

## No Fair

Fairest Lord Jesus, ruler of all nature. . . .  
– The Baptist Hymnal, Number 48

Well, the fairer the better, it seems, at least in America. A government survey of illegal immigrants indicates that those with lighter skin make more money than their darker compatriots. Each measurable dip in melanin bumps earning power to the same degree as an added year of education. Even once researchers filtered out factors like national origin, occupation, and proficiency in English, the Coppertone Quotient remained a constant. Experts say the findings point to a specifically American bias in favor of palefaces.

In a land where dignity is only skin deep, Christians must ponder the question of the color of Christ.

Historically, one wonders whether the Lord Jesus was particularly "fair," or whether he sported a swarthy Mediterranean skin, darkened to an even deeper patina by long exposure to sun and surf. "The Son of Man hath nowhere to lay his head," (Luke 9.58) and no SPF-40 sunblock to keep that head acceptably diaphanous. Most likely we would gyp our Lord on a carpentry job because his skin was more mahogany than knotty pine.

Spiritually, one cringes to encounter such a shallow standard of worth. Jesus would doubtless warn that a whitewashed skin, like a whitewashed tomb, may merely decorate the dead bones of a rotten soul. (Matthew 23.27) Perhaps the hacking away of arms and eyes (Matthew 5.29-30) should also extend to a full-body flaying when we let the container outrank the contents.

Legend has it that "Fairest Lord Jesus" originated as a battle hymn bellowed by German crusaders as they rode away to bring the sweet love of Our Lord to dusky Moors at the point of a cross-shaped sword. They might have done well to remember that they arrived as foreigners on Jesus' home turf, and that, unfair as it might seem, Our Lord looked a lot more like the locals than these military missionaries. And American Christians could benefit from the reminder that we are Johnny-come-lightly branches grafted onto the dark-barked tree of a Jesus many of us would not recognize.

Darkly,  
Doug