

# **When God Asked Women to Wear Pants**

Important Spiritual and Health Principles for Dress

by

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### **1: When God Asked Women to Wear Pants**

GOD'S method of settling the issues of the great controversy between Christ and Satan includes a final generation living in harmony with the physical and spiritual laws of the universe.

The "time of the end" of Daniel 12:4 indeed ushered in a time when "knowledge shall be increased." The last two centuries have been characterized by an opening of man's mind to the great truths of the Bible and also to the laws of the natural world. For humanity to be brought to a final decision to either serve the Creator God or to serve self, sin, and Satan, it was necessary for God to reveal His will for the physical, mental, social, and spiritual aspects of man's life.

For a final generation to demonstrate through their lives of obedience the efficacy of Christ's life, death, heavenly ministry, and His ability to save His people from their sins in the vindication of God's character, it was necessary for humanity to know, in an increased degree, the principles of His kingdom. To help identify His remnant people and to give them a clearer, more specific understanding of His will, God gave the remnant movement an end-time messenger-Ellen G. White.

Some nineteen years after the Great Disappointment, God began giving His people a clearer understanding of health reform through a vision to Ellen White on June 6, 1863. In 1865, she introduced the remnant people to the relationship between dress and health with these words: "Mothers have been in the practice of dressing their infants in reference to fashion instead of health." *Selected Messages*, book 2, 465. "My sisters, there is need of a dress reform among us. There are many errors in the present style of female dress." *Ibid.*, 473.

In the 1800s, Satan clearly had great success in devising styles of women's dress that proved "an injury to physical and moral health." *Counsels on Health*, 599. The fashionable woman's attire consisted of laced corsets worn for the purpose of forming a wasp-like waist having a diameter of no more than twenty inches. The long dress reached to the ground and trailed behind, tending to sweep up dirt and filth. Multilayered, heavy, ruffled underskirts or petticoats were supported on the waist and hips, thus compressing the internal organs further. Large hoops, worn to distend the skirts, tended to allow the air to chill the lower limbs and made immodest exposure inevitable as the women had to raise the skirts to avoid the filth of the streets and to board or disembark from public conveyances.

The fashionable dress was also very inconvenient, occupying the woman's mind and hands as she moved about out-of-doors.

"The long dress is very inconvenient in walking upon the streets in crowded villages and cities. The long skirts sweep up the tobacco spittle, and all manner of filth. In this case, fashion attaches to women cloth used as a mop. If she goes out after a shower, when all nature is refreshed and smiling in gladness, and the birds seem to be having a grand jubilee, and everything in nature is gloriously attractive, her thoughts are upon her dress. Both hands are required to elevate the dress, lest it becomes drabbed. And with her very best efforts this is not prevented altogether." *The Health Reformer*, April 1, 1872.

Even before the Lord gave messages condemning the fashions of the 1800s, society itself was beginning to awaken to the multiple problems of improper dress. One popular journal reported a physician as stating that nearly half of the business of the medical profession was regarding health problems of the organs in the lower part of the abdomen of women caused by improper dress. *The Household* as quoted in *The Health Reformer*, November 1, 1871.

More than a decade prior to Ellen White's first written message on dress reform a member of Congress, the Honorable Gerrett Smith, was quoted as follows:

"A reformation in the dress of women is very much needed. It is indispensable to her health and usefulness. While in the prison of the present dress, she is, and ever will remain, comparatively unhealthful and useless." *The Story of Our Health Message*, 113.

In the early 1850s, a group of prominent women began a movement to change women's styles of dress. Their reform ideas regarding women's dress were accepted and promoted by the physicians of Dr. James Jackson's health institute then at Glen Haven and later at Danville, New York. The reform was promoted widely through their publication *Water Cure Journal* and later *Laws of Life*. Their reform dress did away with the constricting corsets and dragging, heavy skirts. Their dress was about to the knee (later raised to mid-thigh), and the limbs were clothed with trousers. Originally, the trousers were quite full and were called "bloomers," but later they were quite straight and mannish. Their reform dress style became known as the "American Costume." It was promoted through several private publications and also national conventions which were widely covered by the public news media. Its reputation was tarnished in the minds of some because it was adopted by spiritualists. See *ibid.*, 113-118.

Ellen White's messages from the Lord were thus not the first regarding reform in women's dress, nor were they the most publicized. As Satan so often does, he tried to preempt God's timing for a reformation and led the popular reform movement to go from one extreme to another. The Lord's messenger acknowledged that the "American Costume" solved many of the health problems of the fashionable, dragging-skirt style, but also that immodesty was increased and that it was patterned after the clothing of men. Thus, neither popular dress style of the time was acceptable to the Lord.

"We do not think it in accordance with our faith to dress in the 'American Costume,' to wear hoops, or to go to an extreme in wearing long dresses which sweep the sidewalks and streets." *Testimonies, vol. 1*, 424.

Ellen White went on to say, "There is a medium position in these things. Oh, that we all might wisely find that position and keep it." *Ibid.*, 425.

Thus it was that God revealed to Ellen White a reform dress that was between the two extremes. It was designed of God to be both healthful and modest.

In the health reform vision of June 6, 1863, God's messenger was shown three groups of women described in the following words:

"The first were of fashionable length, burdening the limbs, impeding the step, and sweeping the street and gathering its filth; the evil results of which I have fully stated. This class, who were slaves to fashion, appeared feeble and languid.

"The dress of the second class which passed before me was in many respects as it should be. The limbs were well clad. They were free from the burdens which the tyrant, Fashion, had imposed upon the first class; but had gone to that extreme in the short dress as to disgust and prejudice good people, and destroy in a great measure their own influence. This is the style and influence of the 'American Costume,' taught and worn by many at 'Our Home,' Dansville N. Y. It does not reach to the knee. I need not say that this style of dress was shown me to be too short.

"A third class passed before me with cheerful countenances, and free, elastic step. Their dress was the length I have described as proper, modest, and healthful. It cleared the filth of the street and sidewalk a few inches under all circumstances, such as ascending and descending steps, and so forth." *Review and Herald*, October 8, 1867.

She explained that the proper "length was not given me in inches" but that in her best judgment it was nine inches from the floor. Ibid. Not more than one or two light skirts were to be worn to help distend the dress (*Testimonies*, vol. 1, 523), and the skirts were to be suspended from the shoulders. Ibid., vol. 4, 635. The limbs were covered "by wearing lined pants gathered into a band and fastened about the ankle, or made full and tapering at the bottom; and these should come down long enough to meet the shoe." Ibid., vol. 1, 461.

Ellen White clarified that God was not now calling for a special mark on the garments comparable to the ribbon of blue of ancient Israel but that He was requiring a distinction from the world.

"The children of Israel, after they were brought out of Egypt, were commanded to have a simple ribbon of blue in the border of their garments, to distinguish them from the nations around them, and to signify that they were God's peculiar people. The people of God are not now required to have a special mark placed upon their garments. But in the New Testament readers are often referred to ancient Israel as examples. If God gave such definite directions to His ancient people in regard to their dress, will not the dress of His people in this age come under His notice? Should there not be in their dress a distinction from that of the world? Should not the people of God, who are His peculiar treasure, seek even in their dress to glorify God? And should they not be examples in point of dress, and by their simple style rebuke the pride, vanity, and extravagance of worldly, pleasure-loving professors? God requires this of His people. Pride is rebuked in His Word." *Selected Messages*, book 2, 473-474.

God called for uniformity in the length of the dress, and the jacket and pants were to be made according to specific patterns.

"There should be uniformity as to the length of the reform dress among Sabbathkeepers. Those who make themselves peculiar by adopting this dress should not think for a moment that it is unnecessary to show order, taste, and neatness. Before putting on the reform dress, our sisters should obtain patterns of the pants and sack worn with it. It is a great injury to the dress reform to have persons introduce into a community a style which in every particular needs reforming before it can rightly represent the reform dress. Wait, sisters, till you can put the dress on right." *Testimonies*, vol. 1, 521.

God designed the reform dress to identify His "peculiar people" as well as to improve their physical and mental health.

"God would now have His people adopt the reform dress, not only to distinguish them from the world as His 'peculiar people,' but because a reform in dress is essential to physical and mental health." Ibid., 525.

Ellen White first put on God's reform dress in September 1865, and she began wearing only that style in January 1867. She clarified that the dress reform was a minor part of the health reform message, and that it, "as Health Reform should lead the way, finally be adopted by our people....

"It was the design of God that at the right time, on proper occasions, the proper persons should set forth its benefits as a blessing, and recommend uniformity, and union of action." *Review and Herald*, October 8, 1867.

But God was not to have His way with His people. Church members at Battle Creek, upon seeing the reform dress adopted by Health Institute patients, began a blind and bitter opposition, agitating the issue and forcing a premature defense of the dress.

"The issue came too soon. The defense of the dress was forced upon us by those who opposed it, who at the same time professed full confidence in my testimonies. When the Health Institute was opened at Battle Creek, and the dress adopted by female patients, as directed by the physicians, then came the opposition, chiefly from brethren at Battle Creek. The physicians having full confidence in my testimonies, stated to them that the style of dress they recommended for their patients was the same as I had seen would be adopted by our people. Then came the general inquiry, and a strange spirit of blind and bitter opposition arose with some who professed to be among the firmest friends of the testimonies. The general inquiry spread everywhere, and in the autumn and winter of 1866, letters came in from all directions inquiring in regard to what I had seen, asking for immediate answers. I therefore determined to hasten out No. 11. [See *Testimonies*, vol. 1, 456-466.]" *Review and Herald*, October 8, 1867.

While many "accepted" God's reform dress, opposition took many forms.

"While many of the young adopted this dress, some endeavored to shun the cross by indulging in extra trimmings, thus making it a curse rather than a blessing. To those who put it on reluctantly, from a sense of duty, it became a grievous yoke. Still others, who were apparently the most zealous reformers, manifested a sad lack of order and neatness in their dress. It was not made according to the approved pattern. Some would have a variety suit-dress of one material, sack of another, and pants of still another. Others wore the skirt very long, so that only about an inch of the pants could be seen, thus making the dress ill-proportioned and out of taste. These grotesque and untidy costumes disgusted many who would have been pleased with the reform dress proper." *Testimonies*, vol. 4, 636-637.

Some women left off portions of the costume that they objected to.

"The reform dress which was once advocated, proved a battle at every step. Members of the church, refusing to adopt this healthful style of dress, caused dissension and discord. With some there was no uniformity and taste in the preparation of the dress as it had been plainly set before them. This was food for talk. The result was that the objectionable feature, the pants, was left off." *Spalding and Magan Collection*, 91.

"While many of our sisters accepted this reform from principle, others opposed the simple, healthful style of dress which it advocated. It required much labor to introduce this reform among our people. It was not enough to present before our sisters the advantages of such a dress and to convince them that it would meet the approval of God. Fashion had so strong a hold upon them that they were slow to break away from its control, even to obey the dictates of reason and conscience. And many who professed to accept the reform made no change in their wrong habits of dress, except in shortening the skirts and clothing the limbs." *Testimonies*, vol. 4, 635-636.

Some who adopted the reform dress promoted it in the wrong spirit.

"Some who adopted the reform were not content to show by example the advantages of the dress, giving, when asked, their reasons for adopting it, and letting the matter rest there. They sought to control others' conscience by their own. If they wore it, others must put it on. They forgot that none were to be compelled to wear the reform dress." Ibid., 636.

Some made it the sum and substance of their religion.

"Much unhappy feeling was created by those who were constantly urging the reform dress upon their sisters. With extremists, this reform seemed to constitute the sum and substance of their religion. It was the theme of conversation and the burden of their hearts; and their minds were thus diverted from God and the truth. They failed to cherish the spirit of Christ and manifested a great lack of true courtesy. Instead of prizing the dress for its real advantages, they seemed to be proud of its singularity." Ibid.

By 1875, that which had been given as a blessing had been made a reproach and even a disgrace.

"In a vision given me at Battle Creek, January 3, 1875, I was shown the state of things which I have here represented, and that the wide diversity in dress was an injury to the cause of truth. That which would have proved a blessing, if uniformly adopted and properly worn, had been made a reproach, and, in some cases, even a disgrace." Ibid., 637.

The servant of the Lord now ceased promoting the health reform dress in order to allow God's people to develop their true motives.

"I had no burden of testimony on the subject of dress. I made no reference to it in any way, either to advocate or to condemn. It was the Lord's purpose to prove His professed people and reveal the motives of their hearts. At camp meetings I seldom had anything to say upon the subject. I avoided all questions and answered no letters." Ibid.

Five years later, in 1881, Ellen White penned the following:

"One year ago the subject of dress was again presented before me. I saw that our sisters were departing from the simplicity of the gospel. The very ones who had felt that the reform dress required unnecessary labor, and who claimed that they would not be influenced by the spirit of the world, had now taken up the fashions they once condemned. Their dresses were arranged with all the unnecessary adornments of worldlings in a manner unbecoming to Christians and entirely at variance with our faith." Ibid., 637-638.

God had allowed the real pride in His people's hearts to be made manifest.

"God has been testing His people. He allowed the testimony concerning dress to become silent, that our sisters might follow their own inclination and thus develop the real pride existing in their hearts." Ibid., 639.

About the time God removed His call for the "short reform dress," Ellen White, herself left off the promotion of and the wearing of that singular style. She adopted the "less objectionable dress style." Her dress of 1906 is described as follows: "Her long, dark dress came within two or three inches of the platform floor. Her jacket, or the top part of the suit, was also long, coming well below her waist, but the buttons reached only to her waist. Her plain white collar was fastened with a simple brooch, and she was hatless, though several in the congregation and on the platform wore hats." *Arthur White, Ellen G. White, vol. 6, The Later Elmshaven Years 1905-1915, 30.*

Because of the stubbornness of our hearts, God removed the call for the adoption of what became known as the "short reform dress" in 1881, but He replaced it with a "less objectionable" style. The clothing of the substitute style was to be loose fitting. The dress was to be longer, just short enough to

avoid the mud and filth. The limbs were still to be clothed with the same attention as with the short dress. There was to be uniformity in its simplicity, in its modest length, and in its proper covering of the limbs.

"If all our sisters would adopt a simple, unadorned dress of modest length, the uniformity thus established would be far more pleasing to God, and would exert a more salutary influence on the world, than the diversity presented four years ago. As our sisters would not generally accept the reform dress as it should be worn, another, less objectionable style is now presented. It is free from needless trimmings, free from the looped-up, tied back overskirts. It consists of a plain sack or loose-fitting basque, and skirt, the latter short enough to avoid the mud and filth of the streets. The material should be free from large plaids and figures, and plain in color. The same attention should be given to the clothing of the limbs as with the short dress." *Ibid.*, 640.

This "less objectionable" reform dress was also not to follow one precise or uniform style as had the original reform dress. Its various components were not to be cut according to specific patterns. This was done by God to help us to avoid focusing on the outward rather than upon the inward adorning.

"Some have supposed that the skirt and sacque mentioned in *Testimonies, vol. 4, page 640*, was the pattern that all should adopt. This is not so, but something as simple as this should be used. No one precise style has been given me as the exact rule to guide all in their dress. Should our sisters think they must adopt a uniform style of dress, controversy would arise, and those whose minds should be wholly given to the work of the third angel's message would spend their time making aggressive warfare on the outward dress, to the neglect of that inward piety, the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." *The Story of Our Health Message, 428*.

In 1897, inquiries regarding returning to the one-style, short reform dress were directed to God's messenger. She stated that to do so after God had removed His call to His people to adopt the uniform style would be to implement a human rather than a divine invention.

"In answer to the questions that have recently come to me in regard to resuming the reform dress, I would say that those who have been agitating this subject may be assured that they have not been inspired by the Spirit of God. The Lord has not indicated that it is the duty of our sisters to go back to the reform dress. The difficulties that we once had to meet are not to be brought in again. There must be no branching out now into singular forms of dress. New and strange things will continually arise, to lead God's people into false excitement, religious revivals, and curious developments; but our people should not be subjected to any tests of human invention that will create controversy in any line." *Ibid.*, 427.

Because of these inspired counsels, some believe that God, presently, has no specified preferences for any certain mode of dress. Some feel free to allow society and personal preference to primarily determine what is modest and what is healthful dress. Others wonder why God, in His foreknowledge that the short reform dress would be rejected, went ahead and gave it to His people in the first place. And when God released His people from the burden of the short reform dress, why did He describe a more acceptable dress rather than letting each one follow the dictates of their own conscience? Future articles will clarify some of the principles of Christian dress. It will be found that a study of the inspired counsels regarding God's short reform dress, His less objectionable reform dress, and the worldly styles of that era yield many concepts of value for the Christian today in knowing how to best dress both modestly and healthfully.

## 2: When God Defined Healthful Dress

SATAN has led mankind into disobedience of God's natural, as well as spiritual, laws. Thus, the teaching of obedience to natural law is an integral part of the three angels' messages.

"To make plain natural law, and urge the obedience of it, is the work that accompanies the third angel's message, to prepare a people for the coming of the Lord." *Counsels on Diet. and Foods*, 69.

An integral part of the health reform message given to His remnant people is that of healthful dress. Many of God's objections to the fashionable dress styles of the early days of our church's history was that they were contrary to the laws of nature and thus were physically unhealthful.

The counsels of God through Ellen White condemn as unhealthy the practice of leaving the limbs and shoulders of babies uncovered.

"In some countries the custom of leaving bare the shoulders and limbs of little children still prevails. This custom cannot be too severely condemned." *The Ministry of Healing*, 382.

Another divinely condemned, yet fashionable, dress for girls was that of covering the trunk and arms well but leaving the lower limbs with only one to two layers of clothing.

"Mothers who dress their children in accordance with fashion, endanger their health and life. Fashion leaves the limbs of children unclad, save with one covering, or, at most, two. . . . Over the heart, where is the greatest amount of vitality, there are from four to eight coverings.... While traveling, it is customary to see little girls dressed fashionably, but not healthfully. The upper portions of the body are abundantly clothed with warm cloaks, and over these are furs, while the limbs are scarcely covered." *Healthful Living*, 148-149.

The wearing of hoops was also identified as unhealthful.

"Parents are accountable in a great degree, for the physical health of their children. Those children who survive the abuses of their infancy, are not out of danger in their childhood. Their parents still pursue a wrong course toward them. Their limbs, as well as their arms, are left almost naked. Those who value fashion above health, place hoops upon their children. Hoops are not convenient, modest or healthful." *Selected Messages*, book 2, 469-470.

To the unhealthful hoops, the adult women added the unhealthful, constricting corsets and waist-supported heavy skirts.

"The lungs may be compressed by tight-fitting bands, waists or corsets, which hinder the free flow of blood through the system." *The Health Reformer*, February 1, 1877.

"Many females drag down the bowels and hips by hanging heavy skirts upon them." *Selected Messages*, book 2, 473.

Inspiration condemned the squeezing of the feet as well as the compression of the waist.

"We would protest against people's squeezing their feet to make them look small, and compressing the waist, making it impossible for them to fill the lungs with pure air. If we give the lungs and feet ample room to do the work God designed they should, we shall be rewarded with better health and a clearer conscience." *The Health Reformer*, April 1, 1871.

Compression of any part of the body interferes with the blood circulation to and through that area, and tends to displace the local organs and prevents their normal functions.

"Tight corsets ... compress the lungs, the stomach, and other internal organs, and induce curvature of the spine and an almost countless train of diseases." *Testimonies, vol. 4, 635.*

"To say nothing of the suicidal practice of compressing the waist, so as to suppress natural respiration, inducing the habit of breathing only from the top of the lungs." *The Health Reformer, August 1, 1868.*

"The mother of the pale-faced child seemed anxious in regard to her, fearing she would take cold and 'have one of those dreadful coughing spells.' I said to the infidel, pointing to the children, These are indeed creatures of circumstance. No doubt the mother is lamenting the providence of God in thus afflicting her precious child, but does not dream that herself is at fault for the poor health of her children. She is controlled by fashion; and as the result, her children are sufferers. Look at the tight-fitting waists of the dresses of these children. It is impossible for their lungs to have full action. The heart and liver cannot do their work, thus compressed. These children cannot take a full inspiration of air." *Ibid., November 1, 1870.*

"The corsets which are again being generally worn to compress the waist is one of the most serious features in woman's dress. Health and life are being sacrificed to carry out a fashion that is devoid of real beauty and comfort. The compression of the waist weakens the muscles of the respiratory organs. It hinders the process of digestion. The heart, liver, lungs, spleen, and stomach, are crowded into a small compass, not allowing room for the healthful action of these organs." *Review and Herald, October 31, 1871.*

"The lungs may be compressed by tight-fitting bands, waists or corsets, which hinder the free flow of blood through the system. It is essential to health that the chest should have room to fully expand, so that the lungs may be enabled to take full inspirations of air. Many who have died of consumption [pulmonary tuberculosis] might have lived their allotted term of life had they dressed in accordance with the laws of their being. The strength of the system is, in a great degree, dependent upon the amount of pure fresh air breathed. If the lungs are restricted, the quantity of oxygen received into them is also limited, the blood becomes vitiated, and disease follows." *The Health Reformer, February 1, 1877.*

An even possibly greater cause of disease in women is that of having the limbs less covered than the trunk. The chilled blood from the relatively unclad extremities tends to affect the general health. A perhaps even greater problem is that less blood is in the cold extremities which results in excess blood with sluggish circulation in the internal organs.

"The air, bathing the arms and limbs, and circulating about the armpits, chills these sensitive portions of the body, so near the vitals, and hinders the healthy circulation of the blood, and induces disease, especially of the lungs and brain." *Selected Messages, book 2, 467.*

"Mothers who dress their children in accordance with fashion, endanger their health and life. Fashion leaves the limbs of children unclad, save with one covering, or, at most, two. If they are exposed to the chill autumn, spring, or winter weather, their limbs are bathed in a current of cold air. Over the heart, where is the greatest amount of vitality, there are from four to eight coverings. These unclad limbs and feet become habitually cold." *Healthful Living, 148-149.*

"Look at the tight-fitting waists of the dresses of these children. It is impossible for their lungs to have full action. The heart and liver cannot do their work, thus compressed.... Look at their limbs, unclad except by the slight covering of cotton stockings .... The air chills the limbs, the life current is driven back from its natural course, and the limbs are robbed of their proportion of blood. The blood, which should be induced to the extremities by their being properly clad, is thrown back upon the internal organs. There is too much blood in the head. The lungs are congested or the liver is burdened; by interrupting the circulation of the blood, the entire system is deranged." *Ibid., 184-185.*



"When the extremities, which are remote from the vital organs, are not properly clad, the blood is driven to the head, causing headache or nosebleed; or there is a sense of fullness about the chest, producing cough or palpitation of the heart, on account of too much blood in that locality; or the stomach has too much blood, causing indigestion." *Testimonies, vol. 2, 531.*

Hoops were unhealthy because they held the clothing away from the relatively unclad limbs, allowing them to be chilled, resulting in derangement of healthful circulation in the entire body.

"Their garments being kept from the body by hoops, it is impossible for them to receive sufficient warmth from their clothing, and their limbs are continually bathed in cold air. The extremities are chilled, and the heart has thrown upon it double labor, to force the blood into these chilled extremities, and when the blood has performed its circuit through the body, and returned to the heart, it is not the same vigorous warm current which left it. It has been chilled in its passage through the limbs. The heart, weakened by too great labor, and poor circulation of poor blood, is then compelled to still greater exertion, to throw the blood to the extremities which are never as healthfully warm as other parts of the body. The heart fails in its efforts, and the limbs become habitually cold; and the blood, which is chilled away from the extremities, is thrown back upon the lungs and brain, and inflammation and congestion of the lungs or the brain is the result." *Selected Messages, book 2, 470.*

When the limbs are habitually underclad, the vessels in the limbs become too small to allow normal amounts of blood even in warm weather. Such a person may not notice the coldness of the limbs. If contraction of the blood vessels occurs during childhood it can actually prevent normal development of the limbs.

"In some countries the custom of leaving bare the shoulders and limbs of little children still prevails. This custom cannot be too severely condemned. The limbs being remote from the center of circulation, demand greater protection than the other parts of the body. The arteries that convey the blood to the extremities are large, providing for a sufficient quantity of blood to afford warmth and nutrition. But when the limbs are left unprotected or are insufficiently clad, the arteries and veins become contracted, the sensitive portions of the body are chilled, and the circulation of the blood hindered." *Ministry of Healing, 382.*

"Women do not properly clothe their limbs, because it is not fashionable. For want of coverings, the blood is chilled back from the extremities, ...The limbs, which should have even more coverings than any other portions of the body, because farthest from the center of circulation, are chilled, because not suitably protected. These organs are robbed of their due proportion of blood, therefore cannot be properly nourished, and the result is, the almost universally slender, undeveloped limbs." *The Health Reformer, March 1, 1874.*

"Our Creator has formed the limbs with large veins and vessels to contain a large proportion of blood, that the limbs may be sufficiently nourished and proportionately warm with other portions of the body. But fashion robs the limbs of coverings, and the life current is chilled from its natural channel and thrown back upon its internal organs. The many coverings over the chest and lungs induce the blood to these parts, and the animal heat thus retained weakens and debilitates these delicate organs, causing congestion and inflammation. The head, lungs, heart, liver, and kidneys have too much blood, while the limbs have not enough for warmth and proper development. The result is, the blood vessels in the limbs contract because they are not filled and cannot contain the due proportion of blood which nature designed they should, and they are always chilly. Because this chilliness is habitual, it is not noticed by children who are thus unhealthfully dressed. These children, who are disciplined to conform to fashion, are not well proportioned. Their slender, fleshless limbs testify to the abuse they have suffered. Fashion has robbed their limbs of their natural plumpness." *Ibid., January 1, 1877.*

Chronically cold arms and or legs in infancy and childhood can lead to sickness, dwarfing, and premature death.

"The arms' being naked exposes the infant to constant cold, and congestion of lungs or brain. These exposures prepare the way for the infant to become sickly and dwarfed." *Healthful Living*, 176.

"I appeal to you mothers, do you not feel alarmed, and heartsick, in seeing your children pale and dwarfed, suffering with catarrh, influenza, croup, scrofula [tuberculosis] swellings appearing upon the face and neck, inflammation and congestion of lungs and brain? Have you studied from cause to effect? ... Have you not been dictated by fashion in clothing your children? Leaving their arms and limbs insufficiently protected has been the cause of a vast amount of disease and premature deaths." *Selected Messages*, book 2, 471.

Inability of mothers to nurse their infants may be caused by having kept the chest area too warm due to improper dress during breast development.

"Because it is the fashion, many females place over their breasts paddings, to give the form the appearance of well-developed breasts. These appendages attract the blood to the chest, and produce a dry, irritating heat. The veins, because of unnatural heat, become contracted, and the natural circulation is obstructed. These appendages, in connection with other bad habits of dressing and eating, result in obstructing the process of nature, making a healthy development of the breasts impossible. And if these become mothers, there cannot be a natural secretion of the fluids, to have a sufficient supply of nourishment for their offspring." *The Health Reformer*, September 1, 1871.

Cancers are one of the terrible diseases that can be caused by improper dress.

"Many have become lifelong invalids through their compliance with the demands of fashion. Displacements and deformities, cancers and other terrible diseases, are among the evils resulting from fashionable dress." *Testimonies*, vol. 4, 635.

As much as one-half of the sufferings of women have been the result of unhealthful dress:

"Women especially are the victims of various maladies which might be lessened, if not entirely prevented, by right habits of life. Half their sufferings may be attributed to their manner of dress, and the insane desire to conform to the fashions of the world, introduced as a system of speculation and profit, or for other and baser reasons." *The Health Reformer*, February 1, 1877.

Satan knows that "most diseases have their origin in an unequal distribution of the blood." *Ibid.*, January 1, 1874. Thus we should not be surprised when Inspiration tells us that Satan is the inventor of the dress styles that allow the blood to be chilled in the underclad limbs. Too often, *even* life itself is sacrificed in the service of Satan.

"Satan invented the fashions which leave the limbs exposed, chilling back the life current from its original course. And parents bow at the shrine of fashion and so clothe their children that the nerves and veins become contracted and do not answer the purpose that God designed they should. The result is, habitually cold feet and hands. Those parents who follow fashion instead of reason will have an account to render to God for thus robbing their children of health. Even life itself is frequently sacrificed to the god of fashion." *Testimonies*, vol. 2, 532.

The Creator designed the face to endure exposure, but the limbs were designed to be uniformly as warm as the body.

"The limbs were not formed by our Creator to endure exposure, as was the face. The Lord provided the face with an immense circulation, because it must be exposed. He provided, also, large veins and nerves

for the limbs and feet, to contain a large amount of the current of human life, that the limbs might be uniformly as warm as the body. They should be so thoroughly clothed as to induce the blood to the extremities." *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 531-532.

Because perfect health depends upon perfect circulation, Christian dress should clothe the extremities as thoroughly as the chest.

"Perfect health depends upon perfect circulation. Special attention should be given to the extremities, that they may be as thoroughly clothed as the chest and the region over the heart, where is the greatest amount of heat. Parents who dress their children with the extremities naked, or nearly so, are sacrificing the health and lives of their children to fashion. If these parts are not so warm as the body, the circulation is not equalized." *Ibid.*, 531.

It would be well to concern ourselves more with prevention of cruelty to young girls through unhealthy dress than with the prevention of cruelty to dumb animals.

"Societies are formed in our cities for the prevention of cruelty to dumb animals. It would be well to go still further, and, inasmuch as accountable intelligences, capable of obtaining life eternal, are of more value than the dumb beasts, there is greater need of societies to prevent the cruelty of mothers in dressing their darling little girls in a manner to sacrifice them at the shrine of cruel fashion." *Healthful Living*, 149.

Mothers need to decide whether they will dress their little girls the healthful way or the fashionable way leaving the limbs relatively unclad.

"There is a fashionable way and a healthful way to dress a child. Mothers generally pay more attention to the former than to the latter. It is doubtless very pretty and becoming to dress a little girl in short skirts, covering her daintily-shaped ankle and handsome limb with a thin, silken or cotton stocking, encasing her foot in a thin-soled and exquisitely shaped shoe, while her shoulders are loaded with cloak, furs, and scarf." *The Health Reformer*, January 1, 1874.

Healthful dress, that will protect the girls as well as the boys from the cold, is described.

"Your girls should wear the waists of their dresses perfectly loose, and they should have a style of dress convenient, comfortable, and modest. In cold weather they should wear warm flannel or cotton drawers, which can be placed inside the stockings. Over these should be warm lined pants, which may be full, gathered into a band, and neatly button around the ankle, or taper at the bottom and meet the shoe. Their dress should reach below the knee. With this style of dress, one light skirt, or at most two, is all that is necessary, and these should be buttoned to a waist. The shoes should be thick-soled, and perfectly comfortable. With this style of dress your girls will be no more in danger in the open air than your boys. And their health would be much better, were they to live more out of doors, even in winter, than to be confined to the close air of a room heated by a stove." *Selected Messages*, book 2, 471.

"See that your children wear snugly-fitting, woolen, or cotton-flannel drawers next their skin; over this the stocking may be drawn, and, in the colder days, woolen leggings should be worn over all. Let their shoes be thick and covered by warm overshoes; their limbs may not look so neatly, but they will certainly be comfortable, and the corresponding improvement in the health of your children will more than repay you for your temporary mortification at their unfashionable appearance." *The Health Reformer*, January 1, 1874.

The pants for the girls are to be formed so they cannot be pulled up leaving the limbs with only one layer of clothing.

"You should clothe the limbs of your girls as warmly as you do your boys', thus inducing the blood to the extremities. They should be clothed with warm, lined pants, meeting the instep. In no case should the pants be formed so as to be pulled up out of sight by the children, leaving any part of their limbs exposed. I inquire, Is it reasonable, or even modest, to see the limbs of your daughters exposed, to the bend of the knee, without any covering, except a cotton stocking in summer, and flannel, in winter? Why should not mothers clothe their daughters sensibly, modestly, and healthfully, irrespective of prevailing fashions?" *Ibid.*, November 1, 1870.

Women are to clothe their limbs as thoroughly as do the men. Warm, lined pants in winter are encouraged.

"There is but one woman in a thousand who clothes her limbs as she should. Whatever may be the length of the dress, females should clothe their limbs as thoroughly as the males. This may be done by wearing lined pants gathered into a band and fastened about the ankle, or made full and tapering at the bottom, and these should come down long enough to meet the shoe. The limbs and ankles thus clothed are protected against a current of air. If the limbs and feet are kept comfortable with warm clothing, the circulation will be equalized, and the blood will remain healthy and pure, because it is not chilled or hindered in its natural passage through the system." *Selected Messages*, book 2, 479.

"We plead for the warm, lined pants in winter, that the blood may be induced to the extremities, that they may not by scanty clothing be robbed of their due proportion of blood. The current of human life is struggling to go its accustomed rounds and should not be hindered in its circuit through the body by the imperfect manner in which women clothe their limbs." *The Health Reformer*, May 1, 1872.

In regard to healthful circulation, the extremities need to be covered as well or better than the trunk.

"The portions of the body, close by the life springs, need less covering than the limbs which are remote from the vital organs. If the limbs and feet could have the extra coverings usually put upon the shoulders, lungs, and heart, and healthy circulation be induced to the extremities, the vital organs would act their part healthfully, with only their share of clothing." *Selected Messages*, book 2, 470-471.

"In order to maintain equal circulation, there should be an equal distribution of clothing, which will bring equal warmth to all parts of the body. The limbs that are the farthest from the vital organs, should be more thoroughly protected with warm coverings. The extremities should be carefully guarded from cold and chilliness by an additional amount of clothing. It is impossible for women to have, habitually, chilled limbs and cold feet, without some of the internal organs being congested. There is usually worn over the chest, where is the greatest amount of heat, from six to eight thicknesses.... The lower limbs are only furnished with one or two thicknesses of light material. The feet are frequently covered with cotton stockings and cloth shoes." *The Health Reformer* May 1, 1872.

Those with a tendency to respiratory problems especially need to avoid chilling of the hands and arms.

"Fashionable dressing is one of the chief causes of coughs and diseased lungs. Those who are threatened with pulmonary diseases should take especial care not to allow the extremities of the body to be chilled. The wrist should be covered with warm wristlets, for if the hands and arms are chilled, the lungs are injuriously affected." *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 3, 319.

Healthful dress will avoid any constriction that tends to interfere with free blood circulation and organ function. This is best accomplished by suspending the clothing from the shoulders.

"The dress of the infant should be so arranged that its body will not be in the least compressed after taking a full meal." *Healthful Living*, 148.

"Your girls should wear the waists of their dresses perfectly loose." *Selected Messages book 2*, 471.

"Mothers, why not clothe your boys and girls comfortably and properly? Let their dress be simple, loose, and comfortable; clothe their limbs, and especially the ankles, warmly and evenly; then let them go out and exercise in the open air, and live to enjoy health and happiness." *Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene*, 91.

"We object to the popular style of woman's dress because it is neither healthful nor convenient. The skirts generally rest upon the hips, which were not designed to sustain weights. Every article of clothing should be suspended from the shoulders. The habit of fastening the skirts about the body with bands, allowing the weight to rest upon the hips to keep them from slipping off is decidedly injurious to health. For exactly where these bands girt are nerves, and large blood vessels, which carry the blood into the limbs. These veins and nerves should not be pressed, but allowed the most perfect freedom to fulfill the purpose for which nature designed them.

"I have heard young ladies complain of pain in the side when in a sitting position. I have found upon examination that the only cause was the tight bands pressing upon the tender nerves and veins, impeding the free circulation of blood. When the underclothing, as well as the dress waist, was made loose, and all the garments were suspended from the shoulders by straps, the pain disappeared.... The clothing should be worn so loose as to give the most perfect freedom of circulation, respiration, and the exercise of every portion of the body." *The Health Reformer*, April 1, 1872.

"The female dress should be suspended from the shoulders." *Selected Messages*, book 2, 473.

"Every article of clothing upon the person should be worn so loose that, in raising the arms, the clothing will be correspondingly lifted by the action....

"The shoulders should be made to sustain the weight of every article of clothing worn upon the person." *The Health Reformer*, February 1, 1877.

God does not change His natural laws anymore than His moral laws to accommodate sinful man. Our manner of dress is to be controlled by principle.

"God has not changed, neither does He propose to change our physical organism, in order that we may violate a single law without feeling the effects of its violation. But many willingly close their eyes to the light.... By indulging their inclinations and appetites, they violate the laws of life and health; and if they obey conscience, they must be controlled by principle in their eating and dressing, rather than be led by inclination, fashion, and appetite" *Health Reformer*, September 1, 1871.

By word and by example we are to teach the principles of healthful dress to our children.

"Your children are what you make them by your own instruction and example. You are teaching them to be creatures of circumstance by dressing them according to the customs and fashions of the day. As the result, you see them with minds querulous, peevish, ill-balanced, and they lacking physical, mental, and moral strength. Many die prematurely. Mothers, do not charge the result of your cruel work to Providence. You can, by properly instructing your children in regard to the relation their own habits of eating, dressing, and exercise, sustain to health, make them, not children of circumstance, but of God's gracious providence. The course professed Christians generally pursue, in following fashion irrespective of health and of life, brings upon them a train of evils which they charge back upon Providence, and place arguments in the mouths of infidels, wherewith to assail Christianity." *The Health Reformer*, November 1, 1870.

Our first duty is obedience to God's laws, including the principles of healthful dress.

"Knowledge must be gained in regard to how to eat and drink and dress so as to preserve health. Sickness is the result of violating nature's law. Our first duty, one which we owe to God, to ourselves,

and to our fellow men, is to obey the laws of God. These include the laws of health." *Counsels on Health*, 24-25.

The principles of healthful dress regulate every article of clothing and involve the protection and development of every part of the body.

"In order to secure the most healthful clothing, the needs of every part of the body must be carefully studied. The character of the climate, the surroundings, the condition of health, the age and the occupation must all be considered. Every article of dress should fit easily, obstructing neither the circulation of the blood, nor a free, full, natural respiration." *Ibid.*, 93.

"Dress reform proper provided for the protection and development of every part of the body." *Testimonies, vol. 4*, 635.

"True dress reform regulates every article of dress worn upon the person. In order to equalize the circulation of the blood, the clothing should be equally distributed upon the person, that equal warmth may be preserved in all parts of the body. The limbs, being remote from the vital organs, should have special attention." *The Health Reformer, January 1, 1877*.

When we disobey God's laws of how to prevent chilling of the body or of how to promote proper circulation, we are to repent and reform.

"Now in regard to that which we can do for ourselves. There is a point that requires careful, thoughtful consideration. I must become acquainted with myself, I must be a learner always as to how to take care of this building, the body God has given me, that I may preserve it in the very best condition of health. I must eat those things which will be for my very best good physically, and I must take special care to have my clothing such as will conduce to a healthful circulation of the blood.... I must have wisdom to be a faithful guardian of my body. I should do a very unwise thing to enter a cool room when in a perspiration; I should show myself an unwise steward to allow myself to sit in a draught, and thus expose myself so as to take cold. I should be unwise to sit with cold feet and limbs and thus drive back the blood from the extremities to the brain or internal organs. I should always protect my feet in damp weather.... And when I violate the laws God has established in my being, I am to repent and reform." *The Paulson Collection of Ellen G. White Letters*, 28-29.

Our manner of dress is to work with God for the health of both the soul and the body.

"In all respects the dress should be healthful. 'Above all things,' God desires us to 'be in health' health of body and of soul. And we are to be workers together with Him for the health of both soul and body. Both are promoted by healthful dress." *Child Guidance*, 398.

### **3: When God Defined Modesty**

"AND the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." Genesis 2:21-23.

The first marriage, that of Adam and Eve, instituted the marriage law.

"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." Genesis 2:24.

In that first creation week "God bestowed on man His two great gifts, the Sabbath as a day of rest, and woman as a helpmeet." *Signs of the Times, August 30, 1899.*

God's two great gifts to man have been under special attack by Satan from their very beginning. Down through the ages, he has had great success in debasing, perverting, and destroying the sacredness of the marriage relationship. Christ's life on this earth and His gospel have the purpose of restoring the marriage institution "to its original sanctity and elevation." *In Heavenly Places, 202. See also The Faith I Live By, 253.*

The terms modest, chaste, moral, and virtuous are descriptive of those persons who accept and live in harmony with God's marriage law requiring that husband and wife "are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." *Matthew 19:6.*

The terms immodest and immoral are applicable to persons and their activities that reject God's plan for purity of the sacred one-flesh relationship of husband and wife.

God created man, male and female, with one of His primary purposes for them to be fruitful, to multiply, and to inhabit the earth. See *Genesis 1:27-28*. The sexuality of male and female is designed of God to be limited to the one-flesh relationship of marriage. Satan works to make human sexuality a function of casual relationships between consenting persons.

The term modest describes the way a person dresses, behaves, and talks that communicates his or her level of respect for limiting human sexuality to the marriage institution. Immodest are those ways of dressing, behaving, or talking that communicate, directly or indirectly, the desire, willingness, or possibility thereof, of human sexuality being a function outside of matrimony. Such communication can be very subtle, such as flattery or a lingering hand clasp. See *Evangelism, 678-682*. Anything about our behavior or dress that is designed to attract attention or admiration is considered by God as immodest.

"The Bible teaches modesty in dress. `In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel.' *1 Timothy 2:9*. This forbids display in dress, gaudy colors, profuse ornamentation. Any device designed to attract attention to the wearer or to excite admiration is excluded from the modest apparel which God's Word enjoins." *Child Guidance, 423.*

Actions and dress will be evaluated by God as modest or immodest by the motives as well as by the message that is communicated, whether it is conscious and intentional or not. As is all human communication, its effect is determined as much by the recipient as by the sender. The message communicated is also affected greatly by the culture and customs of current society. What one culture considers modest may be considered immodest in another society. Thus, the follower of Christ must determine what is modest by applying the principles of Inspiration to the lifestyles and dress standards of their culture. Some feel that the influence of society in determining modesty and immodesty is so great that to be modest is to not be the first nor the last to accept any given dress style. Other Christians believe that God plays a major role in helping His followers to determine what is modesty in dress.

Human sexuality is limited by God to the privacy of the marriage relationship. It is detrimental and contrary to God's will, irregardless of society's perception, for the physical differences of the sexes to be shared visually or physically with anyone other than the corresponding marriage partner in private. There is no indication that any degree of nudity or suggestivity in dress was or is part of God's dress plan for Eden lost, Eden restored, or Heaven itself, much less for this earth awash with sin-sick souls.

Satan works to diminish the sacredness of human sexuality by placing the physical differences of the sexes on display. We are living in an age when the female form is idolized. The curves and texture of the female body, and to some extent the male body, from the toes to the top of the head, are used to gain attention and to influence the purchasing decisions of modern mankind. Satan is doing all that he can to

cheapen that which God has reserved for the marriage relationship. Satan works, in part, by promoting dress styles that expose and accentuate the female form, not to the marriage partner, but to society at large. This public exposure of the female form is, undoubtedly, a major factor of the crime wave in modern society.

Satan also works to accomplish his goal by deemphasizing the differences between the sexes. He encourages the sexes to have similar, if not identical, hair and dress styles, as well as mannerisms. He encourages the unisex concept so prevalent today. Satan knows that such activities also cheapen and devalue the marriage relationship, which then results in increased crime.

It is God's plan for all to see a clear distinction between the dress of males and females.

"God designed that there should be a plain distinction between the dress of men and women, and has considered the matter of sufficient importance to give explicit directions in regard to it; for the same dress worn by both sexes would cause confusion and great increase of crime." *Child Guidance*, 427.

Through Moses, God informed His people that it was an abomination for the sexes to wear each other's clothing. "The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the Lord thy God." Deuteronomy 22:5.

This clearly condemns transvestitism which is the practice of dressing with the same clothing as the other sex to promote the practice of homosexuality.

Through His prophetess, Ellen White, God clarified that, not just the same clothing, but the clothing that is "very much like" that of the other sex is also an abomination.

"There is an increasing tendency to have women in their dress and appearance as *near like* the other sex as possible, and to fashion their dress *very much like* that of *men*, but God pronounces it abomination. 'In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety.' 1 Timothy 2:9." *Testimonies, vol. 1, 421. Emphasis provided unless otherwise noted.*

The above was in condemnation of the reform dress referred to as the "American Costume" which included, at least by some, a cap, pants, vest, coat, and boots. Although these items of dress were apparently not fashioned identical to those of men they were "very much like" that of men and considered by God an abomination for women to wear. The "American Costume" was not a removal of, but merely a diminishing of, the difference of appearance between the sexes and was thus an abomination to God.

Down through the ages, God has given His people very little counsel as to the specifics of modest dress. He has seemingly left His people to use individual conscience and the mores of their society to determine that which was modest. Deuteronomy 22:5, cited earlier, is the only recorded directive in the Old Testament regarding dress in relation to men and women and it fails to describe or mention any specific style or item of garment.

In the time of Paul, a dispute arose in the church at Corinth as to whether or not the women should participate in church with their heads uncovered as did the men. The dress of that day used a veil covering the head of the women in public apparently as the primary differentiation between the dress of the sexes. God, through Paul, instructed the members in Corinth that for the women to not wear the veil in the church would be a shame and dishonor. See 1 Corinthians 11:2-16. For Christian women to leave off the veil would have been an offense to the customs of society of that day, thus diminishing the witnessing influence of the church. It would also have been contrary to God's principle of seeing a clear distinction between the dress of the sexes.



During the nearly 2,000 years between the time of Paul and that of Ellen White, society left off the distinctive veil covering the head and face of women and replaced it with a distinctive, long skirt for women and split pants for men. God apparently went along with society's change in defining what was modest dress, for He never inspired Ellen White to make an issue of women wearing a veil or other head covering as a means of being modest. God, however, was apparently reluctant in allowing His remnant people to follow society in leaving off the veil. Through His messenger, He lamented that the bare face and head of modern women was the manifestation of an immodest boldness. Though God did not have His women return to the wearing of the veil, He warned in 1859 that, as the world would be growing more corrupt that there must be a clearer line of distinction between the dress of His people and the world.

"I was shown that the people of God should not imitate the fashions of the world. Some have done this, and are fast losing the peculiar, holy character which should distinguish them as God's people. I was pointed back to God's ancient people, and was led to compare their apparel with the mode of dress in these last days. What a difference! what a change! Then the women were not so bold as now. When they went in public, they covered their faces with a veil. In these last days, fashions are shameful and immodest. They are noticed in prophecy. They were first brought in by a class over whom Satan has entire control, who, 'being past feeling [without any conviction of the Spirit of God] have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.' If God's professed people had not greatly departed from Him, there would now be a marked difference between their dress and that of the world. The small bonnets, exposing the face and head, show a lack of modesty. The hoops are a shame. The inhabitants of earth are growing more and more corrupt, and the line of distinction between them and the Israel of God must be more plain, or the curse which falls upon worldlings will fall on God's professed people." Testimonies, vol. 1, 188-189.

Clearly, God foresaw that society would not be a safe guide for His remnant people to follow in the area of modesty.

Satan was indeed active in his attack against the sacredness of the marriage relationship as well as that of the Sabbath. He labored tirelessly to cause society to lose, even further, its understanding of true modesty.

By the mid 1800s, Satan had led society to foster a false standard of modesty. Though purporting to be modest, the popular style of women's dress of hoops and flowing skirts was actually a mockery of modesty. Those parts of the anatomy which were purportedly immodest to be revealed in public, actually, because of the dress design, had to be exposed in public as the women traveled normally from place to place. Thus, what was falsely accepted as modest by deteriorating society was truly judged as immodest by God.

Fashion deemed it immodest for women's feet, even in shoes, to be visible in public. Thus the skirts of the fashionable dress, designed to hide the feet, swept the floors and streets. Ellen White described the real immodesty of the fashionable dress in the following words.

"But does the popular style of woman's dress always hide her feet from the public gaze? See that lady passing over the muddy street, holding her skirts nearly twice as far from the ground as ours, exposing, not only her feet, but her nearly-naked limbs. Similar exposures are frequent as she ascends and descends the stairs, as she is helped into, and out of carriages. These exposures are disagreeable, if not shameful, and a style of dress which makes their frequent occurrence almost certain, we must regard as a poor safeguard of modesty and virtue. But we did not design an exposure of this false modesty in relation to woman's feet, but simply a defense of the style of dress which we regard, in every way, truly modest." *Review and Herald, April 14, 1868.*

In the reference above, God labeled as immodest the exposure of eighteen inches of "nearly naked" lower extremity in contrast with the skirt of the reform dress, which was eight to nine inches from the floor. The "nearly naked" eighteen inches of exposed, fashionably dressed limb were covered with "two thicknesses of light material" (*The Health Reformer, May 1, 1872*), while the eight to nine inches of limb extending below the reform dress were covered with additional women's style pants. The portion of the pant legs that were exposed to view were to be stiffened with starch to give them form rather than clinging to the women's leg. See *Testimonies, vol. 1, 522*.

God also stated that, contrary to the decision of society, it was not modest for the stockinged-legs of girls to be exposed to view.

"In no case should the pants be formed so as to be pulled up out of sight by the children, leaving any part of their limbs exposed. I inquire, Is it reasonable, or even modest, to see the limbs of your daughters exposed, to the bend of the knee, without any covering, except a cotton stocking in summer, and flannel, in winter?" *The Health Reformer, November 1, 1870*.

Ellen White described the fashionable dress for girls as reaching "only to the knee, and their limbs were unclothed except by thin stockings." Ibid. The reform dress for Seventh-day Adventist girls included "pants, which may be full, gathered into a band, and neatly button around the ankle, or taper at the bottom and meet the shoe. Their dress should reach below the knee." *Selected Messages, book 2, 471*.

As discussed in chapter one, a dress reform movement began in society some thirteen years prior to the inspired messages on dress reform given through Ellen White. This style of healthful dress, promoted in the world, became known as the "American Costume." This style was basically proper for physical health. It covered the limbs, preventing chilling interference with the circulation. It got rid of the binding corsets and waist-supported, heavy skirts. Though physically healthy, it carried certain aspects of women's dress to extremes and was thus not acceptable to God.

"Some who adopt this costume maybe correct in their views in general upon the health question, and they could be instrumental in accomplishing vastly more good if they did not carry the matter of dress to such extremes." *Testimonies, vol. 1, 459*.

There were at least two aspects of the "American Costume" that made it "too extreme" for God's remnant people. One problem was that the skirt was too short, not reaching to the knees.

"The dress of the second class which passed before me [the "American Costume"] was in many respects as it should be. The limbs were well clad. They were free from the burdens which the tyrant, Fashion, had imposed upon the first class; but had gone to that extreme in the short dress as to disgust and prejudice good people, and destroy in a great measure their own influence. This is the style and influence of the 'American Costume,' taught and worn by many at 'Our Home,' Dansville, New York. It does not reach to the knee. I need not say that this style of dress was shown me to be too short." *Selected Messages, book 3, 278*.

Actual photographs of those wearing, the "American Costume" show a skirt that appears to come to about the *knee* but the pants make it difficult to say where the knee level is. See *Thy Nakedness, 109-112*. The other "extreme" in style was that the general appearance of the "American Costume" was too much like man's dress. This would result in confusion.

"There is still another style of dress which will be adopted by a class of so-called dress reformers. They will imitate the opposite sex, as nearly as possible. They will wear the cap, pants, vest, coat, and boots, the last of which is the most sensible part of the costume. Those who adopt and advocate this style of dress, are carrying the so-called dress reform to very objectionable lengths. Confusion will be the result." Ibid., *book 2, 477*.

The Lord called this style of dress immodest and also an abomination because it resembled too closely the dress of men. Dressing like the man also tended to be associated with unbecoming behavior.

"I saw that God's order has been reversed, and His special directions disregarded, by those who adopt the "American Costume." I was referred to Deuteronomy 22:5: 'The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the Lord thy God.' God would not have His people adopt the so-called reform dress. It is immodest apparel, wholly unfitted for the modest, humble followers of Christ.

"There is an increasing tendency to have women in their dress and appearance as near like the other sex as possible, and to fashion their dress very much like that of men, but God pronounces it abomination. 'In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety.' 1 Timothy 2:9....

"With the so-called dress reform there goes a spirit of levity and boldness just in keeping with the dress. Modesty and reserve seem to depart from many as they adopt that style of dress. I was shown that God would have us take a course consistent and explainable. Let the sisters adopt the American Costume and they would destroy their own influence and that of their husbands. They would become a byword and a derision. Our Saviour says: 'Ye are the light of the world.' 'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.' There is a great work for us to do in the world, and God would not have us take a course to lessen or destroy our influence with the world.

"The foregoing was given me as a reproof to those who are inclined to adopt a style of dress *resembling that worn by men.*" *Testimonies, vol. 1, 457-458.*

Undoubtedly, God's stipulation that the outer jacket and the pants of His original reform dress were to be according to a pattern was to avoid women giving an appearance "resembling" that of men.

"The limbs should be clothed with pants, always cut after an approved pattern, made tapering to meet the instep of the shoe." *The Health Reformer, May 1, 1872.*

"Before putting on the reform dress, our sisters should obtain patterns of the pants and sack worn with it. It is a great injury to the dress reform to have persons introduce into a community a style which in every particular needs reforming before it can rightly represent the reform dress. Wait, sisters, till you can put the dress on right." *Testimonies, vol. 1, 521.*

Thus, in the early days of our church, God saw that the world, led by Satan, was not a safe guide in defining modesty in dress for His end-time people.

In order to have a final generation who would vindicate His character and law before the universe, He knew that He would need to do something exceptional. By the mid nineteenth century, Satan had had such great success in eroding the standards of modesty that society offered no style of women's dress that was acceptable to God. Thus it was that God deviated from His practice of allowing His people to chose the most modest dress style from society and He specified to the early Seventh-day Adventist people His definition of modesty the health reform dress.

God being specific as to what was modest in female dress was not unique though in how He was relating to His remnant church. For His end-time people to be able to experience the saving-from-sin power of the gospel in their own lives and to share that gospel with the whole world, God gave through Ellen White very specific counsels regarding almost every aspect of their personal lifestyle and also the individual and corporate work in carrying the gospel to the world. Thus it is that we have volume after volume of *Testimonies* with specific instructions on such subjects as diet, exercise, rest, recreation, witnessing, Sabbathkeeping, publishing, work of the

ministry, health care work, restaurants, and so on. Clearly, the times of ignorance of God's will, which God winked at, were not adequate for God's final generation. The final scenes of the great controversy are to be played out with a clear choice between God's will and ways and the will and ways of corrupted society.

For this reason, in the early days of our church, God communicated His definition of a modest female dress style. He tried to encourage our women to not be swayed by the world's definition of modesty and the world's ridicule of the truly modest dress of His people. God called His end-time people to stand independent of the improper fashions of society.

"They do not blush to witness the exposure of the almost naked limbs. But the limbs thoroughly dressed with warm pants shock their modesty. Such opposition to the pants, which are positively modest, and which protect the limbs from exposure and chilliness, should be supported by sensible reason. Many say, Oh! the pants look so singular! Everybody stares, and women nudge one another, and look so comical, and some laugh outright. Weighty reasons, these! It is not among the possibilities to get up anything so deforming and uncomfortable as the hump fashion places on the backs of women. This, and the looped, puffed, and ruffled overskirts are devoid of taste and beauty. But these things are tolerated because they are fashionable. How could these slaves of such hideous fashions reasonably laugh at any manner of dress they should behold? Our work shall be, by the grace of God, to preserve simplicity of dress, and stand with moral independence in defiance of fashions that have no regard for natural beauty or physical law." *The Health Reformer, May 1, 1872.*

"Custom and fashion will have their false standard of modesty, and will feign to blush and appear horrified to see women's limbs sensibly and healthfully dressed. We wish to have a sensible reason, if it can be given, for this blind opposition to the reform dress. Sneers, ridicule, and contempt, with some may be such convincing arguments that after they have adopted the modest and healthful short dress, when they meet opposition in this form, will retire from the ranks of dress reform, and no more advocate it, or have the courage to wear the reform dress. Sneers should be taken by sensible health reformers, who move from principle, for what they are worth. Ridicule and contempt cannot make one hair white or black. We want reason and intellect to take the field, and the will to be subjected to the control of enlightened conscience. We design to be true to God and to the right. If there are sensible and strong reasons which can be produced against the reform dress, we have yet to meet them. We are open to conviction. Until we see better arguments than, 'Oh! it looks so to see women with pants!' 'What will people say!' 'I would die before I would wear them!' we shall continue to wear the reform dress." Ibid.

"The slaves to fashion may say the feet and limbs are exposed. I beg pardon: the limbs are not exposed. It is true the reform dress reveals the fact that women have feet and limbs, and when they are modestly and sensibly clothed, making exposure impossible, she is not ashamed of the fact. But the fact that women have feet and limbs is not, as we have said, concealed by the length of the dress. We have decided that health and modesty require that women clothe their limbs as thoroughly as they do other parts of the body." Ibid., March 1, 1874.

God's encouragement to our early church to adopt the singular-unique, separate-health reform dress with its specific patterns and uniform appearance was not successful. Because of the resistance from the hardness of our hearts, God's messenger was led to cease promoting the style. This allowed our women to be tested and to demonstrate the pride in their hearts by their following the fashions of the world. In 1881, God went along with the hardness of our hearts and replaced His health reform dress and its specific patterns with a style of dress less objectionable to His people. In 1897, God stated that a return to the health reform dress as a test for God's people would be to return to a test of human invention. See chapter one.

Some might be tempted to interpret God's promotion of the singular "short reform dress" as a misjudgment on His part and that His people's response caught Him by surprise. They might assume that He wisely concluded to return to His previous practice of allowing His people to define modesty by being neither the first nor the last to adopt the new styles of the dress of society.

With God's foreknowledge, such a "misjudgment" on His part is not possible. Though He removed the reform dress with its singular, uniform patterns, His "less objectionable" reform dress still contained and represented His basic principles of modest female dress. By His replacing the rejected style with a less objectionable style He restated the fact that degenerate society, at least of that day, was not offering His people any choice of a modest dress style. With His foreknowledge God undoubtedly saw the even more degenerate society of our day with its attitude that anything and everything is acceptable. He foresaw our day when there is no consensus in society as to modest dress for women nor for a clear distinction in dress between the sexes. Though their hearts were hard, God's final generation, in a degenerate society, was not to be left without inspired guidance as to what is modest in dress and as to what, like the veil, clearly distinguishes between the sexes.

It seems that God has given us at least six guidelines by which to measure the modesty or appropriateness of a given dress style.

1. It should manifest a clear distinction from the general dress of men. It should clearly not be a part of the "increasing tendency to have women in their dress and appearance as near like the other sex as possible, and to fashion their dress very much like that of men, but God pronounces it abomination." *Testimonies, vol. 1, 421.*

2. It should not expose the female form to public view. Distinction between the sexes is to be by the style of dress itself and not due to the display (by the dress) of the physical differences of the sexes. It should work in harmony with the purpose of the gospel to restore the purity and sanctity of the marriage relationship by reserving the display of the physical form to the marriage partner in privacy. See *The Faith I Live By, 253; In Heavenly Places, 202.*

3. It should not be a style that is especially identified with, or promoted by, unacceptable special interest groups such as the women's movement or a false religion. See *Testimonies, vol. 1, 421.*

4. Nothing in the mode of dress should serve to draw attention or to excite admiration. See *Child Guidance, 423.*

5. It should not tend to promote or to be associated with less modest or reserved behavior or with a spirit of boldness or levity. See *Testimonies, vol. 1, 421.*

6. The laws of health stipulate that the clothing of the extremities is to protect them at least as well as the rest of the body. See *Selected Messages, book 2, 470-471; The Health Reformer, May 1, 1872.* Clothing is also to be suspended from the shoulders with the waist free from constriction. See *Selected Messages, book 2, 473; The Health Reformer, February 1, 1877.*

If need be, we are to stand alone, but we should not dress differently from the world if it is not necessary. God left open the possibility of the world introducing a proper mode of dress, and if that happened then His people were free to adopt it.

"Christians should not take pains to make themselves a gazing-stock by dressing differently from the world. But if, when following out their convictions of duty in respect to dressing modestly and healthfully, they find themselves out of fashion, they should not change their dress in order to be like the world; but they should manifest a noble independence and moral courage to be right, if all the world differ from them. If the world introduce a modest, convenient, and healthful mode of dress, which is in

accordance with the Bible, it will not change our relation to God or to the world to adopt such a style of dress. Christians should follow Christ and make their dress conform to God's word. They should shun extremes. They should humbly pursue a straightforward course, irrespective of applause or of censure, and should cling to the right because of its own merits." *Testimonies, vol. 1, 458-459.*

For a mode of dress to be acceptable as modest, as mentioned above, the Christian would want to measure it by God's principles of modesty and not primarily because the world considers it to be so.

Because of the following statement, some wonder if the length of the skirt for women is really a factor in modesty as long as the limbs are appropriately clad. "Whatever maybe the length of the dress, their limbs should be clothed as thoroughly as are the men's." *Ibid., 461.*

The context of the *full* paragraph though, is clearly discussing the length of the skirt of the less objectionable reform dress in relation to "a still shorter dress" ideal for duties such as outdoor work. Only by the stretch of the imagination could one conclude that God is advocating a skirt as high as the knees, or above, such as in the "American Costume," or even doing away with the skirt altogether.

"The dress should reach somewhat below the top of the boot, but should be short enough to clear the filth of the sidewalk and street without being raised by the hand. A still shorter dress than this would be proper, convenient, and healthful for women when doing their housework, and especially for those who are obliged to perform more or less out-of-door labor.... There is but one woman in a thousand who clothes her limbs as she should. Whatever may be the length of the dress, their limbs should be clothed as thoroughly as are the men's. This may be done by wearing lined pants, gathered into a band and fastened about the ankle, or made *full* and tapering at the bottom; and these should come down long enough to meet the shoe." *Ibid., 460-461.*

Since society presently accepts as modest the wearing of slacks by women, the question arises as to whether or not "feminine style" slacks can be accepted as modest Christian dress at least for certain activities? Ultimately, each of us will need to decide this for ourselves. We will want to do so only after the love for the truth has led us in a thorough study of God's counsel regarding proper dress. During our study, with an enlightened conscience and with much prayer, we need to consider the following questions:

1. How eager will the God who was reluctant for His people to leave off the veil of the face and head for women, be for His present women to leave off the skirt—the veil of the lower extremities—especially since both items of dress have been the primary difference of dress between the sexes in their time period? How sure can we be that the "feminine style slacks" are a part of God's plan for modest dress and not a part of Satan's plan to diminish the difference between the sexes and to encourage the boldness and immodest behavior which is so offensive to God?

2. Can we plead that the freedom of movement of the slacks for women is necessary for such activities as house cleaning, hiking, outdoor work, horse riding, and so on, when women in skirts, have been participating quite adequately in such activities for hundreds of years? Is this not an especially valid question, when in the reference just above, Ellen White has stated that a skirt over pants can "be proper, convenient, and healthful for women when doing their housework, and especially for those who are obliged to perform more or less out-of-door labor"? *Ibid.*

3. How eager should we be to abandon the "less objectionable" reform style of woman's dress which consisted of a skirt well below the knees and the lower limbs covered with female style pants, or their equivalence, when such dress is not associated with any obnoxious groups or movements and is not portrayed by society as immodest? Has our present all-accommodating society demonstrated that a long skirt over well-covered limbs is not "appropriate for this age?" Has society come forth with "sensible and

strong reasons" why wearing a skirt over well-covered limbs is to be abandoned? What legitimate pressure is society placing upon us to leave that for which we have a clear "Thus saith the Lord" to accept that which is questionable? How eagerly should we leave the safety of God's known will to investigate the slippery slopes and gray areas that risk being an abomination to the Lord? Should we walk on the edge of the precipice or at a clearly safe distance from it?

4. If unveiled, "feminine style" slacks are modest for selected activities such as housework and out-of-door work, are they also modest for social activities? for school? for shopping? for religious services? It can be shown that the world and some Adventists consider the answer to be yes to all of the above. Is there a true *need* for such a style for all such activities? or is this merely another example of creeping compromise?

5. In accepting from the world the concept of "feminine slacks," can we be sure that we are not falling for one of Satan's favorite ploys-that through his multitudinous deceptions he gets God's people to embrace less obvious deviations from God's will, while priding themselves in their "loyal-to-God" resistance of His more obvious deceptions?

6. We are told, "God wants us all to have common sense, and He wants us to reason from common sense. Circumstances alter conditions. Circumstances change the relation of things." *Selected Messages, book 3, 217*. How broadly are we to apply to modesty in dress this paragraph and the counsel that our dress is to be "appropriate for this age" (ibid., 242), when those in the Laodicean condition desire to apply such counsels to much of the specific instructions in the Spirit of Prophecy regarding our medical work, our educational institutions, how our ministers labor, and so on?

7. Could it not be that God in His foreknowledge saw that He needed to test the hearts of His people to the end of time with the concepts of modest dress held in common by the short reform dress and the less objectionable reform dress, in contrast to the concepts of the "American Costume"?

8. Could it not be that in the "American Costume" style of dress with its pants and the skirt above the knees and promoted by a woman's liberation movement intent on minimizing the differences between the sexes, an "abomination to the Lord," that God foresaw our present society with its even more active and influential women's liberation movement and its even greater abandonment of distinctive dress between the sexes with the skirt not merely raised above the knees but actually fully removed? Could it not be that Christ's plea in 1881 for His sisters to accept the less objectionable reform dress style with its long skirt and properly covered limbs rather than following the changing fashions of society is still a valid plea to the end of time?

"If all our sisters would adopt a simple, unadorned dress of modest length, the uniformity thus established would be far more pleasing to God, and would exert a more salutary influence on the world, than the diversity presented four years ago. As our sisters would not generally accept the reform dress as it should be worn, another, less objectionable style is now presented. It is free from needless trimmings, free from the looped-up, tied back overskirts. It consists of a plain sack or loose-fitting basque, and skirt, the latter short enough to avoid the mud and filth of the streets. The material should be free from large plaids and figures, and plain in color. The same attention should be given to the clothing of the limbs as with the short dress.

"Will my sisters accept this style of dress and refuse to imitate the fashions that are devised by Satan and continually changing? No one can tell what freak fashion will take next. Worldlings whose only care is, 'What shall we eat, and what shall we wear?' should not be our criterion." *Testimonies, vol. 4, 640*.

As Laodiceans by nature, *we need* ask ourselves, Why would God be more willing for His people to follow the changing fashions of the world after the prophetess is dead than while she was alive? Could it not be that God is still testing His people?

Our dress is an outward manifestation of that which is within.

"Dress is an index of the mind and heart. That which is hung upon the outside is the sign of what is within." *Mind, Character, and Personality, vol. 1, 289.*

However we personally relate to these issues, we must avoid passing judgment on others who are seeking to know and to follow God's will.

"Do not encourage a class who center their religion in dress. Let each one study the plain teachings of the Scriptures as to simplicity and plainness of dress and by faithful obedience to those teachings strive to set a worthy example to the world and to those new in the faith. God does not want any one person to be conscience for another.

"Talk of the love and humility of Jesus, but do not encourage the brethren and sisters to engage in picking flaws in the dress or appearance of one another. Some take delight in this work; and when their minds are turned in this direction, they begin to feel that they must become church tinkers. They climb upon the judgment seat, and as soon as they see one of their brethren and sisters, they look to find something to criticize. This is one of the most effectual means of becoming narrow-minded and of dwarfing spiritual growth. God would have them step down from the judgment seat, for He has never placed them there." *Child Guidance, 429.*

The matter of dress of new converts will need to be faithfully dealt with, for the majority will need to make decided changes.

"One of the points upon which those newly come to the faith will need instruction is the subject of dress. Let the new converts be faithfully dealt with. Are they vain in dress? Do they cherish pride of heart? The idolatry of dress is a moral disease. It must not be taken over into the new life. In most cases, submission to the gospel requirements will demand a decided change in the dress." *Evangelism, 268.*

We do have a duty to share the principles of Christian dress with those about us, but in our reformatory efforts we are to be sure to leave room for Christ and the Holy Spirit to work.

"The soul that accepts Jesus places himself under the care of the Great Physician, and let men be careful how they come between the patient and the Physician who discerns all the needs of the soul. Christ, the physician of the soul, understands its defects and its maladies, and knows how to heal with the purchase of His own blood. What the soul lacks, He can best supply. But men are so officious, they want to do so much, that they overdo the matter, leaving Christ no room to work." *Selected Messages, book 1, 178.*

"The disciples of Christ are not called upon to magnify men, but to magnify God, the source of all wisdom. Let educators give the Holy Spirit room to do its work upon human hearts. The greatest Teacher is represented in our midst by His Holy Spirit." *Fundamentals of Christian Education, 363.*

Modesty is a revelation of the inner self and is manifest in our manner of behavior as well as dress. We are not merely to dress modestly. We are to *be* modest.

"Young ladies connected with our institutions should keep a strict guard over themselves. In word and action, they should be reserved. Never when speaking to a married man should they show the slightest freedom. To my sisters who are connected with our sanitariums, I would say, gird on the armor. When talking to men, be kind and courteous, but never free. Observant eyes are upon you, watching your



conduct, judging by it whether you are indeed children of God. Be modest. Abstain from every appearance of evil." *Counsels on Health*, 591.

We tend to adopt the immodest, demoralizing fashions of the world because Christ is not formed within.

"Having before us the picture of the world's demoralization upon the point of fashion, how dare professed Christians follow in the path of the worldling? Shall we appear to sanction these demoralizing fashions by adopting them? Many do adopt the fashions of the world, but it is because Christ is not formed within them, the hope of glory." *Messages to Young People*, 359.

The outward adorning with jewelry and apparel is contrary to the inward adorning of the God-fearing woman.

"In the third chapter of Isaiah's prophecy mention is made of the prevailing pride of the 'daughters of Zion,' with 'their tinkling ornaments.... the chains, and the bracelets, and the mufflers, the bonnets.... and the headbands, and the tablets, and the earrings, the rings, and nose jewels, the changeable suits of apparel, and the mantles, and the wimples, and the crisping pins, the glasses, and the fine linen, and the hoods, and the veils.' Verses 18-23. How different this picture from that portrayed by the apostle Peter of the God-fearing woman, who, estimating at its real value the 'outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel,' chooses rather to cultivate beauty of soul, 'even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.'" *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, 1138.

In our outward adorning, we are to place ourselves upon the Bible platform.

"Have not our sisters sufficient zeal and moral courage to place themselves without excuse upon the Bible platform? The inspired apostle has given most explicit directions on this point: 'Whose adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.' Here the Lord, through His apostle, speaks expressly against the wearing of gold. Let those who have had experience see to it that they do not lead others astray on this point by their example. That ring encircling your finger may be very plain, but it is useless, and the wearing of it has a wrong influence upon others." *Review and Herald*, July 8, 1880.

An outwardly adorned person is a sign of inward poverty.

"Christians are not to decorate the person with costly array of expensive ornaments. All this display imparts no value to the character. The Lord desires every converted person to put away the idea that dressing as worldlings dress will give value to our influence. The ornamentation of the person with jewels and luxurious things is a species of idolatry. This needless display reveals a love for those things which are supposed to place a value upon the person. It gives evidence to the world of a heart destitute of the inward adornment. Expensive dress and adornments of jewelry give an incorrect representation of the truth that should always be represented as of the highest value. An overdressed, outwardly adorned person bears the sign of inward poverty. A lack of spirituality is revealed." *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 6, 159.

Let us each one, by God's grace, not only dress modestly but also speak and behave modestly at all times. Let our actions, our speech, and our dress always serve to direct others to Christ rather than to draw attention to ourselves.

#### 4: General Counsels on Christian Dress

GOD has called us to adopt the principles of healthful and modest dress that He has established. He calls this final generation to glorify and honor Him in every aspect of their lives. Our outward appearance as well as our inward adorning speaks either in favor of God and righteousness or of Satan and sin. Our choices in dress either please God or cause Satan to exult.

"Satan is constantly devising some new style of dress that shall prove an injury to physical and moral health; and he exults when he sees professed Christians eagerly accepting the fashions that he has invented." *Counsels on Health, 599.*

Our manner of dress either helps to break the spell of Satan in the lives of others or it confirms them in their wrong habits. There should be a marked contrast between the world and the remnant.

"There are weak and vain ones who have no depth of mind or power of principle, who are foolish enough to be influenced and corrupted from the simplicity of the gospel by the devotees of fashion. If they see that those who profess to be reformers are, as far as their circumstances will admit, indulging the appetite and dressing after the customs of the world, the slaves of self-indulgence will become confirmed in their perverse habits. They conclude that they are not so far out of the way after all, and that no great change need be made by them. The people of God should firmly uphold the standard of right and exert an influence to correct the wrong habits of those who have been worshipping at the shrine of fashion, and break the spell which Satan has had over these poor souls. Worldlings should see a marked contrast between their own extravagance and the simplicity of reformers who are followers of Christ." *Testimonies, vol. 4, 571-572.*

For us to have the proper influence we must escape from the snares of Satan and from the chains that bind us to his fashions.

"Will my sisters consider these things as they are, and will they fully realize the weight of their influence upon others? By walking in a forbidden path themselves, they lead others in the same way of disobedience and backsliding. Christian simplicity is sacrificed to outward display. My sisters, how shall we change all this? How shall we recover ourselves from the snare of Satan and break the chains that have bound us in slavery to fashion? How shall we recover our wasted opportunities? how bring our powers into healthful, vigorous action? There is only one way, and that is to make the Bible our rule of life." *Counsels on Health, 597-598.*

Modern society, and unfortunately, many of God's professed people are not shocked by that which God revealed to His messenger was immodest.

"We cannot, if we would, conceal the fact that women have feet and limbs that were made for use. But in regard to the exposure, this is on the other side of the question. We have traveled extensively the past twenty-five years, and have been eyewitnesses to many indecent exposures of the limbs. But the most common exposure is seen upon the streets in light snow, or wet and mud. Both hands are required to elevate the dress, that it may clear the wet and filth. It is a common thing to see the dress raised one-half of a yard, exposing an almost unclad ankle to the sight of gentlemen, but no one seems to blush at this immodest exposure. No one's sensitive modesty seems shocked for the reason that this is customary. It is fashion, and for this reason it is endured. No outcry of immodesty is heard, although it is so in the fullest sense." *The Health Reformer, May 1, 1872.*

A family council on dress is to be held with a determination to be guided by principle.

"Let us be faithful to the duties of the home life. Let your children understand that obedience must reign there. Teach them to distinguish between that which is sensible and that which is foolish in the matter

of dress, and furnish them with clothes that are neat and simple. As a people who are preparing for the soon return of Christ we should give to the world an example of modest dress in contrast with the prevailing fashion of the day. Talk these things over, and plan wisely what you will do, then carry out your plans in your families. Determine to be guided by higher principles than the notions and desires of your children." *Manuscript Releases, vol. 7, 25-26.*

Teaching our children to dress from principle will help to protect them from the world.

"I heard the parents with deep feeling express their regret that they did not encourage their daughters to put on the reform dress from principle. They said if they had done so they were now convinced their children would be with them in the truth. The reform dress would have kept them separate from the world. They would not have had so strong inclination to attend parties of pleasure and mingle with their worldly companions in exciting amusements, which diverted their minds from God and the truth." *Pamphlet 123, Testimony to the Church at Battle Creek, 63-64.*

Mothers should set an example in simplicity and tidiness of dress.

"Let the mother's dress, also, be simple and neat. So may she preserve her dignity and influence. If mothers allow themselves to wear untidy garments at home, they are teaching their children to follow in the same slovenly way. Many mothers think that anything is good enough for home wear, be it ever so soiled and shabby. But they soon lose their influence in the family. The children draw comparisons between their mother's dress and that of others who dress neatly, and their respect for her is weakened. Mothers, make yourselves as attractive as possible, not by elaborate trimming, but by wearing clean, well-fitting garments. Thus you will give to your children constant lessons in neatness and purity." *Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene, 143-144.*

Mothers should dress in a becoming way for their family.

"Sisters, when about their work, should not put on clothing which would make them look like images to frighten the crows from the corn. It is more gratifying to their husbands and children to see them in a becoming, well-fitting attire than it can be to mere visitors or strangers. Some wives and mothers seem to think it is no matter how they look when about their work and when they are seen only by their husbands and children, but they are very particular to dress in taste for the eyes of those who have no special claims upon them. Is not the esteem and love of husband and children more to be prized than that of strangers or common friends? The happiness of husband and children should be more sacred to every wife and mother than that of all others." *The Adventist Home, 252-253.*

The clothing of children should be becoming and not an injury to their self-respect.

"My sister, bind your children to your heart by affection. Give them proper care and attention in all things. Furnish them with becoming garments, that they may not be mortified by their appearance, for this would be injurious to their self-respect." *Testimonies, vol. 4, 142.*

Part of dressing well is the ability to make one's own clothing.

"Let girls be taught that the art of dressing well includes the ability to make their own clothing. This is an ambition that every girl should cherish. It will be a means of usefulness and independence that she cannot afford to miss." *Education, 248-249.*

Faithful mothers will have immortal fame.

"The votaries of fashion will never see or understand the immortal beauty of that Christian mother's work, and will sneer at her old fashioned notions, and her plain, unadorned dress; while the Majesty of

heaven will write the name of that faithful mother in the book of immortal fame." *The Adventist Home*, 238.

We are preparing for the grand review. Children are not to be given their supposed wants.

"Dress your children in simple and neat clothes, but do not let them have anything that they may suppose they want. They may ask for a dress that is cut low in the neck because it is the fashion to wear them so. Who has supposed such a fashion? It is not a right fashion, and we should not allow ourselves to consider it right. We should dress our children in such a way that they will learn to fashion their lives in simple, orderly lines. We are to be preparing for the grand review that is soon to take place, and our children must have a part in this work of preparation." *Peter's Counsel to Parents*, 36-37.

Through conformity to the world, many are in danger of being bound in bundles to be burned.

"Many who suppose they are going to heaven are blindfolded by the world. Their ideas of what constitutes a religious education and religious discipline are vague, resting only on probabilities; there are many who have no intelligent hope, and are running great risk in practicing the very things which Jesus has taught that they should not do, in eating, drinking, and dressing, binding themselves up with the world in a variety of ways. They have yet to learn the serious lessons so essential to growth in spirituality, to come out from the world and be separate. The heart is divided, the carnal mind craves conformity, similarity to the world in so many ways that the mark of distinction from the world is scarcely distinguishable." *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, 311.

Down through history only a minority of the professed followers of Christ have actually followed His directions in how to live. God, as always, is looking for a few good women (and men).

"Human reasoning has ever sought to evade or set aside the simple, direct instructions of the Word of God. In every age a majority of the professed followers of Christ have disregarded those precepts which enjoin self-denial and humility, which require modesty and simplicity of conversation, deportment, and apparel. The result has ever been the same--departure from the teachings of the gospel leads to the adoption of the fashions, customs, and principles of the world. Vital godliness gives place to a dead formalism. The presence and power of God, withdrawn from those world-loving circles, are found with a class of humble worshipers, who are willing to obey the teachings of the Sacred Word." *Child Guidance*, 430.

Our dress is to be in harmony with that which God appreciates.

"The words of Scripture in regard to dress should be carefully considered. We need to understand that which the Lord of heaven appreciates in even the dressing of the body. All who are in earnest in seeking for the grace of Christ will heed the precious words of instruction inspired by God. Even the style of the apparel will express the truth of the *gospel*." *Evangelism*, 269.

In order to have a saving influence on the world we must live out God's principles of dress.

"Such will have no excuse. Many, I saw, dressed like the world to have influence; but here they make a sad mistake. If they would have a true and saving influence, let them live out their profession, show their faith by their righteous works, and make the distinction great between the Christian and the world. I saw that the words, the dress, and actions, should tell for God. Then a holy influence will be shed upon all, and all will take knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus; and unbelievers will see that the truth we profess has a holy influence, and that faith in Christ's coming affects the character of the man or woman. If any wish to have their influence tell in favor of truth, let them live it out, and imitate the humble Pattern." *Messages to Young People*, 128.

During the time of the three angels' messages the dress of God's people is to glorify Him and to be a rebuke to the world.

"The children of Israel, after they were brought out of Egypt, were commanded to have a simple ribbon of blue in the border of their garments, to distinguish them from the nations around them, and to signify that they were God's peculiar people. The people of God are not now required to have a special mark placed upon their garments. But in the New Testament we are often referred to ancient Israel for examples. If God gave such definite directions to His ancient people in regard to their dress, will not the dress of His people in this age come under His notice? Should there not be in their dress a distinction from that of the world? Should not the people of God, who are His peculiar treasure, seek even in their dress to glorify God? And should they not be examples in point of dress, and by their simple style rebuke the pride, vanity, and extravagance of worldly, pleasure-loving professors? God requires this of His people. Pride is rebuked in His Word." *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 1, 1114.*

Our Sabbath dress is to give honor to God.

"Especially have I been shown that those who profess present truth should have a special care to appear before God upon the Sabbath in a manner which would show that we respect the Creator who has sanctified and placed special honors upon that day. All who have any regard for the Sabbath should

be cleanly in person, neat and orderly in dress; for they are to appear before the jealous God, who is offended at uncleanness and disorder, and who marks every token of disrespect." *Testimonies, vol. 1, 275.*

We are to have special clothing for church service.

"Many need instruction as to how they should appear in the assembly for worship on the Sabbath. They are not to enter the presence of God in the common clothing worn during the week. All should have a special Sabbath suit, to be worn when attending service in God's house. While we should not conform to worldly fashions, we are not to be indifferent in regard to our outward appearance. We are to be neat and trim, though without adornment. The children of God should be pure within and without." *Testimonies, vol. 6, 355.*

Our clothing is to be plain, neat, and of durable material.

"We do not discourage taste and neatness in dress. Correct taste in dress is not to be despised or condemned. While needless ruffles, trimmings, and ornaments should be left off, we encourage our sisters to obtain good, durable material. Nothing is gained in trying to save means by purchasing cheap fabrics. Let the clothing be plain and neat, without extravagance or display." *Review and Herald, March 20, 1858.*

Large and fiery-colored figures should be avoided.

"Taste should be manifested as to colors.... Complexion ... may be taken into the account. Modest colors should be sought for. When figured colors are used, those that are large and fiery, showing vanity and shallow pride in those who choose them, should be avoided." *Ibid., April 14, 1868.*

We are not to differ from the world's dress for any reason other than to obey God.

"We do not wear the style of dress here represented to be odd, that we may attract notice. We do not differ from the common style of woman's dress for any such object. We choose to agree with others in theory and in practice, if we can do so, and at the same time be in harmony with the law of God, and with the laws of our being. We believe it wrong to differ from others, unless it be necessary to differ in order to be right." *Ibid.*

While we are not to be preoccupied with the dress question, we are to live in harmony with God's dress principles of health and modesty. The following counsel was written in 1908.

"I beg of our people to walk carefully and circumspectly before God. Follow the customs in dress so far as they conform to health principles. Let our sisters dress plainly, as many do, having the dress of good, durable material, appropriate for this age, and let not the dress question fill the mind. Our sisters should dress with simplicity. They should clothe themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety. Give to the world a living illustration of the inward adorning of the grace of God." *Child Guidance*, 414.

We are our brother's (and sister's) keeper in the sense that we are to share (in love) with them what God has said regarding Christian dress. We are not to be the conscience for another. Dress reform is not to be one of our principal subjects. We are to share God's will and leave to each the privilege of developing Christian character as they surrender their wills and ways to the wooing of the Holy Spirit.

"None need fear that I shall make dress reform one of my principal subjects as we travel from place to place. Those who have heard me upon this matter will have to act upon the light that has already been given. I have done my duty; I have borne my testimony, and those who have heard me and read that which I have written must now bear the responsibility of receiving or rejecting the light given. If they choose to venture to be forgetful hearers, and not doers of the work, they run their own risk and will be accountable to God for the course they pursue. I am clear. I shall urge none and condemn none. This is not the work assigned me. God knows His humble, willing, obedient children and will reward them according to their faithful performance of His will. To many the dress reform is too simple and humbling to be adopted. They cannot lift the cross. God works by simple means to separate and distinguish His children from the world; but some have so departed from the simplicity of the work and ways of God that they are above the work, not in it." *Testimonies*, vol. 1, 523-524.

When we are converted, the problem of improper dress will drop away.

"There is no need to make the dress question the main point of your religion. There is something richer to talk of. Talk of Christ; and when the heart is converted, everything that is out of harmony with the Word of God will drop off." *Child Guidance*, 428-429.

Christian dress is summarized by the following:

"Our clothing, while modest and simple, should be of good quality, of becoming colors, and suited for service. It should be chosen for durability rather than display. It should provide warmth and proper protection. The wise woman described in the Proverbs 'is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with double garments.' Proverbs 31:21, margin." *Ibid.*, 420.

In 1897, the servant of the Lord admonished His people to take hold of reform in dress. See *Spalding and Magan Collection*, 90-92. There was not to be one precise style as God had originally revealed in 1863 and in 1867 regarding the original short reform dress. See *Selected Messages*, book 2, 465-479; *Testimonies*, vol. 1, 420-422; 456-466. But in 1897, Christian dress was to be as simple as the less objectionable dress shown to and advocated by Ellen White in 1880-1881. See *Testimonies*, vol. 4, 628-648. She acknowledged that designing clothing that is healthful as well as modest and simple will take effort and talent. The servant of the Lord also acknowledged that such a labor will encounter at least as strong a resistance today as in the early days of our church. In spite of any and all objections God has instructed us that the bringing of our clothing into harmony with His principles of health and modesty is an essential reform.

"The dress of our people should be made most simple. The skirt and sack I have mentioned may be used-not that just that pattern and nothing else should be established, but a simple style as was rep-

resented in that dress. Some have supposed that the very pattern given was the pattern that all should adopt. This is not so. But something as simple as this would be the best we could adopt under the circumstances. No one precise style has been given me as the exact rule to guide in their dress. But this I know, that the very same objections, only much stronger, exist today as when the short dress was discarded. The Lord has not indicated that it is the duty of our sisters to go back to the reform dress. Simple dresses should be worn. Try your talents, my sister, in this essential reform." *Spalding and Magan Collection, 91.*

Our burden is to be plainness of dress.

"We are nearing the close of this world's history. A plain, direct testimony is now needed, as given in the Word of God, in regard to the plainness of dress. This should be our burden." *Selected Messages, book 3, 253.*

Let each one of us consider well the counsels on Christian dress given to us from the Lord. Let us emphasize daily conversion—full surrender to all of God's will—and thus have the spiritual discernment to truly know His will in these matters. May our desire be to indeed honor our Creator by dressing healthfully in all ways—physically, mentally, and morally. We have been blessed now for some years by a society that is tolerant of almost any dress style. To adopt today dress styles that are not only healthful but also modest will hardly raise an eyebrow. It is as though God is making it as easy as possible and leaving us without excuse to not honor Him in every facet of our lives. Let us be wary of following the world in its definitions of what is healthful, modest, and Christ-like. Let us demonstrate our desire to not misrepresent Christ in any way so that we might be among that group in whom there is found no guile.

"And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God." Revelation 14:5.