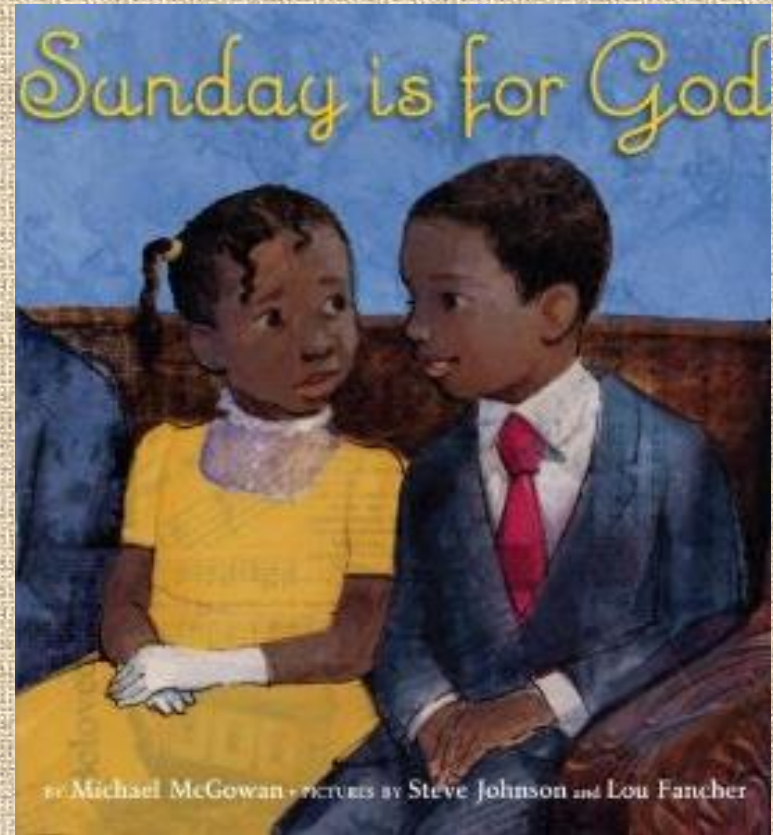




Appropriate
for this age

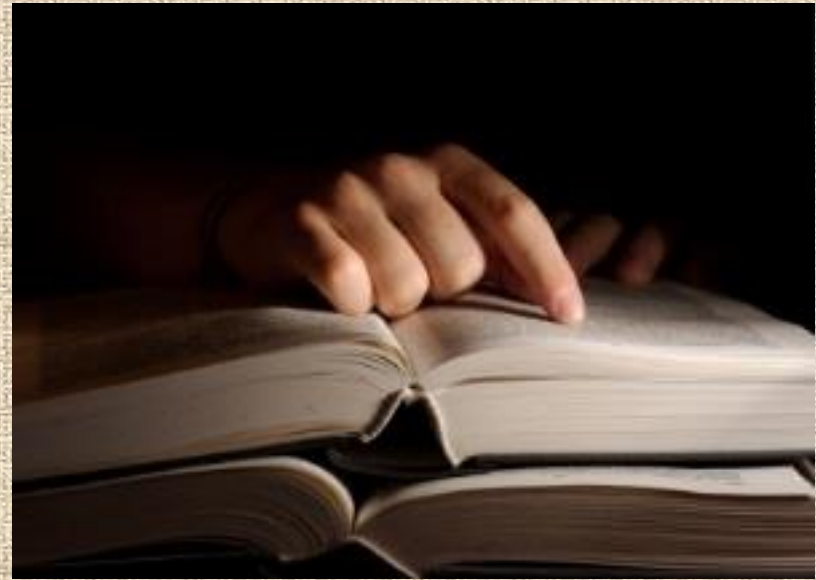
There are some Bible verses and quotations that people love to take out of context because they support their cherished beliefs. For instance, our Sunday keeping friends love to quote 1 Corinthians 16:2 when discussing Sunday worship. They will ignore the abundance of evidence to the contrary and focus on this text as “proof” of their belief and practice. There are other such examples as well.





Another text is 2 Corinthians 5:8: “to be **absent from** the body, and to be present with the Lord.” Pastors from other denominations love to quote this verse at funerals, assuring the loved ones that the departed is “present with the Lord.” We wonder how they can ignore all the verses that clearly teach that the dead are not conscious.

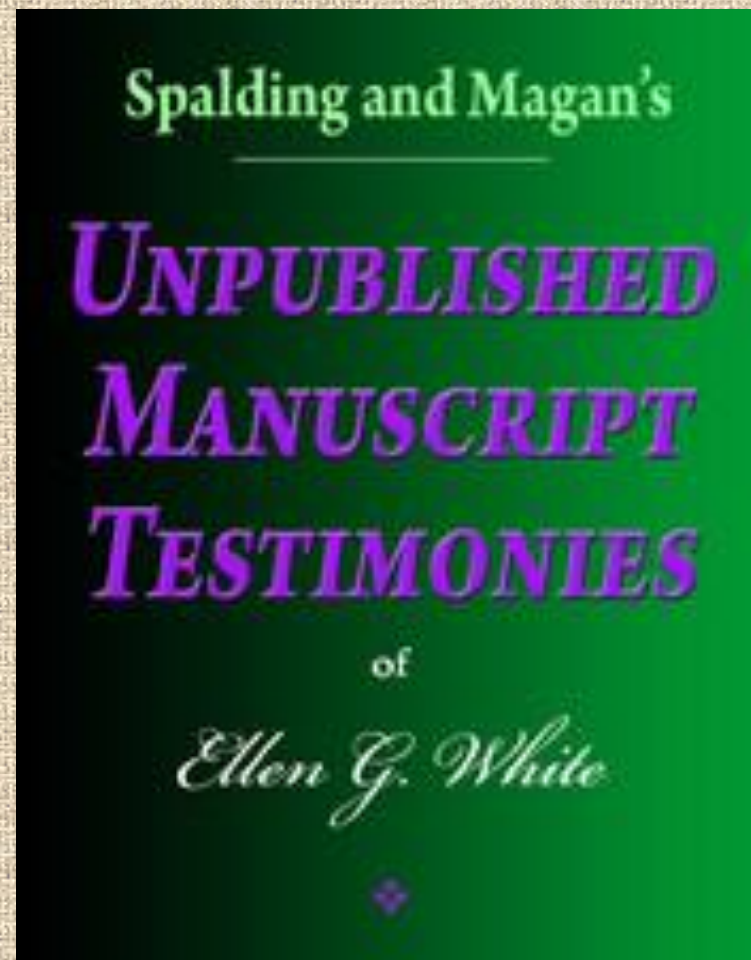
Could it be that many have done the same thing with the Spirit of Prophecy? A sentence here and there is lifted out of context which substantiates an erroneous belief and practice. Thus, they are able to “prove” their position.



One of the statements that is often twisted reads like this:

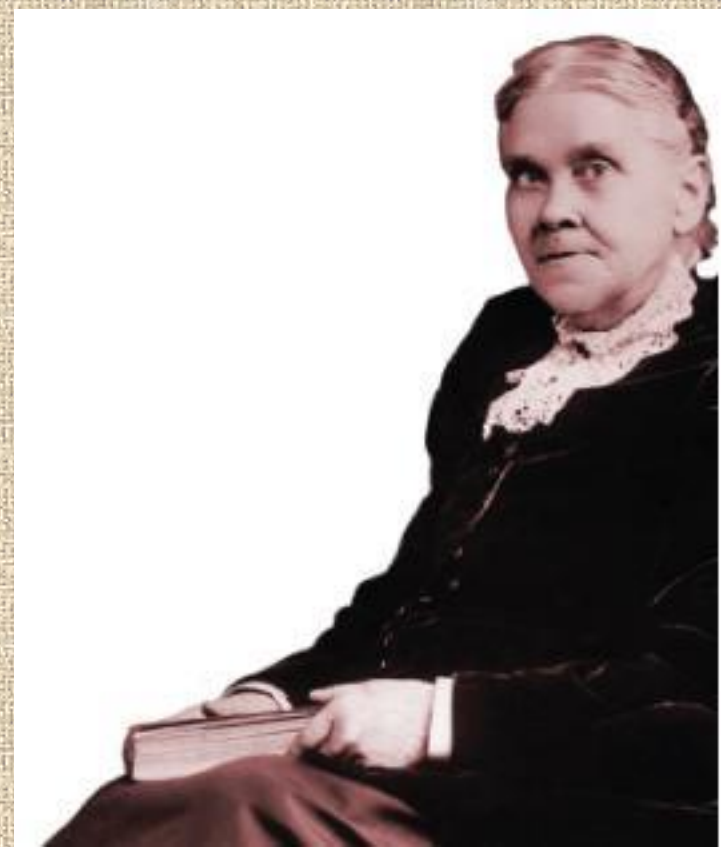
“Follow the customs in dress so far as they conform to health principles. Let our sisters dress plainly, as many do, having the dress of good, durable material, ***appropriate for this age***, and let not the dress question fill the mind.”

(Found 9 times in Ev 273, LDE 88, CG 414, ML 145, 3SM 242, 254, SHM 443, 5MR 404, SpM 91., Letter 1897)



It appears that the original statement was written by Ellen White in 1897 in a letter to J. H. Haughey.

It is very important for us to understand the meaning of this statement, because two vastly differing views can arise by a different interpretation. We cannot afford to take this out of context and twist it to fit our preference.



By many, this phrase “appropriate for this age” has been interpreted to mean: wear whatever is approved and accepted by society at the current time, as long as it seems “appropriate.” To them, “this age” means the age we are in right now.

Thus, Ellen White seems to be telling us that it is important to fit in with what the rest of society is currently doing, so we can throw away the “old fashioned” counsel she had given previously.



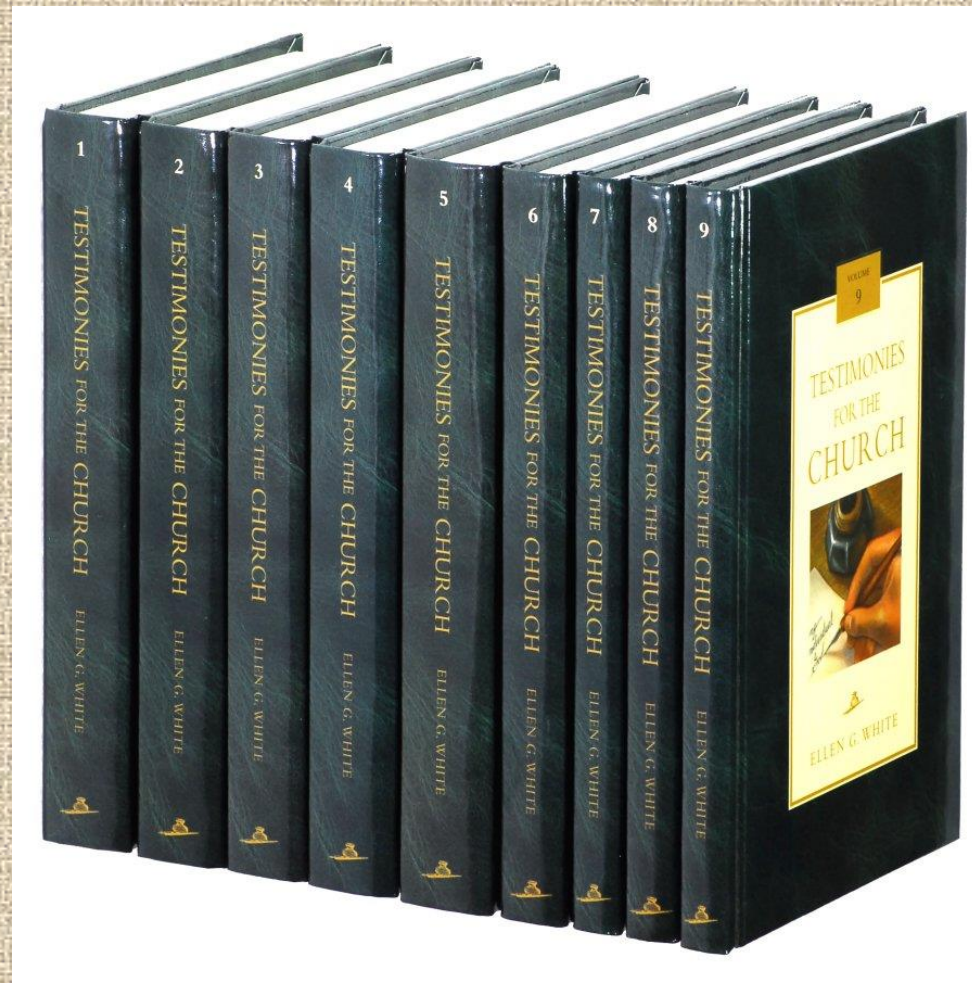
The final conclusion for many Seventh-day Adventist women is: “Just fit in with the crowd, and wear whatever you want because God doesn’t really care what you wear anyway!”

Thus, it is left with each person to decide what is modest and appropriate, and as fashions change, so should we, they say, to keep up with the current styles.



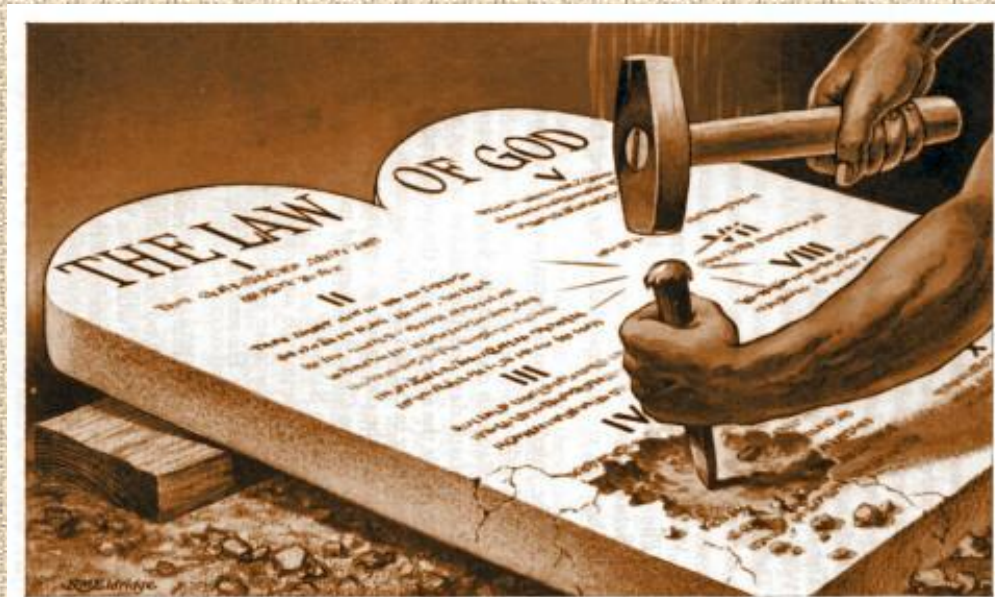
If this is really what Ellen White is saying, we have a serious problem. During the 50 years prior to that statement, she wrote extensively on dress, and some of her counsel is very specific and detailed.

Did she, with just a few words, erase all the prior counsel on dress which God had given to His people through her prophetic ministry?



Or could the problem actually be that many have seriously misunderstood this and a few other statements?

Remember our Sunday-keeping friends, how they use just a text or two to erase all that God said previously regarding the Sabbath. What a tragedy it would be if we fell into the same trap, and miss an important truth God has entrusted to us as a people!



The letter in which this phase and several others which are often misquoted by those who oppose dress reform really should be read in its entire context. It can be found in the Spaulding Magan collection, pages 90-92. A thoughtful reading of this entire letter would clear up many misconceptions. Portions of this letter have been placed in several compilations, and great misunderstanding has been the result.



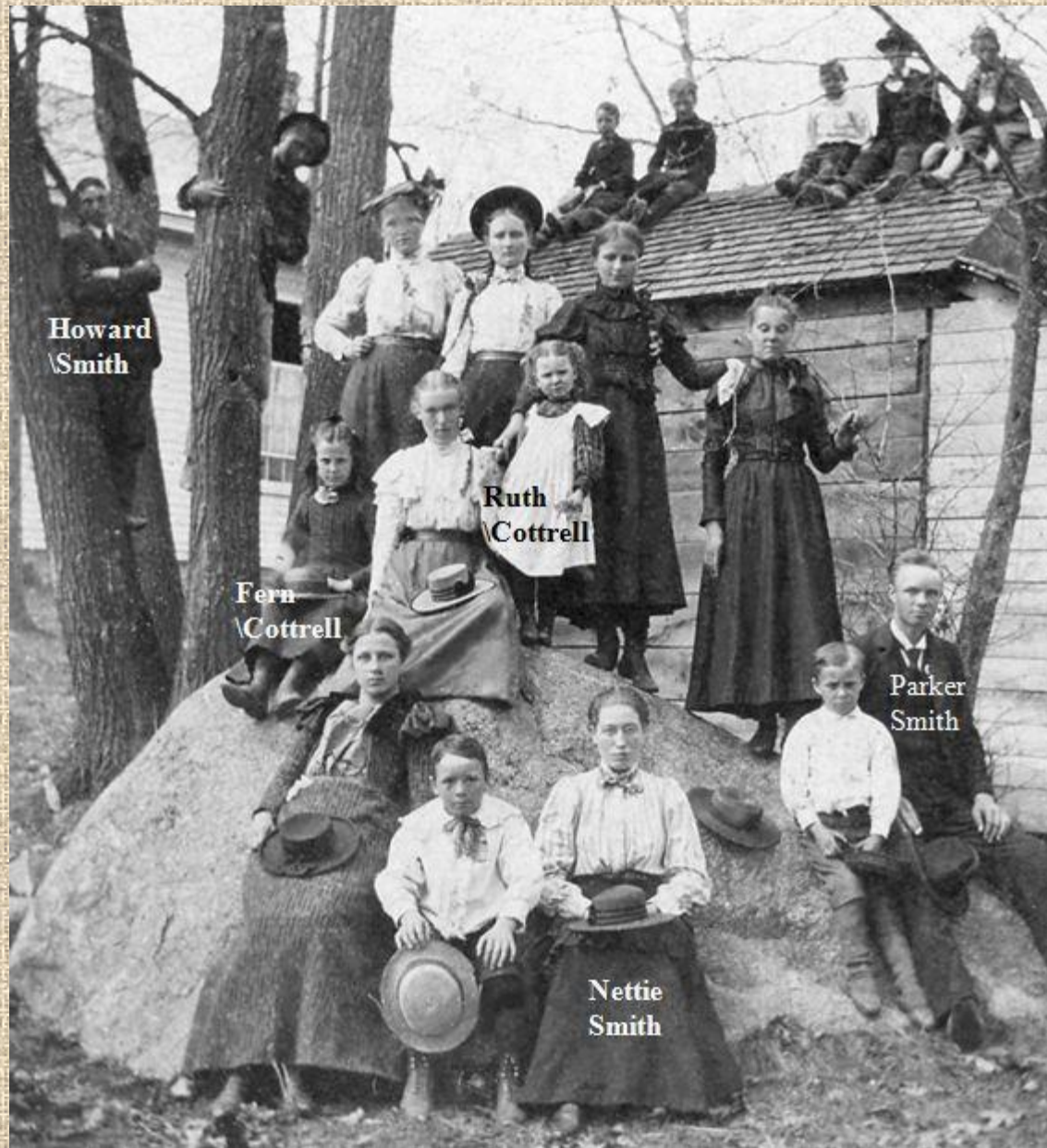
In order to be diligent students of inspiration, we need to take a closer look at the setting in which she wrote this statement. The big question is, when Ellen White wrote “appropriate for this age” did she understand “this age” to be the time around 1897, when she wrote it, or did she mean whenever you happen to be living?





“This age” of 1897 was quite possibly the only time in recent history in which society, as a whole, came the closest to following God’s ideal in women’s fashions. The majority of women were in harmony with many aspects of God’s standard. The styles of the times were generally healthful, modest, feminine, neat, and tidy.

Therefore, God's people found the current fashion of "this age," 1897, appropriate in many respects. We will take a look at all the areas in which the majority of the women of that era followed God's principles of dress.



SDA Church members in Wisconsin, 1897

Not all, but **the majority of women** in 1897:

- Always wore a **long full skirt**, at approximately ankle length.
- Always wore loose-fitting **long sleeves**, keeping the arms covered to the wrists, or at least to the elbows.
- Always wore a **covering on their lower limbs**, keeping their ankles and legs covered.
- Always wore their **necklines** close to their collar bone.
- **Never wore** sheer material or **seductive clothing**.
- Always wore durable [substantial] material that did not seductively reveal the form, such as stretchy material does.
- Always wore **low-heeled shoes**.
- Did not wear make-up or paint their nails or cut their hair very short.

The basic type of dress in 1897 was according to God's standard, all the way from Bible times: Full, ankle length skirt, modest fit, covered limbs, high neckline, etc.



Many prideful and unhealthful elements, such as hoop skirts, bustles, dragging, heavy skirts, and corsets, which Ellen White had spoken strongly against in prior years, were no longer the prevailing fashion in 1897. So, she encouraged the sisters to dress according to the fashions of “this age” in so far as they were in harmony with godly principles, which encompassed all the principles she had carefully explained previously.



But did the majority of the ladies in society in 1897 please God by their dress? NO!

Because the majority of women wore unnecessary trimmings, and decorations which were contrary to God's standard of simplicity.

Therefore, there was a wide contrast between the appearance of the women of the world and a godly Seventh-day Adventist woman in those days.



Look at these outlandish hats! While some of the dresses may have been acceptable, these hats were vain and prideful.



“... superfluous clothing, and needless ornaments expressly forbidden in the word of God. . . We see ladies professing godliness wear elegant gold chains, necklaces, rings, and other jewelry, with a profusion of feathers and ribbons and expensive trimmings.” {RH, November 21, 1878



Notice the elaborate trimming on these dresses. God had admonished His people through Ellen White to dress with simplicity, not with superfluous lace, embroidery and decorations.



“It is evident that fashionable ladies are losing the consciousness that true beauty of dress consists in its simplicity, rather than in ruffles, flounces, puffs, tucks, and elaborate embroidery.” {HR, March 1, 1874 par. 1}



While a few women in society still did wear corsets and dragging skirts, and others wore low cut tops, short sleeves, and high heels, it was more common and perfectly stylish in 1987 to NOT wear these things.

The MAJORITY in society were in harmony with God's principles regarding the basic silhouette of the dress.



But, the majority were NOT in harmony with God's moral standard of dress. They were way too extravagant and prideful in their dress.

This is why Ellen White addressed the issue of extravagance in dress in such a strong way.



Many women in worldly society in 1897 wore jewelry along with their extravagant trimmings, decorations, fancy hats, impractical shoes, elaborate hairstyles, and various other ways of adorning themselves. The majority of women looked worldly. A conscientious, godly woman stood in contrast to a worldly woman.





Ellen White in the SDA
Reform Dress 1867 - 1872

Now let's go back to the letter we started with at the beginning of this presentation, which was written in 1897. There were several points that were addressed, but the main one was whether the SDA reform dress should be promoted or not.



It begins by addressing the **“subject of again resuming the reform dress.”** This was the dress advocated by Ellen White from 1867, but was laid aside in 1881 because of the refusal of the sisters to uniformly adopt this style. “The burden of advocating the reform dress was removed because that which was given as a blessing was turned into a curse.”

The purpose of the letter under discussion is to clarify God's desire for His daughters regarding the issue of the Seventh-day Adventist reform dress. This dress had been scorned and rejected by the majority of Seventh-day Adventist sisters, even though God had given clear counsel that this dress would have been a tremendous blessing, setting them apart in a similar way the ribbon of blue set apart the children of Israel.

The SDA reform dress, a style of a mid-calf length dress with pants underneath became very objectionable to the women in the church. Thus, a "less objectionable" style was introduced as acceptable for the sisters.



Understanding this setting helps us to understand the inspired counsel in the Spirit of Prophecy regarding dress. In 1897, the “less objectionable” dress was a little longer than the reform dress and did not include the visible pants that were part of the reform dress.



Antique dress

That is why Ellen White wrote: “There is no need now for any special alteration in our dress. **The plain, simple style of dress now worn**, made in the most healthful way, demands no hoops and no long trails, and is presentable anywhere.”
{SpM 90.4}



She then clarified a statement she had made earlier describing an acceptable style of dress (4T 640). Apparently some thought she was advocating a precise pattern, since the SDA reform dress had been a specific configuration. She explained that now, there was no exact style, but many variations of this “less objectionable” dress could be acceptable. **“No one precise style has been given me as the exact rule to guide in their dress.”** {SpM 91.2}

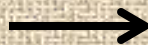


Again, she explained this style that was approved by God. “But the more sensible style of dress now being adopted does not embrace the objectionable features. The fashionable part [the superfluous lace, ribbons, decorations, etc.] may be discarded, and should be by all who will read the Word of God.”
{SpM 91.1}



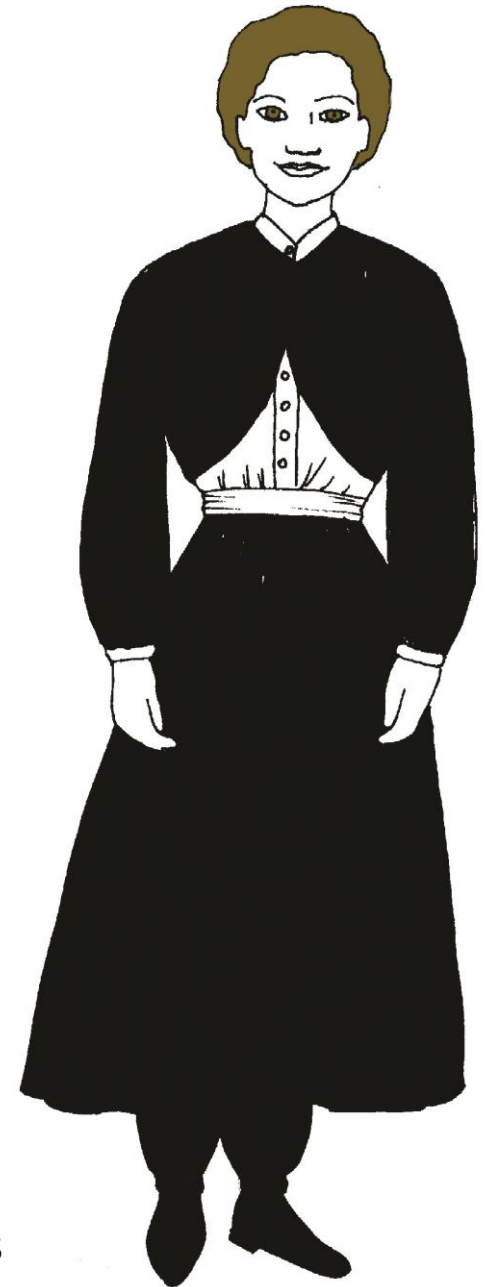
The whole point of this letter under discussion is to make it clear that God's people were NOT to go back to wearing the SDA reform dress. God had taken it away from them. They were not to try to insist that people wear it. The time for promoting the SDA reform dress was OVER.

SDA reform dress was 8-10 inches from floor with pants underneath.



Ellen White made it crystal clear that those who were trying to make an issue of pushing the specific reform dress pattern were not being led by God. Their zeal was misguided. This was not the test for that time—1897, to push the defunct SDA reform dress on the sisters. This is the whole point of this letter!

SDA Reform Dress



Now we'll consider what Ellen White meant when she wrote about the sisters wearing a dress that was "appropriate for this age." {SpM 91.3}

The age was around 1897, when modest and healthful dresses were popular.



“Let our sisters dress plainly, as many do, having the dress of good, durable material, **appropriate for this age**, (1897) 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.”
{SpM 91.3}



What is the “dress question” that should not fill the mind? That term “dress question” was generally used to refer to the “reform dress movement” in secular society, which had introduced bloomers in the 1850’s, the American Costume in the 1960’s and more recently the bicycle costume in the 1890’s.

Articles in secular literature referred to this topic as the “dress question” so it was a familiar term at that time.



For example, here is an article from the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*: "[The Dress Question](#)" (June 14, 1866) which talks about the issues surrounding the bloomer costume and The American Costume.

Amelia Bloomer wrote: "Having had part in the discussion of the **dress question**, it seemed proper that I should practice as I preached."

<http://www.cbpl.lib.ia.us/history/documents/Bloomer,%20Amelia/The%20reform%20dress.pdf>

So we see this phrase "the dress question" was specifically related to the wearing of the short dress with pants underneath, not dress in general.

The Dress Question.

Mrs. Dr. Mary Walker, on whom has fallen the mantle of Mrs. Bloomer, has had another opportunity for publicly airing her theories on dress, before the Police Commissioners. Mrs. Dr. Walker objects to voluminous skirts. As far down as the waist, she coincides with the taste of her sisters in form of dress, but instead of a baloon of silk or muslin, expanding on either side and trailing on the ground, Mrs. Walker prefers a plain skirt falling just below the knee, and between the hem of that garment and the tops of her gaiters, she displays a pair of loose fitting but neat trousers. The vulgar mind, unaccustomed to this sort of thing makes it inconvenient for Mrs. Dr. Walker to appear in public in New York. Whenever she is seen in the streets a miscellaneous and excitable crowd collects and follows her, causing annoyance, if not to the lady to the travelling public, and danger to the public peace. It is due to Mrs. Dr. Walker to say that she bears this affliction with the heroism of a martyr; perhaps she rather likes the attention she receives. The crowd is an obvious nuisance, and a policeman finding it impossible to disperse or arrest the mob the other day, adopted the alternative of removing the cause by taking Mrs. Walker to the station house. The lady then brought the case before the Police Commissioners by making a complaint against the official who arrested her. Before the Commissioners

This “dress question”—the idea of wearing the short dress with pants underneath—was not to fill the mind. In other words, they were to put thoughts of short dresses aside, and be contented wearing the more acceptable style now popular by society.

Ellen White certainly was NOT saying that we shouldn't give careful and prayerful thought to what we wear, and the influence of our clothing.



In fact, she teaches just the opposite, that we are to know for a certainty that God approves of our dress through sincere prayer, diligent study and the Holy Spirit's guidance:

"When they really desire an article of **dress**, or some ornament or convenience, do they lay the matter before the Lord in **prayer** to know if his Spirit would sanction this...?" {RH, December 6, 1881}

"Christians should not neglect to **search the Scriptures** on these points. They need to understand that which the Lord of heaven appreciates in even the **dress** of the body." {6MR 161.1}

"Those who are truly seeking to follow Christ will have **conscientious scruples** in regard to the **dress they wear;**" MYP 345, 346

This sentence from the 1987 letter, “. . . let not the dress question fill the mind” has been rephrased in several compilations and in the official SDA Church Manual since 1951, to read this: “The people of God should always be found among the conservatives in dress, and will not let ‘the dress question fill the mind.’—Ev 273.”

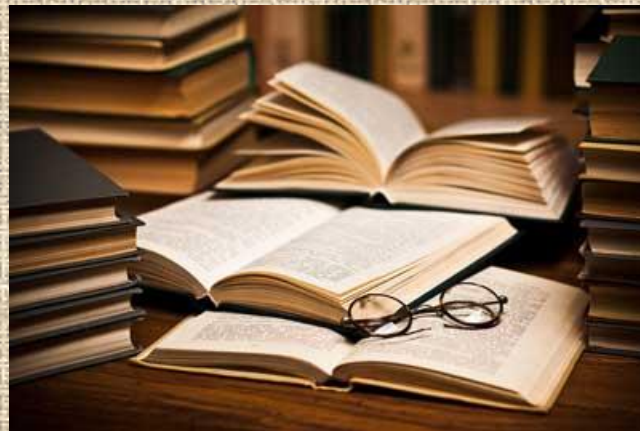
Taken out of its context, with no understanding of what the “dress question” referred to, it seems like she was advising the sisters that it was not necessary to give careful and prayerful consideration to what they wear.

This phrase is often thrown at conscientious sisters, making it seem that they are violating the inspired counsel by bringing up the topic of godly dress.



This is a classic case of misuse of the inspired writings. Instead of studying the entire context, this phrase is used to give her counsel the opposite meaning of what she intended. Notice this counsel:

“You should study the Testimonies, not to pick out certain sentences to use as you see fit, to strengthen your assertions, while you disregard the plainest statements given to correct your course of action.” {LS 326.1}



This is an example of how the Spirit of Prophecy has been rendered powerless to convict the hearts of God's people.

“The enemy has made his masterly efforts to unsettle the faith of our own people in the testimonies.” {9MR 198.3}



Back to the letter under discussion:
Next she made a comment about the “strange doings” related to the bicycle craze. Apparently someone was trying to promote the newly popular “bicycle costume” as the new reform dress for Seventh-day Adventists. She strongly declared that this voice should be quenched.

This bicycle costume, which was becoming all the rage was called the bloomer costume, but it didn't have a skirt, —just billowing pants.



She was quite concerned about these people who were promoting either the extinct SDA reform dress or the new bicycle reform outfit. She plainly states that they are NOT to be pushing the short dress and pants, and that would certainly include pants without a short dress as well. She begged them to wear the current style of dress, called the “less objectionable style,” the “more sensible style” or the “plain, simple style.”



Don't wear this style!

This is where she made the statement: “I beg of our people to walk carefully and circumspectly [cautiously, vigilantly] before God. Follow the custom of dress in health reform, but do not again introduce the short dress and pants unless you have the Word of the Lord for it. {SpM 92.2}

The current popular style, the 1987 custom of dress, was in harmony with health reform. There was no reason to go back to the old SDA reform dress, which was developed because the former popular style of hoops, corsets and dragging skirts was not healthful.



*Don't wear
this style!*

This statement which includes the phrase “Follow the custom of dress” has been latched on to by those who want to follow the customs of the world. But what does it really mean?

“Follow the custom of dress in health reform, but do not again introduce the short dress and pants unless you have the word of the Lord for it.”--Letter 19, 1897. (To J. H. Haughey, July 4, 1897.) {5MR 405.3}

Another similar quote written in the same month states:

“Follow the customs in dress as far as they conform to health principles.” MS 167, July 1897

Is Ellen White here instructing us to follow the customs of current fashion, as long as they are healthful?

If that was the case, there are many contradictory statements that would bring great confusion, such as:

“I am instructed to urge upon our people that we, as the people of God, are ***not to follow the customs*** and fashions of the world.” {LLM 459.1}

“Christians should ***not follow the customs*** and practices of the world.” {CH 49.3}

“You are ***not to follow the customs of the world.***” {5T 541.5}

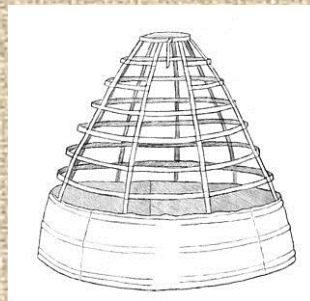
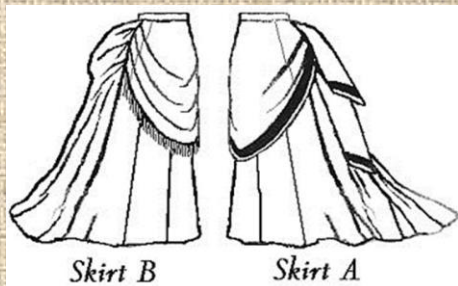
So, what is the instruction for God's people in these statements?

Taken in the context of 1897, we need to consider the health customs which were popular through organizations such as the Rational Dress Reform Movement. They protested against corsets, high-heeled shoes, heavily-weighted skirts, dragging skirts, and anything that had a constricting, deforming or unhealthy effect on the body.

These were the customs of healthful dress in her day that Ellen White was urging God's people to follow. And we should follow these healthful customs today as well!

We should make sure that we wear nothing tight, even in our underwear that would restrict the blood flow or hinder the respiration. Our clothing should be loose and comfortable, so that no red marks are ever left by tight clothing.

Ellen White taught that all clothing should be suspended from the shoulders. The principle behind this teaching is to avoid any weight or pressure on the sensitive organs of the body. When she wrote that counsel, the weight of the undergarments and extra skirts was up to 14 pounds! No wonder she gave that counsel.



Immodest clothing sometimes requires tight undergarments. When we cover ourselves according to God's standards, we can wear our undergarments loose enough to be always comfortable and healthful.

Today, it is possible to wear skirts and undergarments that are loose enough not to cause any constriction. That should be our goal.



Sister White clearly taught that we are not to follow the customs of the world that conflict with God's principles or modesty or health.

Another principle she clearly taught was that women were not to wear clothing resembling men's attire. Please see the presentation "A Plain Distinction" for more clarification on this topic.



She certainly advised against accepting new worldly reforms, which would have included the bicycle custom.

“Let there be no tests manufactured now to absorb time and minds, to bring in new reforms. We have now to face tremendous issues, and all the time and power of our thought are to be called to the living issues before us. I know that the voice raised to create something new in the matter of dress now should be quenched.

{SpM 92.1}



The bicycle bloomers

This “new reform” style of dress was introduced just before the time when she wrote this letter. How strongly she opposed this style! Yet, this bicycle costume is the forerunner of pants on women today.

Unfortunately, the church members did accept this new style of dress reform which was clearly condemned by Sister White.

“But there must be no branching out now into singular forms of dress. There have been plenty of strange doings in Battle Creek with the bicycle craze, which has greatly displeased the Lord and greatly dishonored the cause of present truth.” {5MR 405.1}



She ends the letter by addressing the real issue: “To get up a different style of dress will not change the heart. **The difficulty is that the church needs converting daily.**”

Truly, that is our greatest problem in our church – a lack of conversion among our members. True conversion would bring us all into submission to God and to His timeless principles.



There is a manuscript #167 which contains much of the same content as the letter to which we have been referring in this presentation. It was written at the same time.

In this manuscript, Ellen White writes with concern regarding the church members who refuse to follow God's counsel on dress:

“While we are burdened and distressed, but waiting in patient submission, our invisible Helper will be doing the work we do not see, and will bring to pass in His providence events which will either work reformations, or will separate these half-hearted, world-loving members from the believers.” MS 167, July 1897

She urges us not to push these worldly members into total apostasy by making man-made tests.

The matter is in God's hands. Those who are ignorantly guilty must learn their condition, in God's timing.

We are promised that God will bring to pass events that will bring the issue of dress home to each sister in the church.

Each one will decide – will she reform, or will she be separated from God's people?

This will be the final shaking, which is just before us.

As we consider the message in the entire letter, we see clearly that she was being used of God to guide the church regarding His will in their dress. She settled the issue that:

- The SDA reform dress was no longer to be promoted.
- “The plain, simple style of dress now worn” was what the sisters should be wearing.
- It was healthful, modest, simple and “presentable anywhere.”
- No new reforms promoting a specific pattern of dress were to be introduced, and made a test.
- Those who refused to adopt this plain, unadorned, simple, neat proper dress, and wore instead the extravagant trimmings, were guilty of idolatry.

Since she had been called to be the prophetess of the Lord, He had used her to guide His people regarding their dress. She declared hoops to be an abomination to God, because of their unhealthfulness and the frequent immodest exposure when they were lifted. She declared the American costume to be an abomination to God because of its closeness to men's attire, and the immodest short skirt. She called the extravagant, prideful trimmings idolatry, a hellish banner. She condemned corsets, bustles, artificial enhancements, and many other prideful fashions of the time.

Finally, in the 1890's a dress had become fashionable that could be adopted by God's people! Minus the excess trimmings, this dress complied with God's standard.

How is it what we can conclude that she, from 1897 on, was giving permission for God's people to just wear whatever fashion society happened to accept, without regard to God's standard of modesty, simplicity, gender distinctiveness and healthfulness?

Is it possible that we have been seriously deceived?

“Some Sabbath-keepers so earnestly desire to have friendship with the world, that they mangle their feelings and make wretched work of following Christ. They desire the approval of God and the friendship of the world too. Such, I saw, would certainly lose heaven.

...

“ . . . He will accept of nothing but **entire consecration**. A **dreadful deception** is upon many minds, even of Sabbath-keepers. They have neglected to cherish and follow the light God has given them, and have been left **completely deceived**. {RH, November 26, 1861 par. 7}

“Souls will come up to the day of God's visitation under a **perfect deception**. They had marked out a course for themselves. They did not let the Bible place the bounds for them. They did not heed the exhortation, ‘Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye **separate**, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean; and I will receive you.’ {RH, November 26, 1861 par. 8}

“The condition of our being received of God is, to **separate ourselves from the world**. . . . What **stronger delusion** can deceive the human mind than that which makes us believe we are on the right foundation, and God accepts our works, when we are **not conforming to his will**, and when we mistake the form of godliness for the spirit and power thereof, supposing we need nothing when we need all things.” {RH, November 26, 1861 par. 10}

This powerful delusion which tells us that we are right in our conformity to worldly fashion has taken our entire church by storm, until you can hardly find any who are willing to seriously consider God’s counsel in the Spirit of Prophecy regarding dress.

It is very clear from inspiration that many women in the church have not dressed in a way that was pleasing to God for many years. Going back to 1881, we read from Testimonies, volume 4, such statements as these:



“I saw that our sisters were **departing from the simplicity of the gospel.** . . . Their dresses were arranged with all the **unnecessary adornments** of **worldlings** in a manner unbecoming to Christians and **entirely at variance** with our faith” {4T 637.5} 1881



“Our people have been **steadily retrograding** **in the work of reform.**

... There is a **growing** disposition to sacrifice health and the **favor of God** upon the altar of ever-changing, never-satisfying **fashion.** {4T 638} 1881



“Some in responsible positions have exerted an influence in favor of worldly customs and entirely at variance with the Bible standard. They have done their part in bringing about the **present state of worldliness and backsliding.** {4T 638} 1881





“Fashion is deteriorating the intellect and eating out the spirituality of our people. Obedience to **fashion** is pervading our Seventh-day Adventist churches and is doing **more than any other power** to separate our people from God. I have been shown that our church rules are very deficient. All exhibitions of pride in dress, which is forbidden in the word of God, should be sufficient reason for church discipline.” {4T 647.2} 1881



There is a terrible sin upon us as a people, that we have permitted our church members to dress in a manner inconsistent with their faith. We must arise at once and close the door against the allurements of fashion. Unless we do this, our churches will become **demoralized.** {4T 648}
1881



“Again and again have our sisters been warned against indulging **pride of dress, which is idolatry;** yet they pass on, making no change, and their example is leading others away from Christ, instead of leading to him.” {RH, June 3, 1880 par. 12}

In the same time period, 1881-1885, in volume 5 of the Testimonies, we read:

“Some of our sisters indulge too freely in a love for dress and display; they do not dress at all in harmony with our holy faith. {5T 130}



“I am filled with pain and anguish as I see parents conforming to the world and allowing their children to meet the worldly standard at such a time as this. I am filled with horror as the condition of families professing present truth is opened before me. . . By their dress, looks, amusements, they surround themselves with an atmosphere which is opposed to Christ.” {5T 78.1}





“Those sisters who are dressmakers and who study the fashion plates frequently lead others in the church to do that which is displeasing to God by encouraging them to cut and trim their dresses in imitation of the world.” {5T 130.2} 1882

“I am filled with sadness when I think of our condition as a people. The Lord has not closed heaven to us, but our own course of continual backsliding has separated us from God. **Pride**, covetousness, and **love of the world** have lived in the heart without fear of banishment or condemnation. Grievous and presumptuous sins have dwelt among us. And yet the general opinion is that the church is flourishing, and that peace and spiritual prosperity are in all her borders. **The church has turned back from following Christ her leader, and is steadily retreating toward Egypt.** Yet few are alarmed or astonished at their want of spiritual power. Doubt and even disbelief of the testimonies of the Spirit of God is leavening our churches everywhere. Satan would have it thus.”-- {5T 217.2} 1882



“The parading of bows and ribbons, ruffles and feathers, and gold and silver ornaments is a species of idolatry and is wholly inappropriate for the sacred service of God, where the eye of every worshiper should be single to His glory. All matters of dress should be strictly guarded, following closely the Bible rule. **Fashion has been the goddess who has ruled the outside world, and she often insinuates herself into the church.** The church should make the word of God her standard . . .” {5T 499}



In 1891, she wrote: “Great neglect has been shown in the matter of bringing our church-members up to the standard of the Bible in this matter. . . . The example of those who follow the fashions of the world has a disastrous effect upon other members of the church. {RH, June 2, 1891 par. 8}

Members who refused to reform were eventually to be suspended from the church, after sufficient admonition.

“It is a sad thing that where the most light is given, as in Battle Creek, there should be marked departure from Bible simplicity in dress. . . . With such solemn truths as we are handling, with the signs fulfilling everywhere in our world to show that the end is near, the great crisis right upon us, the stupor, the lethargy, the pride and conformity to the world in dress and in spirit, is most astonishing.” {18MR 157.2}

1897



“Those who meet the world's standard are not few in numbers. We are grieved to see that they are exerting an influence, leading others to follow their example.

When I see those who have named the name of Christ, **aping the fashions introduced by worldlings,** I have the most painful reflections.” {3SM 243.3}
1897



“Heart Condition Indicated.--
We warn our Christian sisters
against the tendency to make
their dresses according to
**worldly styles, thus attracting
attention**. The house of God is
profaned by the **dress** of
**professedly Christian women
of today**. A fantastic dress, a
display of gold chains and
gaudy laces, is a certain
indication of a weak head and a
proud heart.” {3SM 244.1}
1897



“Satan stands in the background, **devising the fashions** which lead to extravagance in the outlay of means. **In forming the fashions of the day, he has a fixed purpose.**” {3SM 244.3}
1897



“This entirely unnecessary burden is taken up and willingly borne by our sisters. Half of their burdens come from an attempt to follow the fashions; yet they eagerly accept the yoke, because fashion is the god they worship. They are as truly held in shackles of bondage as is the veriest slave; and yet they talk of independence! They do not know the first principles of independence. They have no mind or taste or judgment of their own.”
{3SM 245.1} {2MR 3.1} 1987



“The test of discipleship is not brought to bear as closely as it should be upon those who present themselves for baptism. It should be understood whether those who profess to be converted are simply taking the name of Seventh-day Adventists, or whether they are taking their stand on the Lord's side to come out from the world and be separate and touch not the unclean thing. When they give evidence that they fully understand their position, they are to be accepted. But when they show that they are **following the customs and fashions and sentiments of the world**, they are to be faithfully dealt with. If they feel no burden to change their course of action, *they should not be retained as members of the church.*” {TM 128} 1898

“The sin of these last days is upon the professed people of God. Through selfishness, love of pleasure, and **love of dress,** they deny the Christ that their church membership says that they are following.” {TM 129.1} 1898



“As I have seen many Sabbathkeeping Adventists **becoming worldly** in thought, conversation, and **dress**, my heart has been saddened. The people who claim to believe that they have the last message of mercy to give to the world, are attracted by **worldly fashions**, and make great exertions to follow them **as far as they think their profession of faith allows them to go.** **Worldly dress** among our people is so noticeable that unbelievers frequently remark, ‘In their dress you **cannot distinguish** them from the world.’



This we know to be true, although there are many exceptions.” {3SM 243.2} Manuscript 106, 1901

Here is an example of a healthful, modest style of dress that was popular in 1897. As long as they left off the excess trimmings, and made their dresses plain and healthful, they pleased God by following this style of dress. Many years before, she had said,



“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.” {1T 458.4} 1868

Godly Seventh-day Adventist women were not gazingstocks, but they were neat and tastefully dressed. Their plain apparel was a rebuke to the pride and vanity of the day.



Shortly after Ellen White passed away in 1915, the styles of the day changed drastically. A godly woman who desired to follow God's *standard* could no longer safely follow the *styles* of the day.

1915





These dress lengths were shockingly immodest in the 1920's when compared with the length of skirts popular just a few years previously. Seventh-day Adventist Christians who valued the counsel of Ellen White knew that these styles were not appropriate for a godly woman. So, why should this length be appropriate for a godly woman in our day?



Are God's people in the last days to be becoming more godly and modest than in previous generations, or less so?

It is a tragic fact that the majority of our church members have followed the fashions of the world as, over the years, the hemlines rose, the sleeves shortened, the necklines plunged, and the heels became higher. And much more besides!

Our church is in grave danger! We are so accustomed to following the fashions of the world, that it's hard to see any problem with it at all. God says, "When the church is converted, there will be a very great reformation in dress."
{PH157 14.2} (1897)

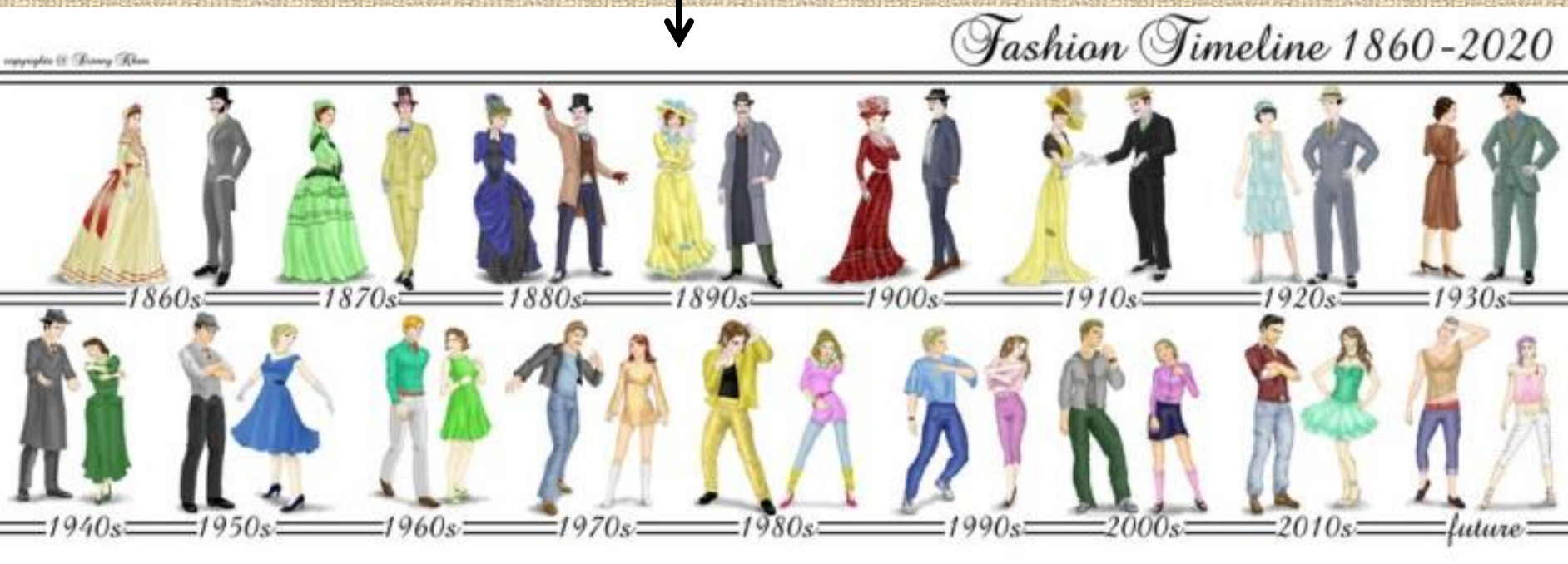
That reformation has not yet come. The church is following the fashions of the world now more than ever.

The message still speaks:
“There must be far greater humility,
a much greater distinction from the
world, among Seventh-day
Adventists, else God will not accept
us, whatever our position or the
character of the work in which we
are engaged.” {7T 296.2} 1902

If God is calling for a
higher standard than
the church upheld in
1902, what does He
think today?



Look closely at this historical timeline. 1890 represents the closest to God's ideal, of all recent times, probably the closest to what they wore in Bible times. By removing the prideful trimmings and decorations, this basic format represents what God appreciates in dress for women: modest, healthful, feminine, simple, natural. All the other styles fall short of God's ideal in a variety of ways.



The Spirit of Prophecy has faithfully given us clear and consistent counsel regarding what God would have women in particular wear. Woven in among the specific counsel relating to fashions that are no longer worn are timeless principles that can guide us even today. We can clearly see that God's standard deals with modesty, gender distinctiveness, healthfulness and simplicity in dress as well as grace and beauty.



During the late 1800s and early 1900s there were many aspects of the *styles* of the day that were acceptable to God.

But godly women were still required to conform to God's standard of simplicity, modesty, healthful and gender distinction.



The basic silhouette of the dress approved by God in Bible times, and on up into the 1890's shines forth as a model for us today. Interestingly, a careful shopper can still find outfits in stores today, which would include a long, full, substantial maxi skirt with a loose waist, a long sleeve, high neck blouse, free of gaudy patterns and showy decorations. This basic design in updated patterns can be worn attractively and appropriately in our age.





A Christian can safely wear the *styles* of the day as long they conform to the timeless *standard* God has ordained.





Today, we can wear a maxi skirt in a worldly way, or in a godly way. It's the same basic style—a maxi skirt. But in wearing it, ***we can follow God's standard or the world's standard.***

These celebrities in maxi skirts include prideful, immodest elements that mark them as worldly. God's people are to leave off everything that pertains to worldliness.



These modern secular women are wearing the basic style that God set his approval on in 1897, with a few exceptions. He does not require that we dress unattractively; He wants us to be beautiful and graceful.



When we follow all of God's principles in dress, we will be distinct from the world, as the godly ladies were in 1897. And the more degenerate the worldly fashions become, the more distinct God's people should be. We should stand out in a beautiful way.



Let's consider some of the fashions of our times. Society considers these styles "appropriate for this age" in which we live. But since they are not in harmony with God's timeless standards, God's people cannot conscientiously wear them.



The only way we can know that a certain fashion is acceptable in God's eyes is to compare it with the standard we know is approved by Him.



In the 70's, these styles were considered appropriate for that age. Most Seventh-day Adventist young ladies complied with fashion's demands. But they were not in harmony with God's standard.



Today, we see our Seventh-day Adventist sisters wearing what fashion deems acceptable and appropriate.



Do we rationalize our desire to wear these fashions by saying that they are “appropriate for this age” and therefore acceptable to God? Consider how far they are from the standard God approved in 1897.



When we reject God's standard, who is to decide what is appropriate for this age? The goddess of Fashion, will gladly tell us what is appropriate for this age!



It is never appropriate for people who call themselves Seventh-day Adventist Christians to violate God's standards of dress!



God has a standard, and it has not changed since 1897. He still wants His daughters to dress modestly, healthfully, simply, and femininely!

We can dress appropriately, beautifully, neatly, and still be true to God's standard.



We are to dress appropriately and becomingly for the occasion according to God's standards of modesty, femininity, simplicity and healthfulness.

Obviously, what is appropriate for a formal event is not appropriate for wearing in the garden! But, we are not to consult the world's standard as to what is appropriate.



Appropriate for the occasion

God's standard has everything to do with morality. It upholds the principles of purity, humility, simplicity, and selflessness.

The inappropriate revealing of female flesh and form is a violation of God's standard. The fashions of the world have increasingly exposed the female shape and skin.



“But the sins that control the world have come into the churches, and into the hearts of those who claim to be God's peculiar people. Many who have received the light exert an influence to quiet the fears of worldlings and formal professors. There are lovers of the world even among those who profess to be waiting for the Lord. . . They find pleasure in dress and the indulgence of appetite. The things of the world are their idols. These interpose between the soul and Christ, and the solemn and awful realities that are crowding upon us are but dimly seen and faintly realized.” {5T 456.1}



We have no reason to believe that God approves of the leg-baring, chest-baring, shoulder-baring fashions, or the form-fitting fashions of the world. Nothing in the Spirit of Prophecy leads us to believe that God approves of these immodest fashions. We have been blindly following the fashions of the world, and **we have no excuse!**

“And yet those who choose to follow their own way, often frame ingenious excuses in self-justification.”
{4BC 1175.3} “As we bear testimony against pride and following the fashions of the world, we are met with excuses and self-justification.” {1T 277.1}

What does God consider appropriate attire for His daughters?

“**Simplicity of dress** will make a sensible woman appear to the best advantage. We judge of a person's character by the style of dress worn. Gaudy apparel displays vanity and weakness. **A modest, godly woman will dress modestly.**

A refined taste, a cultivated mind, will be revealed in the choice of simple and **appropriate** attire.”-- T., V. IV, p. 643. {HL 120.2} 1897



God wants us to dress appropriately and attractively. His standards is well-suited for a graceful, feminine appearance.

“We would not by any means encourage carelessness in dress. **Let the attire be appropriate and becoming.**

Though only a ten-cent calico, it should be kept neat and clean.”-- T., V. IV, p. 642.
{HL 120.3} 1897



“A person's character is judged by his style of dress. A refined taste, a cultivated mind, will be revealed in the choice of simple and appropriate attire. **Chaste simplicity in dress**, when united with modesty of demeanor, will go far toward surrounding a young woman with that atmosphere of sacred reserve which will be to her a shield from a thousand perils.”-- {Ed 248.5}
1903



When Ellen White was promoting the SDA reform dress, (sometimes called “the short dress” because it was shorter than the dragging skirts popular in 1868) she made this statement: “Women should **clothe their limbs** with regard to health and comfort. **Their feet and limbs need to be clad as warmly as men's.**” {1T 459.1} 1868

Years later, when she was promoting the “less objectionable style of dress” and clearly stated that God was not leading the women to go back to the SDA reform dress, she made this statement: “**The same attention should be given to the clothing of the limbs as with the short dress.**” {4T 640.1} 1876-1881

Any dress that God has ever approved has covered the women's limbs, from Bible times until today. This is a timeless principle, not dependent on changing fashions.



ELDER AND MRS. JAMES WHITE



It might be mentioned here that Ellen White seldom addressed the matter of modesty as it relates to bare skin or tight clothing. The obvious reason is that it was almost unheard of in her day for women to go around with bare legs, with the knees showing or even bare ankles. She did condemn the immodest display of the “almost unclad ankle.” And she declared that a dress “cut low in the neck” was not a right fashion. {PCP 36.5} Form revealing clothing as we see today was simply not worn in her day.

Lack of counsel against sensual immodesty certainly does not condone it! She does not speak out against secular TV, movies, video games and other evils unheard of in her day. But if we follow the other principles of dress she gave us, we certainly would always dress modestly!

Are we suggesting that God wants us to look old fashioned? Fortunately not! The beautiful, modest maxi skirts that have been available for the past few years can look as up to date as anything else out there. But even if maxi skirts do go out of style, should we abandon God's standard to follow the world's standard? Ellen White commented: "Many will immediately exclaim, 'Why such a style of dress would be old-fashioned!' What if it is? I wish we could be old-fashioned in many respects. If we could have the old-fashioned strength that characterized the old-fashioned women of past generations it would be very desirable." {1T 462.1}



Some may say, What we wear has nothing to do with our salvation. Why make such a big deal about our clothes?

This is why— Worldly apparel and adornment has tremendous power to stir up sinful pride and lust, causing the loss of souls. Love of dress is idolatry, the worship of the fashion goddess. We must be overcomers in order to walk in white.

Thus, how we choose to dress becomes a very significant issue. God does care what we wear!



Another statement often taken out of context is: “There is a medium position in these things. O that we all might wisely find that position and keep it.” {CH 605.1}

The examples used in context are the hoop skirts vs. thin cotton dresses, and short knee length skirts vs. dragging skirts.



Too thick
←

Too thin
→



Too short
←

Too long
→



The medium position, according to inspiration, places the skirts a few inches above the ground, and the full, naturally flowing skirts should be of durable material.

It is only when we know God's standard that we can find the medium position, and recognize the extremes on either side.



Too heavy
←

Too flimsy
→



Too short
←

Too long
→





We still have
extremes that
we should
avoid!

God's standard
is the medium
position.
That is the only
true reference
point for a
Christian.





Here are some more examples of extremes.

We can't find God's standard by going half-way between two evils, or by compromising with the world.

God's standard helps us discern the extremes on either side.





“All who stand ready to make a ← compromise with the world do in truth despise the humble, self-denying, self-sacrificing principles of Christ.” {RH, August 23, 1898 par. 3}

“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.”
{CG 424.4}



“True conversion of the heart will work wonderful changes in the outward appearance.”
{BTS, May 1, 1908 par. 1}

It is our love for Jesus, our heartfelt appreciation of His incredible sacrifice for us that brings us to submission to His will regarding what we wear. This is true righteousness by faith.



Excuses! Excuses!

It's uncomfortable!

It's hot!

It's cold!

It's inconvenient!



When we realize that for approximately 6000 years, the daughters of God followed His standard of dress, without the benefit of automobiles, electricity, automatic washing machines and dryers, irons, sewing machines, air conditioning, and all the other comforts and conveniences we enjoy, it should put us to shame for all our whining and complaining!

You would be surprised how a meek and obedient spirit can melt away all those excuses. An appreciation for God's standard changes the entire picture. A willing heart is blessed beyond measure. Obedience becomes a delight!

As Sister White urged, "Try your talents, my sister, in this essential reform." {SpM 91.2}

God will help you put together a wardrobe that is modest, feminine, simple, comfortable, healthful, attractive, practical, and representative of a daughter of the King of the Universe!

By the way, there is a movement among some men to wear skirts because they say they are much cooler and more comfortable! And, how is it that men wear long sleeves and long pants in our air conditioned churches, and the women think they need to wear short skirts and sleeveless tops? That doesn't make sense!

Hopefully, through this presentation, you have been able to understand how our church has fallen into a dreadful deception, which Ellen White calls a “perfect deception”—the strongest delusion, which will cause all those who remain deceived to be lost. This deception has everything to do with the fact that many refuse to separate from the worldly fashions, and continue to think that God approves of them. (See RH, November 26, 1861, quoted above)



It breaks the heart of God when we choose the world over Him. When we are drawn to the sinful, fleshly manifestations that stir up pride and lust, it shows that we do not value the self-denial and self-sacrifice Jesus went through for us.



It shows that we reject the purity and holiness of His character, wrought out through incredible suffering. We deny Him by our pride. Worldliness in a so-called Christian is a reproach to His name.

His heart is pleading with His people to turn in heartfelt repentance from their worship of the goddess of fashion.

“We wish to impress upon our people who claim to believe the truth for this time that they need to heed the counsel of the True Witness, who represents their state as spiritually fallen, and calls upon them in decided language to repent and to return to their first love. Who is our first love?--The world's Redeemer is our first love, and must ever remain our first love. The Christian is to live a life distinctly different from that of the worldling.” {YI, January 10, 1895 par. 5}



“It is not possible that the Holy Spirit shall fall upon you unless you feel your need, and are more desirous for its descent than you now are. You should realize that you are living upon the very borders of the eternal world, that Christ is coming very soon, and that all heaven is interested in the work that is in progress in **fitting up a people for his coming**. If ever there was a people that needed to heed the counsel of the True Witness to the Laodicean church to be zealous and to repent before God, it is the people who have had opened up before them the stupendous truths for this time, and who **have not lived up** to their high privileges and responsibilities. We have lost much in **not living up to the light** of the solemn truths which we profess to believe.” {RH, June 4, 1889 par. 9}

“Do not, my sisters, trifle longer with your own souls and with God. I have been shown that the main cause of your backsliding is your love of dress. This leads to the neglect of grave responsibilities, and you find yourselves with scarcely a spark of the love of God in your hearts. Without delay renounce the cause of your backsliding, because it is sin against your own soul and against God. Be not hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.” {CH 603.1}

For more information on the topic of dress, please go to www.SistersInSkirts.com. May God bless you!

Sisters In Skirts