for wearing jeans or cotton clothes over. At night I prefer all cotton garments—with the bottoms a size or two larger than what I wear during the day—more comfy. If you take a size 30 try a 32 at night and cotton is really comfy. Under thin slacks where a line would show or under capris, I wear the ankle length nylon kind and especially with white, it's great because it acts like an inner lining and no panty lines.

On another note, observant Jews keep a Mezzuzah on their door post with the inscription inside that is Deut. 5 or 6 I think, about remembering the Lord your God and teaching your children to walk uprightly before Him. They're to look at the Mezzuzah whenever they leave the house or arrive home they reach up and touch it to show they are "remembering".

I wear my garments to show I "remember" and that I have faith in His promises.

Pardon me for being so long winded!

ME

[Reply](#)



me  [March 18, 2007 at 6:18 am](#)

I could just say that my garments are a comfort to me and when I'm out of them, I feel like something is missing. And I can't wait to get back into them and feel "clothed" properly or righteously again, if that makes any sense. It's like things are as they should be—that's just how I feel.

ME

[Reply](#)



me  [March 18, 2007 at 6:42 am](#)

I realize my feeling. It's that I want to be claimed, body and spirit, as His—not as mine or the World's, but His. When I wear His clothing I'm saying that I belong to Him.

And I feel clothed with Him as if I stand with Him. And that's a very comforting, peaceful feeling.

[Reply](#)



jana  [March 18, 2007 at 3:09 pm](#)

ME:

I liked your comments. I've often explained garments to nonmembers by telling them that they are about a personal commitment w/God. That they



are like priestly vestments but are worn next to the skin because the reminder is a personal one, rather than about holding an ecclesiastical role. When I discuss them this way, the listener generally ‘gets them’ beyond the ‘weird Mormon underwear’ idea.

[Reply](#)



Paula  [March 18, 2007 at 3:50 pm](#)

I’ve heard the suggestion before to buy petite bottoms before, even if you’re not petite– but in my experience it seems as though they’re making them longer now. I’ve heard that was done because women were buying the shorter version. The last tops I bought were also very long, even though they weren’t tall garments. They came down longer than any shirt I would wear, about even with the leg joint. All that extra fabric is really an annoyance.

[Reply](#)



Tatiana  [March 18, 2007 at 5:43 pm](#)

The idea of wearing garments has been a big obstacle to me going to the temple. It seems so silly in one way to worry about underwear, and yet I live in the southeast of the U.S. where even one layer of light seersucker cotton away from your skin in the summertime still leaves you drenched with sweat. I really can’t even fathom the idea of putting on large knit underwear underneath. It seems clear to me that garments were designed by and for people who live in cold climates. What about tropical saints? How can heat stroke be righteous?

Also, I’ve always preferred smaller underwear. Anything around my waist is very uncomfortable. I was so glad when pants started having a lower rise again, because I haven’t been comfortable in clothes since the 70s when waistlines rose.

For the larger question, there’s a constant tug of war in our hearts between orthodoxy and reason. It is depicted beautifully in the books of Chaim Potok. I feel that call of reason above all, but I also know that there is a divine joy that resides within orthodoxy and not with reason. In “The Chosen”, the viewpoint character’s father summed it up after they went to an orthodox wedding, when he said to his son “We can’t sing and dance as they do.” Maybe it’s about loving someone so much that you’re willing to do irrational things for them. Whether it be your spouse or God, there is divine beauty and magic in that, I know. I can feel it.

So I think it might be that by giving up that orthodoxy of the covenant with God, we lose something very precious, and maybe even more than precious. And yet, why does the law put people in a cage? (Another line I can’t forget

from Chaim Potok was “to some people a cage is the law, and to others the law is a cage” about the fact that when Davita’s mother went to the synagogue to pray in the mornings, she had to be confined in a small dark screened-off space, because she was female.)

I don’t know the answer to these questions. I’m torn about going to the temple. One part of me longs for it with deep longing. Another part of me protests the wrongnesses. Reading the bloggernacle is always convincing me positively in one direction or another, but the direction keeps swapping back and forth. =)

I love you guys!

[Reply](#)



anon  [March 18, 2007 at 7:48 pm](#)

I’m one of the people who Jana’s quoted here. I wrote it very quickly, thinking that she was just going to use parts of it. I don’t mind that she used all of it, but I might have explained a bit more if I’d realized that it was going to appear totally, without any editing. First of all, although I was a little flip about the temple ceremony, I was also very truthful about my opinion of it. It’s not that I didn’t want to believe, I truly wanted to, and truly expected to. But it was just such a let down after all the buildup I’d heard about it, that the temple has become a major problem for me in my relationship to the church. And I’ve done the things that are required to gain a testimony. It’s awfully important to have one for someone in my position– all my family are members, I’m married in the temple etc, and I spent a good deal of time praying, fasting and studying, but just do not have a good feeling about the temple and its ordinances. I am not trying to criticize those who feel different, or had other experiences. It just didn’t happen for me. There are other spiritual things that touch me deeply– but not the temple.

I think that the issue of the garments being uncomfortable also depends on the person. Neither of my kids could stand to have a tag in their shirts till they were well into adolescence, and I frequently cut the tags out of my shirts, so maybe I’m hyper sensitive there. When I get too hot, I don’t turn pinkish, I turn bright purplish red, to the point that complete strangers will stop me and ask if I’m ok, like last summer on the Fourth of July when I was on the Mall in Washington DC, and two of the Native American women in the Folklife Festival insisted that I come back into the air conditioned place for exhibitors to rest, to the point of almost physically dragging me in. (They actually had a point. When I got in the back, and saw my face, it was the worst I’d ever been.) So when I was wearing garments in the summer in the midwest, I was often beet red in the face, and I’d go home, and find heat rash all over the lower

parts of my breasts, and around my waist where it was covered by two layers of garments. That was daily from May to September, and I was miserable. The humidity was the biggest part of the problem. You can wear jeans through much of the summer in Utah, but certainly not in most of the eastern US. It was after a year or two of putting up with heat rash, and purple face, that I quit wearing them in the daytime, but wore them during the parts of the year when they were tolerable.

[Reply](#)



Deborah  [March 18, 2007 at 7:54 pm](#)

Tatiana said, “Maybe it’s about loving someone so much that you’re willing to do irrational things for them. Whether it be your spouse or God, there is divine beauty and magic in that, I know. I can feel it.”

What an intriguing thought. Thank you.

[Reply](#)



jana  [March 18, 2007 at 8:36 pm](#)

Tatiana:

I absolutely love what Deborah has quoted here, too. Thank you so much for adding your thoughts to our discussion!

[Reply](#)



Tanya Sue  [March 18, 2007 at 10:46 pm](#)

Garments are an extremely personal thing between us and the Lord. While I have never been offended by the temple recommend questions I can see how some could be. My only issue with the recommend questions is that in the end I will be judged for myself alone, my bishop and stake president will not be there so it doesn’t matter what they think. I had a bishop and stake president feel I was unworthy to renew my temple recommend due to me only staying for 2 of 3 meetings due to a serious medical issue. To this day they still think the medical problems would go away if I would “just come to church and stay for the 3 hour block”.

While they ultimately signed the recommend, the experience is one of the contributing factors that make me wonder if I can ever be active again-or if there is even a place for me in the LDS church. While I am not bitter, I am somewhat angry, but most importantly I feel that my trust has been severely violated in so many areas.

I have chosen to continue wearing my garments while I make the decisions I am making-even though I am not sure that I will ever feel that the temple is a “safe” place for me to be. I am not sure I will be saying the same thing 6

months from now, but while I am deciding what to do with my religion in the future I will continue to wear them.

[Reply](#)



Mel  [March 18, 2007 at 11:10 pm](#)

Maybe this just shows how clueless I am about Mormon culture, but I have always believed that garments were meant to be a private reminder—not a public statement—about the covenants we make in the temple. I always thought we wear underwear rather than something really obvious because it's about our personal spiritual journey—not about making an outward show of righteousness.

Do that many people really make a point of noticing whether other people are wearing garments or not?

Sure I've heard a few judgmental comments over the years (about garments and other things as well), but I've always just dismissed them as being made by people who are missing the point. And as humans it just seems so easy for us to miss the point—especially when it comes to things spiritual and intangible and to commandments like love one another.

[Reply](#)



Angry Mormon Liberal  [March 18, 2007 at 11:35 pm](#)

That last comment really made me laugh (in a good way) I just remember the marketing scene near the end of the last season of Big Love where their talking about how the visible garment line is necessary in the Utah television market for local businesses.

Surviving one year at BYU, you learn the 'unwritten order of things' relating to garment wearing. There were freshmen that really did wrap tape around their boxer shorts to simulate the feel of a garment bottom.

Growing up in a Mormon town, there is more than just the tradition behind the wearing of a white shirt on Sunday. The 'Mormon Smile' of the scoop neck garments were a constant reminder of who was 'mature' or worthy and who wasn't. Furthermore, the problem with colored shirts is that they don't allow this kind of check up.

Also, the way women's garments are designed, unless your clothes resemble the Amish, there is always a tell-tale lace outline or collar peeking out.

It provides a subtle but visible 'check' on who is wearing and who is not. Over time, everybody gets checked up on, whether they know the 'rules' or not. This is especially noticeable in rural wards (the kind I grew up in) because there is so little turnover.

It's somewhat weird all written out like that... observations that seem second nature are really rather odd.

[Reply](#)



mary  [March 19, 2007 at 6:34 am](#)

I think the lacy part of the top that sometimes peeks out is like a sexy little tank underneath. I like it.

I once called Beehive garments to order more of my favorite kind only to find they stopped making them. I was not happy. So I asked the woman if I could speak with whomever was in charge of designing and choosing fabrics for women's garments. She put me through to the "man" in charge and he was quite happy to hear from a woman how she found wearing her garments—what I liked, what I didn't, asked me what they could do to make them more comfortable.

He genuinely cared and took my phone number as someone they could call on to ask whether an idea might be a good one to implement.

I told him the bra lines need to go. They don't have anything to do with the symbols and I have yet to talk to a woman who thinks they fit well. The Church soon came out with the Chemise, no lines and is as comfy as a T-shirt. If any of you would like to be heard by someone who could make a change, please call them with your thoughts or suggestions.

He was genuinely wanting women to be comfortable wearing them.

[Reply](#)



MJK  [March 19, 2007 at 6:11 pm](#)

Been wearing mine for just 4 years now. (almost exactly!) The husband and I always wear them outside of the house; at home... eh, it depends. We have no kids yet and he was a convert and not happy when he converted about the idea of not being able to see his own wife in sexy underwear. So around the house, just lounging around sometimes I wear it, sometimes I don't.

[Reply](#)



matt thurston  [March 19, 2007 at 9:14 pm](#)

I like the title of this post, "Making My Body My Own Again." To me, this body/garments subject is a sub-category of a more all-encompassing category, "Making My Life My Own Again." After spending years struggling to reconcile what I felt deep within my soul to be right against what the church told me what was right, I began to experiment by adjusting little aspects of my life to see what effect it would have on my overall spirituality, mental health, physical well-being, as well as the effect on my relationships. In some respects, the adjustments proved to be a marked improvement on my life; in

other respects, they did not. Some adjustments required further compromise, others an entirely new solution. I tried to approach these adjustments in the same way I'd always approached "personal revelation," that is with an eye towards God/Heaven/Eternities, not to satisfy/gratify my own selfish desires.

My relationship to garments was one of those areas that I had difficulty reconciling my personal feelings against the LDS orthodox/orthoprax standard. I made little adjustments over the course of a few years until I arrived at a place that feels right to me. I won't get into the specifics of what that "place" entails, but I will say it means that I am a part-time wearer of garments. I consider the decision a personal one between myself and God. I recognize that such a decision is bound to incur the judgment of some of my more orthodox Mormon brothers and sisters, but such occasional discomfort is infinitely preferable to the personal (and ever-present) discomfort I felt when I wasn't true to myself.

I recommend the "experiment/make-small-adjustments" approach to those struggling with garments (or any other aspect with the church). I've seen people grow more and more frustrated only to give up entirely and make a clean break, essentially going 180 degrees in the other direction overnight. Such a clean break often causes as much upheaval in a person's life as they felt before. Sometimes it isn't All or Nothing. There are innumerable places in-between all and nothing. (And then again, in some cases it really is all or nothing... I respect that the orthodox "alls" and unorthodox "nothings" out there have made the right decisions for themselves.)

[Reply](#)



a spectator  [March 19, 2007 at 10:03 pm](#)

I think garments and temple attendance are a personal matter, and very few people's garment-wearing or temple attendance affect me, so I really don't mind what most people choose to do.

It seems so odd, though, that most of these stories includes thinking the garments are uncomfortable or ugly. It just seems a superficial concern.

[Reply](#)



Eve  [March 19, 2007 at 11:34 pm](#)

I'm generally OK with garments. My only real complaint is, as so many have already said here and elsewhere, I have hard time finding them to fit my idiosyncratic body right. I have a long waist and short legs, and even the regular (non-petite) bottoms don't always stay together with the tops, so I sometimes end up with this bizarrely contemporary look, the swath of back flesh showing between shirt and jeans, even though it's not at all the look I'm

going for, at my age.

I do think there's a difference between garments not allowing the wearing of certain styles of clothing, and garments causing serious physical discomfort, as one commenter described.

I'm particularly interested in the opposition we seem to have between garments and (many) cute, sexy clothes. I don't know entirely what to make of that opposition. I'm the original modesty queen—I adore long skirts, for example, and I never owned a miniskirt or a tank top, even in my pre-endowed days—but I realize the case could be made, with some justice, that I'm insufficiently comfortable with my own body. The only garment-incompatible clothes that have ever made me wistful are certain lace-lined tank tops.

But I wonder if there's a way to break down this opposition between garments and sexiness. It's not that I think we should necessarily adopt every contemporary revealing idea of what makes a woman's body sexually appealing (on the contrary; I'm frequently embarrassed for my scantily-clad eighteen-year-old students). I think there's a strong feminist case to be made for equitable standards of modesty for men and women, and given the large amounts of female flesh contemporary tend to reveal, those equitable standards are going to be more culturally discordant for women than they are for men. Still, I find that there's something profoundly self-respecting about modesty.

I also think there's got to be a different way to consider the issue of garments, beauty, sexiness. I'm not sure what it is, though.

[Reply](#)



amelia  [March 20, 2007 at 5:21 am](#)

i have to say that i agree with julie. i find it problematic that only one perspective was presented here and that this was excused by suggesting alternative views should be posted (buried) in the comments.

i further find it problematic that this post associates being a "liberal" mormon with some of these attitudes towards garments. i am a liberal mormon and i have no problem with garments other than minor criticisms regarding fabric or design—criticisms that mean less to me in any meaningful way than it means to me whether we use white or wheat bread for the sacrament or which version of "abide with me" is sung in sacrament. i know many other liberal mormons who have no substantial problem with garments.

on the contrary, i love the symbolism of garments. as do most of my mormon friends, both liberal and conservative. i love wearing my garments and always

have. even when i lived in the south in the summer and dealt with 90-100 degree heat and 90%+ humidity daily.

i sympathize with those for whom the temple was a spiritually upsetting experience. i find their reactions to garments worthy of understanding. i am sorry there are those for whom garments exacerbate medical problems or create severe physical discomfort. i know for a fact that the church is willing to make (at a very reasonable price) custom garments for those with a medical reason.

i think it is important to note that believing garments to be a form of control over bodies exercised by the institutional church is a subjective interpretation. i do not feel the church is controlling my body by asking—or even requiring, though i find that a stretch since it has always been my decision—that i wear my garments. wearing garments is a privilege that i treasure. if it results in limiting what clothes i can wear—well i think that’s a small price to pay. i manage just fine to find clothing—even sexy, beautiful clothing—that works with my garments. and yes. i realize my perspective is also subjective. but i find it highly problematic for those who are unwilling to do something which is not inherently wrong (in this instance wearing garments; we’re not talking about people being coerced against their will here) to criticize that thing as a tool of subjugation without acknowledging that their criticism is personal and subjective in nature.

and i must say that complaints about garments not being “sexy” or comfortable (excepting those situations that cause actual pain, rather than simple irritation) or that they make shopping difficult strike me as supremely shallow reasons for not wearing them. i understand having significant ideological reasons for not wearing them, and respect and support those who make the decision based on such reasons. but because they’re not “sexy”? that’s just sort of sad.

and i don’t think god gives a tinker’s damn about my underwear. i do think he gives a damn about my integrity and my honesty, however. and there are issues of both honesty and integrity involved in whether or not one wears garments after having been endowed. to suggest that this issue is about underwear is a bit of a strawman, don’t you think?

[Reply](#)



Anonymous  [March 21, 2007 at 3:23 pm](#)

I didn’t mind garments. They were a rite of passage into adulthood, and they reminded me of Heavenly Father.

I took off my garments for the first time when I was still a church-goer, but



mostly a non-believer. By that time, I believed they were just made up by Smith. But I felt terribly guilty about it. Maybe I was doing something wrong. Wasn't I allowing Satan to have all power over me? Didn't the garments distinguish me as Mormon? Didn't they protect my spirituality? Didn't they protect me from sin? Did this mean I was going to inevitably commit adultery with the next guy I saw? Hadn't I made a covenant? So I put them back on.

They provided a sense of comfort. I was back in my old paradigm, comfortable, wrapped in my heritage and all that is known to me.

Then I thought, this is silly. They're just underwear. A church telling me what underwear to wear? After a couple weeks, they were off for good.

At one point before that, I told my husband that I would keep the temple covenants I made, even if my beliefs about the church changed. Because I'd made a promise, and I have integrity enough to keep it!

But it's not breaking covenants if the covenants simply dissolve, if they simply don't mean anything anymore. I had made the covenants not even knowing beforehand what the covenants would be; there had been intense social pressure to go through with the covenants; and I feel I falsely thought that my entire salvation rested on the covenants. What kind of covenant is that? Therefore, I had made the covenants with no one but myself, and I could release myself from them.

fta

[Reply](#)



Anonymous  [March 21, 2007 at 7:32 pm](#)

I'm one of the ultra sensitive people who hates the binding and twisting under my clothes, which is still always on my mind after seven years. On the few occasions I'm wearing normal underwar, I'm amazed at how comfortable I feel. I'm also an over-heater in the summer, when I'm not 100% with garments on some days. This started when I traded the air-conditioned office for motherhood.

Someone commented "I've heard the suggestion before to buy petite bottoms before, even if you're not petite- but in my experience it seems as though they're making them longer now. I've heard that was done because women were buying the shorter version."

Is that the reason they're longer now? - Because taller women were wearing petite sizes? So unfair, says the petite woman who can't wear skirts anymore!

[Reply](#)



Paula  [March 21, 2007 at 10:37 pm](#)



Anonymous, I don't know if that's really the reason or not. A friend of mine was told that, on the phone, when she was trying to order garments and was asking some fit questions. But that might just be the opinion of the person who was on the phone. I find the fit issues to be pretty frustrating. The last ones I bought were a lot longer than my old ones, but were theoretically the same size. They were a different style, so I guess that's part of it, but still you'd think they'd be more consistent from style to style.

[Reply](#)



Anonymous  [March 22, 2007 at 3:46 pm](#)

One last thing, I swear! I thought of this as I was getting dressed this morning, and putting on a skirt.

I have other friends like me who agree – those of us who are chubby, we like the bottoms 'cause we can wear skirts without having the skin of our big fat thighs rubbing together. (And since my husband likes my thighs...)

[Reply](#)



Anonymous  [March 24, 2007 at 7:15 am](#)

Wow, eloquent rationalizing is much more interesting than the non-eloquent kind.

[Reply](#)



Tigersue  [March 30, 2007 at 6:00 pm](#)

I personally have never had an issue with wearing garments. I love the way they feel, I do have trouble sleeping because of the way they twist and turn and creep around. That is a problem that at one point was fixed and then they took the lace off the legs which helped keep them in place for me.

As to why I wear them, it is because it is part of the covenant I made. I never completely understood the symbolism of the garment until a month or so ago when I attended a special meeting on temple covenants. One of the talks was on the sacredness of the garment, it's whole name and why it is so sacred and should be honored. When one considers that the garments placed on Adam and Eve were made of lamb skin, you should eventually connect the dots of its sacred symbolism and why the body should be covered with this sacred emblem.

[Reply](#)



lammy  [April 23, 2007 at 8:38 pm](#)

yes, I love my garments.

But I'd rather spend that rest of my days either stark naked or in a bikini on the beach.

cool topic.

[Reply](#)



Lesley O'Connell-Maritz  [November 11, 2017 at 12:32 pm](#)

After 50 years as members we have just resigned. Recently I spent 2 days unpicking all the markings as we still needed underwear. But that horrible polyester lace on the tops ...why did I have to endure that , always causing an irritation and irritability?We lived far from a temple in 1961 and anticipated going to the temple. My husband and I were married in the temple in 1969. Yesterday as I removed the garments and felt such absolute relief from the vile cheap polyester lace, I felt a rising anger directed to wards myself for allowing anyone to inflict such control over me and my body. In 1969 we had only one piece garments which we were told not to remove even during love making.I should have resigned at that point ...the control is way out of control. My husband and I went shopping for underwear today and he found some beautiful shell pink pure cotton sleeveless vests. His eyes filled with tears as he said he was so sorry I had had to endure such unnecessary discomfort....even during several pregnancies and miscarriages. And I was supposed to have been regarded as a mother in Zion. Tomorrow he is going to burn that underwear.

[Reply](#)



TommyThompson  [June 3, 2018 at 11:17 pm](#)

I have been endowed for 7 years now before serving a full time mission. When I received my garments I felt like they were a warm hug from Jesus:)

Over the years I have become quite uncomfortable with them. It's strange because I feel my testimony has grown and I feel closer to God and I trust Him, but I cannot figure out how to continue to justify wearing the temple garment.

As a female and and, I cannot keep them perfectly clean for long. I cringe when they get dirty from paint stains, and it's even worse when they simply stain from normal wear. I have a lot of discharge the week before my period, and I always ruin at least 6 pair during the week of my period, and I have brown discharge for at least a few days following my period. After a few months, since I cannot predicted the day or hour precisely that I will start my period, I ruin every pair and I find it disgusting and disgraceful and I feel dirty and unclean and embarrassed. I also am prone to UTIs and other infections and heat blisters on my vulva which seem to be aggravated by wearing garments.

I don't wear a wedding ring often, although my husband and I adore each

other and our marriage covenant. I love my temple covenants and I attend the temple as often as possible. I have decided for myself that I feel more respectful toward the garment and filled with love when I save them for special occasions (like church, temple worship, or family and church functions).

I don't feel that I have ever been given this advice, or "taught" by anyone specifically to wear my garments this way. I do feel that this is what years of wearing them has taught me. This is what I feel is right for me personally.

[Reply](#)



Bonnie  [August 9, 2019 at 12:47 pm](#)

This article is a breath of fresh air to know that other LDS woman have gone through a similar garment experience as I have.

I've gone through the last 15 years of being endowed to serve a mission and dreading having to wear garments, to gradually wearing them less and less over the last few years and months, to deciding a few weeks ago that I'm done with them.

Living in a hot climate, G's presents the problems of sleeping comfortably, heat exhaustion, yeast infections, UTI's, extra sweat, and the fact that I bleed a lot and have to wear pads daily just doesn't work with them.

I'm so much more comfortable in my skin now. They have always felt unnatural to me though I valued my covenant to wear them. I've gone from judging others who didn't wear them at times (including my husband) to now worrying about other members judging me.

I can still be a good Christian person who tries my best to live Christlike despite what kind of underwear I'm wearing.

I totally respect those who choose to wear them faithfully. More power to you! but I don't think this article was meant for you.

[Reply](#)

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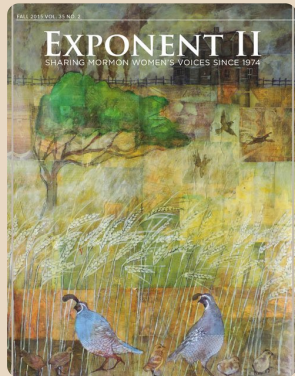
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