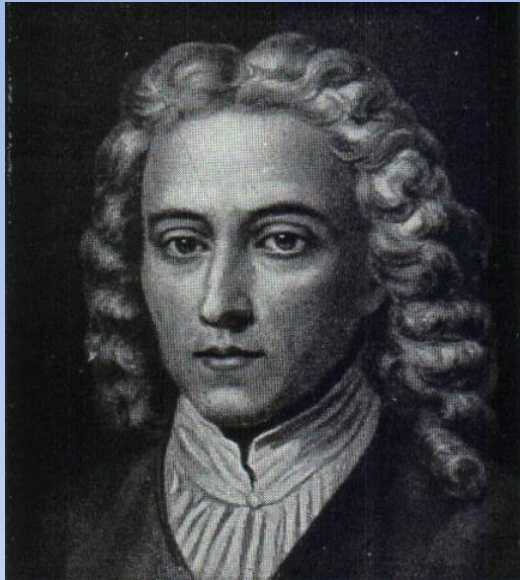
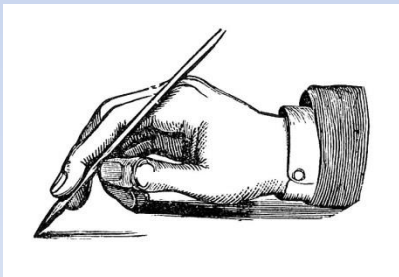


Not the First or the Last





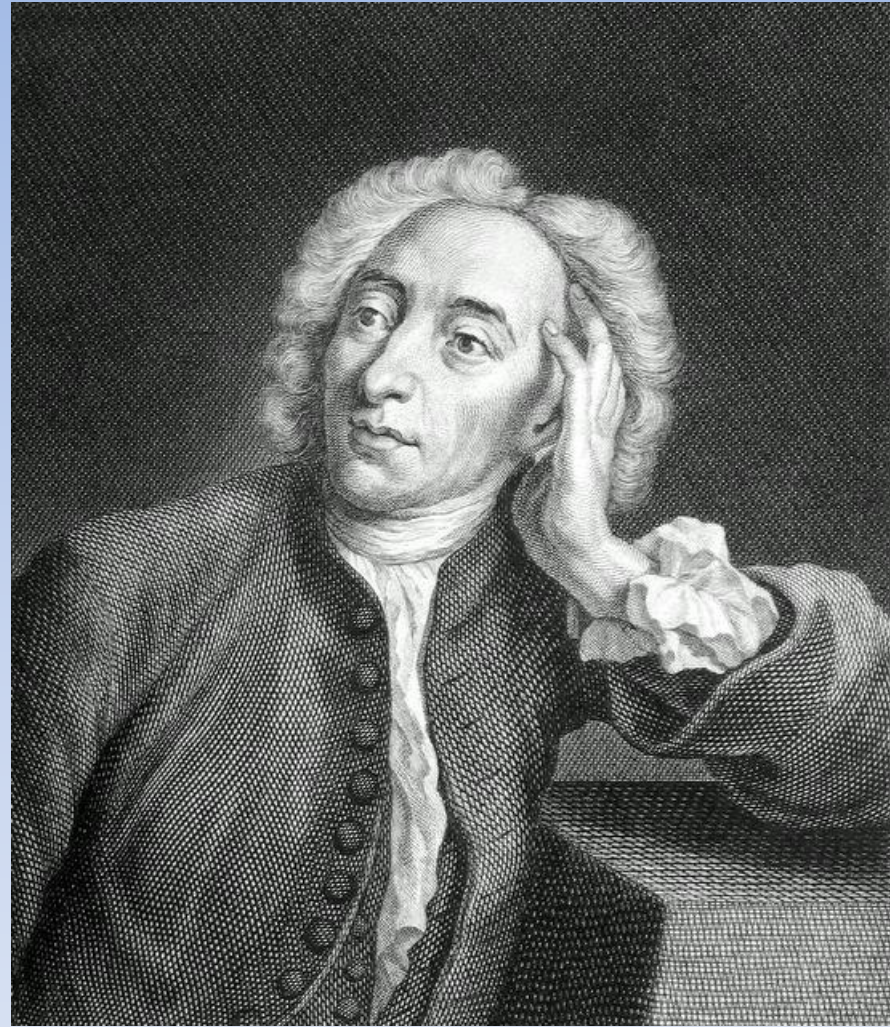
In this presentation, we will consider a simple, yet famous poem, written in the 1700s that has influenced millions. This poem has morphed into a powerful philosophy that has facilitated an amazing transformation, as we shall see.



Unfortunately, this has not been a change for the better, but for the much worse!

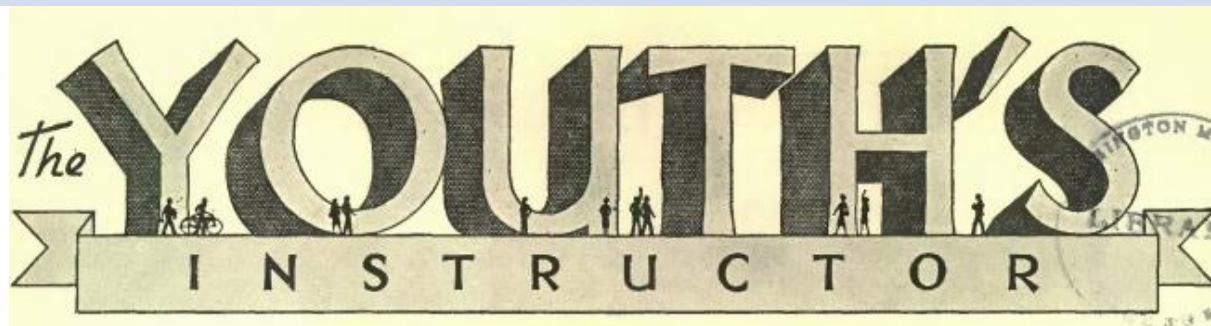
The famous English poet,
Alexander Pope (1688-1744)
penned these lines:

*“In words, as fashions, the same
rule will hold,
Alike fantastic if too new or old;
Be not the first by whom the new
is tried,
Nor yet the last to lay the old
aside.”*



This poem contains a lot of wisdom, and can indeed be a helpful philosophy if it is applied wisely. But a misapplication can be disastrous!

This small verse has been quoted over and over to drive home various points. Our own Seventh-day Adventist authors seemed to appreciate it quite a bit. It has appeared, either as a direct quote, or as a paraphrase in several of our official publications over the years.



This verse: “Be not the first by whom the new is tried,
Nor yet the last to lay the old aside” first appeared in
an SDA periodical *The Christian Educator* in 1897 in an
article written by C. W. IRWIN. He applied it to the
techniques of a successful teacher.

The 1901 *The Youth's Instructor* and the 1909 *Pacific
Union Recorder* quoted it in reference to language and
grammatical rules.

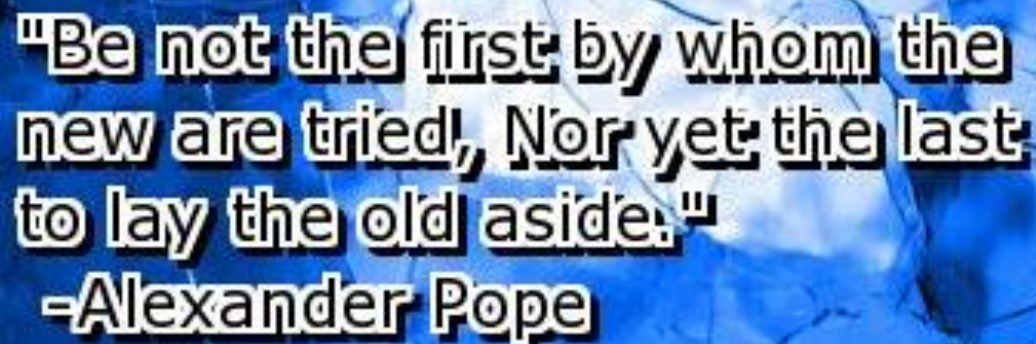


Be not the first by whom the new are tried,
Nor yet the last to lay the old aside.

(Alexander Pope)

In 1914, H. M. BLUNDEN wrote: “Be not hasty, however, to adopt new styles of clothes as soon as they come into vogue,” and then quoted this verse, thus connecting it with dress styles. ***It seems that Mr. Blunden was the first writer in our periodicals to apply this verse to styles of clothing.***

His article was first published in 1914 in ***Australasian Record*** and in 1949 in ***The Youth’s Instructor***.



**"Be not the first by whom the
new are tried, Nor yet the last
to lay the old aside."
-Alexander Pope**

Here are other official SDA periodicals in which we find this poem quoted, specifically connecting it with dress fashions:

1923 – *The Youth's Instructor*

1924 – *Review and Herald*

1926 – *Signs of the Times*

1927 – *Review and Herald*

1927 – *The Youth's Instructor*

1932 – *The Youth's Instructor*

1937 – *The Youth's Instructor*

1934 – *The Watchman*

1938 – *The Church Officer's Gazette*

1941 – *Review and Herald*

It is quite obvious that the influence of this poem has been huge. Over and over, our members have been instructed that this poetic rule is a very wise idea to follow when it comes to fashion.

In fact, it was clearly stated in The Watchman Magazine, February, 1934, “The same principle [of the poem] should govern us: follow fashions conservatively.”

Did you hear that? Our grandparents were told, by our leaders, to “Follow fashions conservatively”!



What does “conservatively” mean: From freedictionary.com: 1. Favoring traditional views and values; tending to oppose change. 2. Traditional or restrained in style.

So, we have been taught to restrain ourselves in our following of fashion, favoring traditional views. That would mean we shouldn't run out ahead of the crowd in wearing a new style.

But the poem also instructs us not to lag behind, either. We must not be the last to lay the old aside. In other words, Seventh-day Adventists **MUST** follow the fashions, according to this teaching.

Tragically, there is a serious problem which our church has overlooked. In promoting the philosophy found in this poem, a differentiation was not made between laying aside outdated **styles** and laying aside divine **standards**.

This point is crucial!

*When we lay aside the outdated **styles**, are we also at liberty to lay aside the **standards** connected with the old fashioned styles?*

We find an article in the Counsel Corner of *The Youth's Instructor* in 1937, which pointed out the difference between styles and standards: “ ‘Be not the first by which the new are tried, nor yet the last to lay the old aside,” is a good rule to follow where fundamental principles of dress are not involved.”

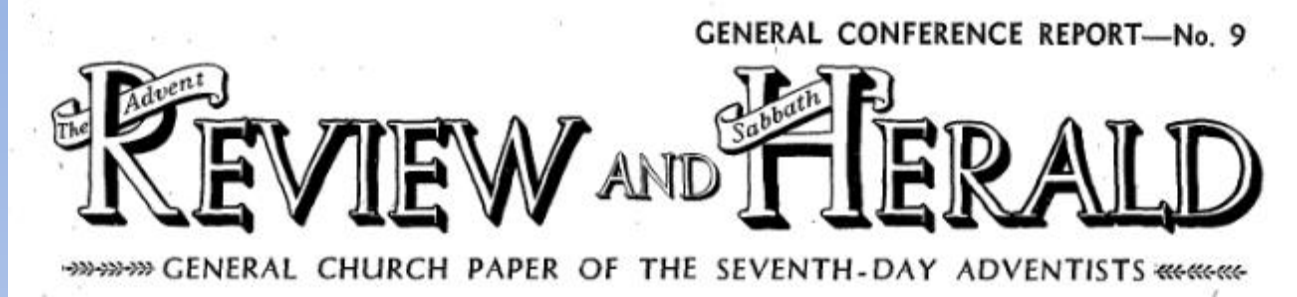


Don't miss this point!

The truth is, when fundamental principles of dress are involved, this poem is ***NOT a good rule to follow!***

Fundamental principles of dress, which define God's standard of dress for Christians, are **NEVER** to be laid aside, no matter what the styles of the day.

How important, then, it is for Christians to understand ***God's standard of dress***, so that, as styles come and go, they can be evaluated and adopted only as they are in conformity to God's timeless standards. This is the only way we can discriminate between the fashions of the world and God's standards of Christian dress.



Tragically, this distinction was not clearly made. Therefore, when the perhaps well-meaning leaders paraphrased the sentiment of this poem in the official **STANDARDS FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING** document, under the section entitled *Dress*, they probably had no idea where this thinking would lead the church.

This document was adopted at the General Conference Session in 1946.

Seventh-day Adventists have been called out from the world. We are reformers. True religion which enters into every phase of life must have a molding influence on all our activities. Our habits of life must stem from principle and not from the example of the world about us. Customs and fashions may change with the years, but principles of right conduct are always the same. Dress is an important factor in Christian character. Early in our history, instruction was given as to the way Christians should dress, the purpose of which was "to protect the people of God from the corrupting influences of the world, as well as to promote physical and moral health."

—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 634. Truly a comprehensive purpose. There is no virtue in dressing differently from those about us just to be different, but where the principles of refinement or morality are involved, the conscientious Christian will be true to his convictions rather than follow the prevailing customs.

Christians should avoid gaudy display and "profuse ornamentation." Clothing should be, when possible, "of good quality, of becoming colors, and suited for service." It should be chosen "for durability rather than display." Our attire should be characterized by "beauty," "modest grace" and "appropriateness of natural simplicity." —*Messages to Young People*, pp. 351, 352. That it may not be conspicuous, it should follow the conservative and most sensible styles of the time.

The adoption of fads and extreme fashions in men's or women's dress indicates a lack of attention to serious matters. Regardless of how sensibly people generally may dress, there are

The Advent REVIEW AND Sabbath HERALD

GENERAL CHURCH PAPER OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

Standards of Christian Living

JUNE 16, 1946

always extremes in style which transgress the laws of modesty, and thus have a direct bearing upon the prevalence of immoral conditions. Many who blindly follow the styles are at least partly unconscious of these effects, but the results are no less disastrous. The people of God should always be found among the conservatives in dress, and will not let "the dress question fill the mind." —*Evangelism*, p. 273. They will not be the first to adopt the new styles of dress nor the last to lay the old aside.

"To dress plainly, and abstain from display of jewelry and ornaments of every kind is in keeping with our faith." —*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 366. It is clearly taught in the Scriptures that the wearing of jewelry is contrary to the will of God. "Not with brodered hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array" is the admonition of the apostle Paul. (1 Tim. 2:9.) The wearing of ornaments of jewelry is a bid for attention which is not in keeping with Christian self-forgetfulness.

In some countries the custom of wearing the marriage ring is considered imperative, having become, in the minds of the people, a criterion of virtue, and hence is not regarded as an ornament. Under such circumstances we have no disposition to condemn the practice.

Let us remember that the elements of beauty lie not so much in feature and color as in the expression of intelligence and benevolence. The use of lipstick, unnatural shades of fingernail polish and similar cosmetics employed in the common "make-up" partake of the artificial and are out of keeping with Christian simplicity. Cleanliness and Christlike modesty should also be observed in the care and grooming of the person seeking at all times to please and rightly represent Christ our Lord.

Our Christian parents should bring to bear the weight of their example, instruction, and authority, to lead their sons and daughters in modestly attiring themselves, and thus winning the respect and confidence of those who know them. Let our people consider themselves well dressed only when the demands of modesty are met.

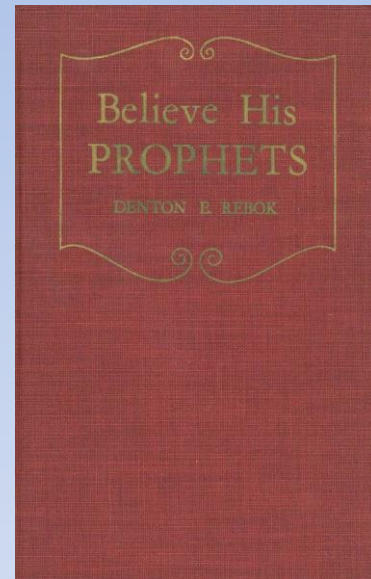
Here is the specific statement as found in the General Conference Session Bulletin, 1946:

“The people of God should always be found among the conservatives in dress, and will not let "the dress question fill the mind."—"Evangelism," p. 273.

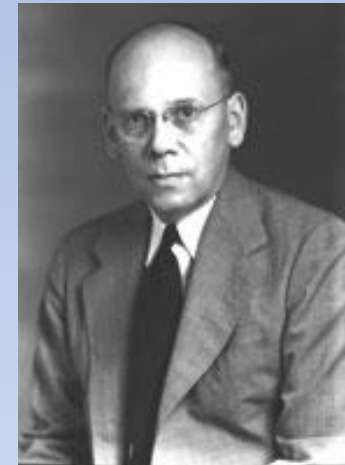
They will not be the first to adopt the new styles of dress nor the last to lay the old aside. "To dress plainly, and abstain from display of jewelry and ornaments of every kind is in keeping with our faith."—Testimonies," Vol. 3, p. 366.

This statement was placed in the church manual, and was in the next 18 editions from 1951 to 2005.

This official statement,
**STANDARDS FOR CHRISTIAN
LIVING**, under the subheading
Dress, was quoted in Denton
Rebok's book, *Believe His
Prophets* in Chapter 13, *Ellen G.
White's Message on Dress*,
which was prepared by Denton
Rebok and his wife, Florence.



Regarding this statement, Denton and Florence Rebok wrote: “It sums up the counsel from Mrs. White and the best thinking of the best-informed people of the world on this subject, and gives us *our own denominational standard* on this very important topic.”



We will discover why this statement was, unfortunately, not the best thinking, after all.

This chapter in Rebok's book specifically addresses the matter of skirt lengths. As they endeavored to explain what is appropriate in this matter, the length of the skirt is relegated to a **STYLE**, and not a **STANDARD**. This is very unfortunate.

Rebok *did not have support* from the Spirit of Prophecy regarding his narrative on skirt lengths. Instead, he used a book entitled *Personality Unlimited*, by Veronica Dengel, published in 1943. She had some thoughts on what skirt length looked best on varying shapes and ages, while considering the popular length of skirt in vogue.

1948



From the perspective of what “looked good” the length of skirts was left up to the wearer to decide what was acceptable.

The desire to fit in with society by following the fashions became the deciding factor. So, the church decided that skirt lengths no longer needed to conform to a divine standard.



Thus, using human wisdom, the matter of appropriate lengths of skirts for the Seventh-day Adventist is made subjective, relative to the fashions of the day and one's own personal preference.



Dear Church Family, here is the crux of the matter. If the length of the skirt is merely a style, to be adopted or laid aside according to what's in fashion, then we have made **current fashion our standard.**

This philosophy effectively does away with any moral standard regarding the length of the skirt.





That is exactly what we did in 1946. ***We declared that the styles of the day had become the standard for the church.*** The only criteria for following them is to wait a little while (conservatively) until they are largely accepted by society. Then, if we use the poem as our rule, we **MUST** accept the new style, and lay the old style aside.

How clever the devil has been! How confused and blinded we have been! The church at large has obediently followed this mandate from the General Conference. **We have made fashion our standard.**



We have just traced the history of our church's official adoption of the world's standard as the acceptable standard for a Seventh-day Adventist Christian in dress.

From this point on, any effort to regulate the length of skirt worn by a Seventh-day Adventist sisters has no divine standard to back it up. It merely becomes an opinion.



Because our church now has **no standard** on dress, anything goes. Our official position is that we are to adopt the new styles that come off the fashion runway, just as long as we're not the first to wear them.

Therefore, we should just wait awhile until others around wear the new styles, then we can wear them!



Of course, our official position states that Seventh-day Adventists are to dress “modestly.” We say that we need to follow the “conservative” styles of dress. We are told we need to dress “appropriately” and use our cosmetics in “good taste.”

These words, *modest*, *conservative*, *good taste*, *appropriate*, can all be used in a relative way, making them totally subjective to the user’s own perspective.



Relativism?

Society as a whole has changed in the way we consider moral standards. One author puts it this way, showing how moral ideals have changed with the times:

Ideology	Time	Belief
Biblical Morality	1800—early 1900s	"Certain things are right and wrong, and I know why."
Abiblical Morality	1900—1950s	"Certain things are right and wrong, but I don't know why."
Immorality	1960s—early 1970s	"Certain things are right and wrong, but I don't care."
Amorality	late 1970s—present	"There is no such thing as right or wrong!"

Because of the moral collapse of society during the last 100 years, the church should have been on guard to keep from sliding down right along with society. Instead of slacking up on our standards to keep pace with the lowering of society's standards, the church should have been careful to maintain God's standards.

Unfortunately, many of the ladies in our church from the 1920s and onward did not do that. They wanted to fit in with society. But they salved their consciences by staying a few steps behind the fashions.

Nonetheless, as fashions progressed in degeneration, so did the attire of Seventh-day Adventist sisters.

Does God have a standard of dress? Can we know for a certainty what it is, or is it just a matter of individual taste and preference? Just how should Christian's dress? What does this following quotation mean?

“The dress worn by many of our sisters testifies against them,--professors in name, but lovers of the world by practice. . . . My sisters, ***dress as Christians should dress***,-- simply, plainly; adorn yourselves as becometh women professing godliness, with good works...”
{RH, December 6, 1881 par. 16}



How should Christian's dress? The Spirit of Prophecy clearly states that God does have a standard. And we can find it in the Word of God.

“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 499.1} 1889

We are instructed to ***strictly guard*** all matters of dress. This doesn't sound subjective or uncertain.

1 Timothy 2:9 specifies that women are to adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety.

(For the specific meaning of this verse, please see the presentation "A Plain Distinction.")

Throughout history, there was no confusion or uncertainty regarding the Bible rule regarding God's standard of modesty for women. It was exemplified by godly women all through Bible times, up until 1915. It included full coverage, concealing both the form and flesh of the woman's body.



During the lifetime of Ellen G. White, this Bible rule of modest covering was followed by society at large. Ellen White never needed to address the problem of tight fitting clothing such as the stretchy garments popular today. Nor was the revealing of the skin of women a major issue. Near the end of her life, almost all the women wore long sleeve dresses, high necklines, and ankle length skirts.

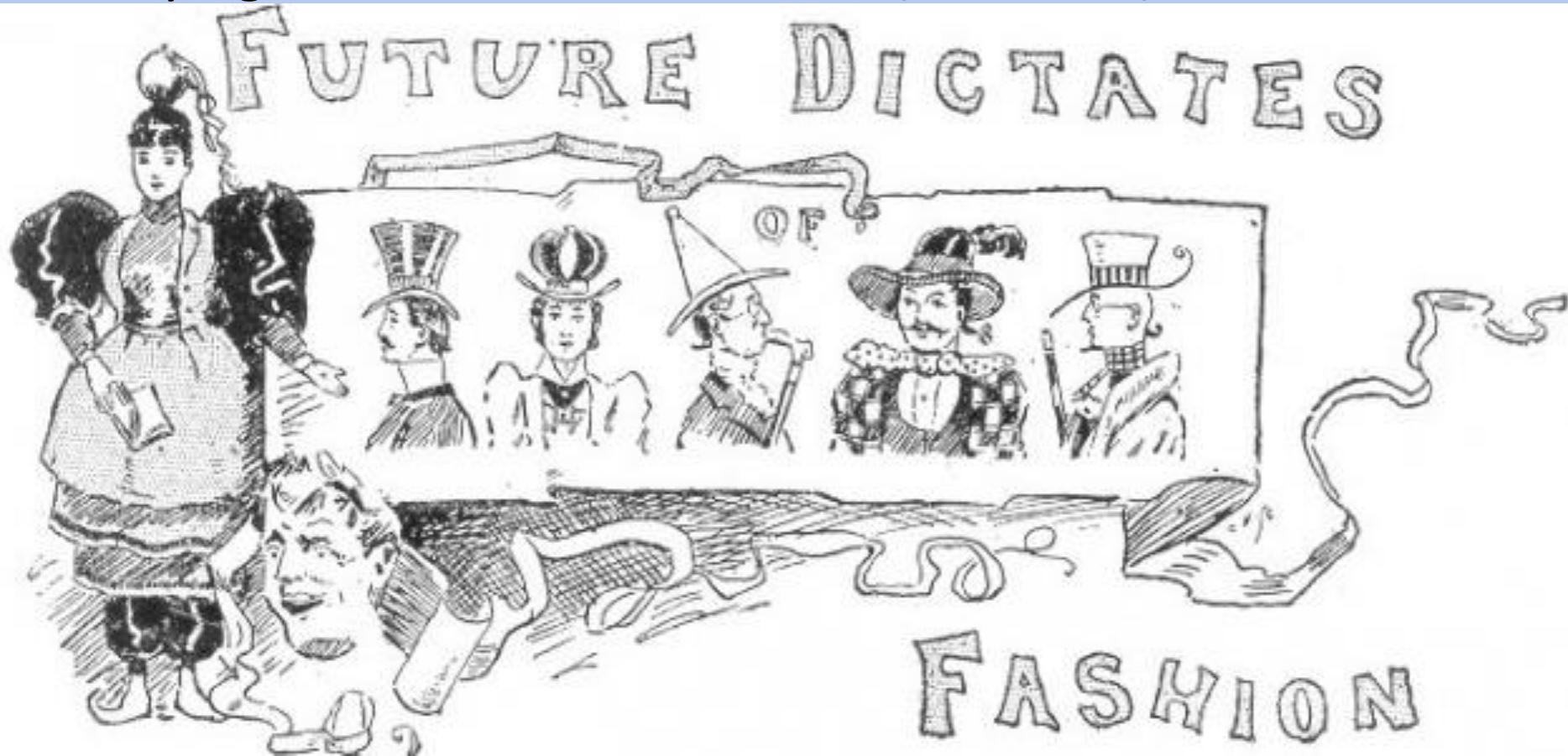
There were other issues though. In 1881, Ellen White warned of an evil that was steadily gaining ground in the church. And it has certainly been continuing to gain ground right down to our day. This evil is that of ***allowing the sisters to follow the fashions of the world*** rather than following God's standard.

In the upcoming quotation, Ellen White asks the question: *How can we expect the presence of the Holy Spirit, if we allow the sisters to follow worldly fashion?*

The appeal God makes through Ellen White is applicable in our day. We need to consider this matter carefully and prayerfully. ***Are we following the fashions of the world?***

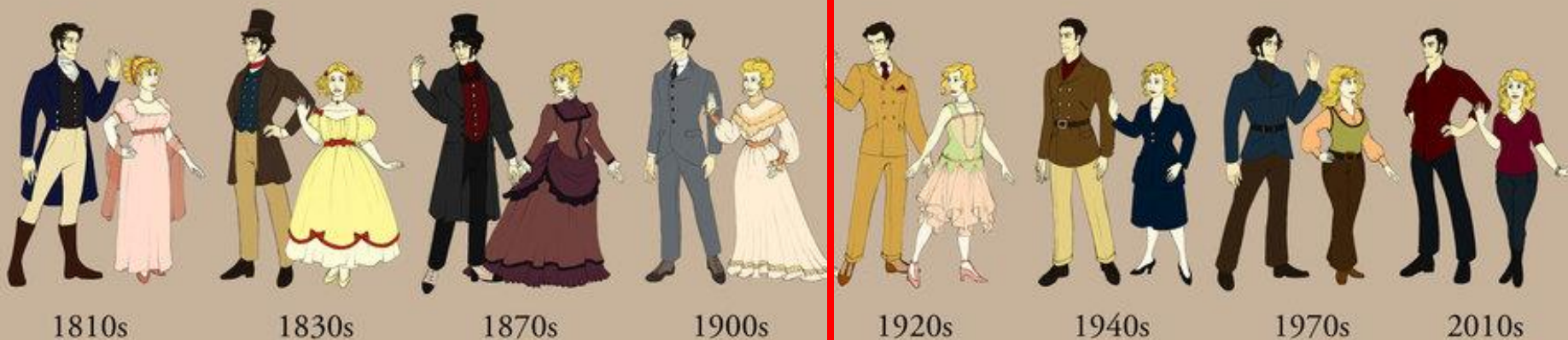
“We see steadily gaining ground in the church an evil which the word of God condemns. What is the duty of those in authority in regard to this matter? Will the influence of the church be what it should be, while many of its members ***obey the dictates of fashion***, rather than the ***clearly expressed will of God***? How can we expect the presence and aid of the Holy Spirit while we suffer these things to exist among us? Can we remain silent while the teachings of Christ are set aside by His professed followers? These things bring grief and perplexity to those who have the oversight of the church of God. Will not my Christian sisters themselves reflect candidly and prayerfully upon this subject?” {RH, December 6, 1881 par. 6}

We will be considering these “dictates of fashion” that have told society what to wear, especially in the last 100 years. This graphic shows the devil as the instigator of fashion, just as the Spirit of Prophecy tells us. “Satan, the instigator and prime mover in the ever-changing, never-satisfying decrees of fashion . . .” {CG 432.3}



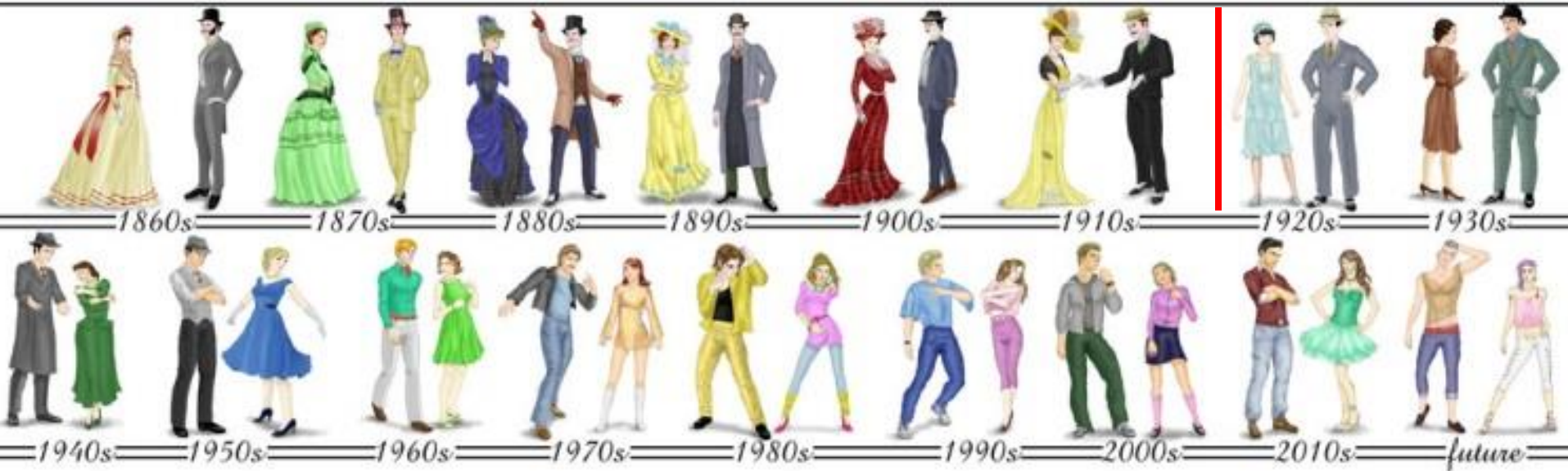
Now let's take a look at skirt lengths on women from almost Bible times to current. Notice what happens between 1900 and 1920—a radical change in skirt length!

Terrizae's Western Fashion Timeline



Fashion Timeline 1860-2020

Copyright © Tommy Khan



Notice in this chart starting at 1860, the ladies wore long skirts up until 1910. By 1920, the hems are nearly to the knees. Somewhere between 1900 and 1920, there was a drastic change in the moral standard of society.

Here is another graphic showing the change between 1910 and 1920.



This graphic shows the skirt length starting to rise right at 1915.

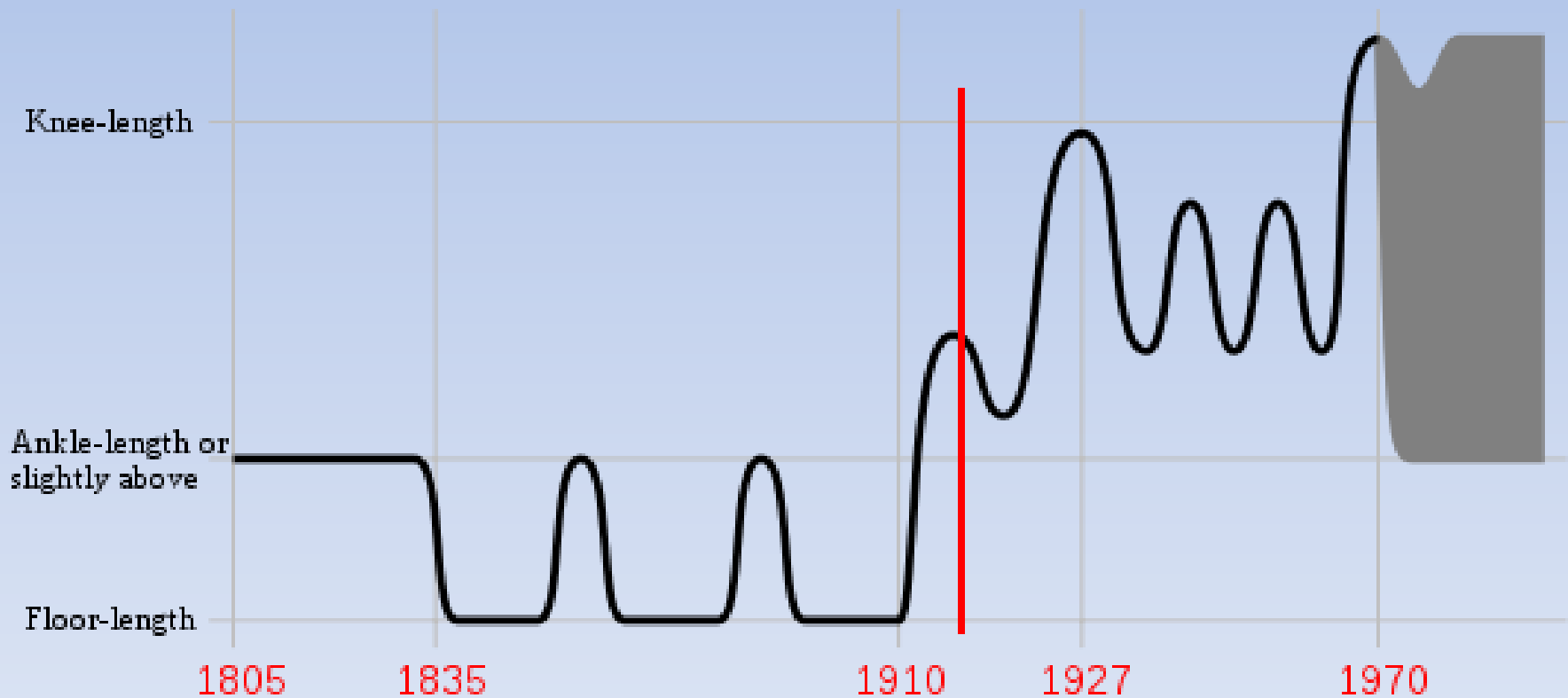


CHANGING SKIRT LENGTHS charted above have gone up and down with the Federal Reserve Board index of industrial production ever since they first left the floor in 1910. When skirts were skimpiest (1926-29) times were

booming. When skirts were at their longest (1930-35) America was in the midst of a depression. The four actresses above were fashion plates of their era (left to right): Louise Drew, Joan Crawford, Claudette Colbert, Kay Francis.

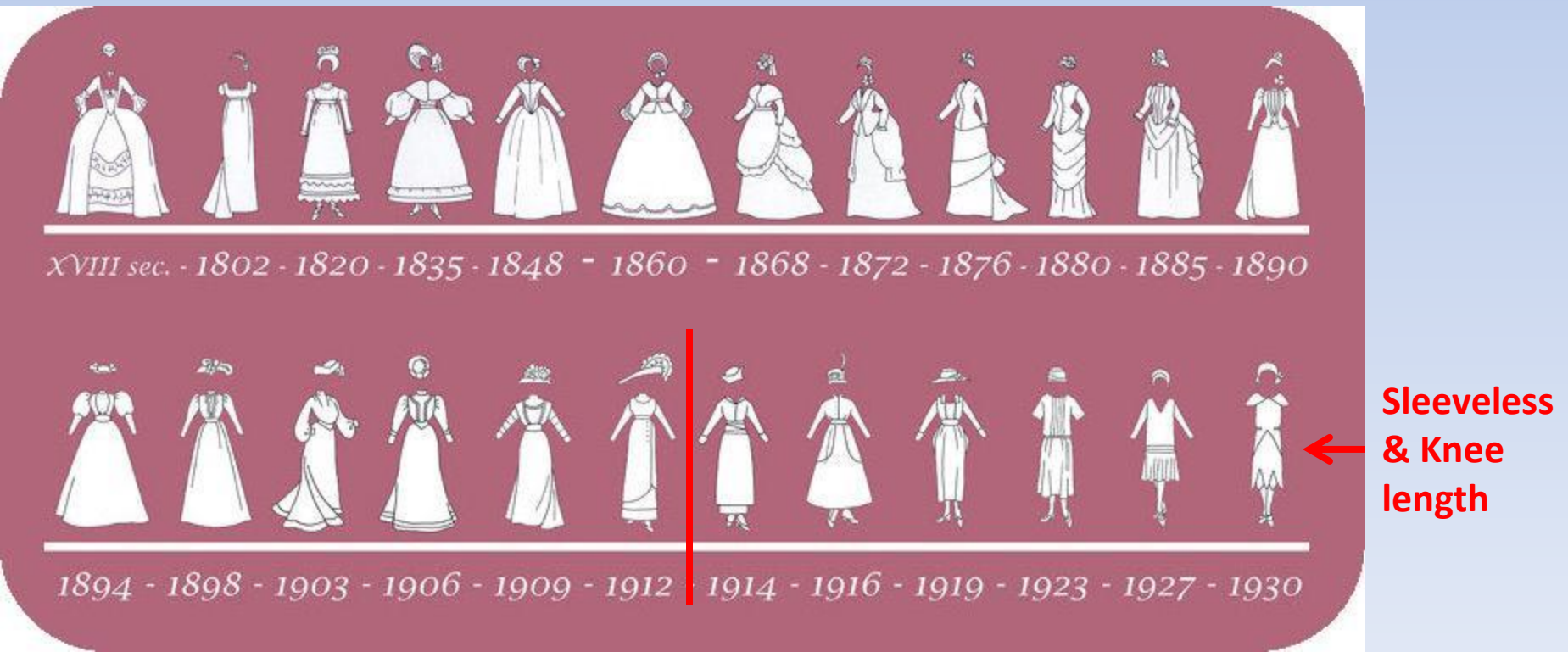
This graphic shows that skirts in popular fashion never rose much above ankle length until right around 1915.

Abstract conceptual overview of changes in hemline heights (skirt lengths):



Up until that time, the lower body was always completely covered. The ankles, legs, knees and especially above the knee were never shown by respectable women.

From around 1915 on, fashion has deliberately revealed these parts of women's anatomy through various styles.



Here at Ellen G. White's funeral in 1915, you can see the women all have on the long, full skirt and long sleeves. Yes, that was the style of the day, but it also complied with God's standard.



3P. Oak Hill Cemetery. Funeral Mrs. E. G. White; Battle Creek, Mich.

The time around 1915, when Ellen White died, was a significant period in the history of women's dress.



Within a relatively short span of time, women went from being totally covered, to revealing legs, arms and low necklines in a shameful manner. The 1915 date is significant.

I do not believe this was a coincidence. When the voice of God's prophetess was silenced in death, the devil began a deliberate campaign to introduce degenerate and immodest fashions.

The hemlines rose, the shirt sleeves shortened, the necklines lowered over the years. Oh, and the heels rose in height, and form fitting clothes were introduced. After nearly 6000 years of the same standard of modesty for women, and then, starting at 1915, it's all gone at fashion's decree!

This is not just about style, it's about a standard!

At this time, in the Seventh-day Adventist church, the members were so caught off guard by this new style, that they completely forgot about God's standard. The young ladies in our church were enamored by the shortened dresses, and began wearing them soon after they were introduced. They began to dress just like the world. What did God think?

“The conformity of professed Christians to the world is a disgrace to their profession, a disgrace to the cause of God. They profess to have come out from the world and to be separate, yet are *so near like them in dress*, in conversation, and actions, *that there is no distinction.*”

{RH, December 12, 1882 par. 8}

It is very interesting and eye-opening to trace the history of the lowering of the dress standards in our church, as found in our official periodicals. Some of the leaders wrote articles trying to stop the downward progression of lowered standards. But, for the most part, they seemed to want to give in just an inch or two to the current fashion.

So, it became a matter of each older generation reproving the younger generation about their short skirts, which were just a few inches shorter than their own!

And, naturally, since there was no recognized divine standard, the young ladies just scoffed at the older ladies, and went ahead and wore the current fashion of shorter skirts.

Here are some of the admonitions given in our periodicals. An article in the Review and Herald August 7, 1924, entitled “Dress Reform by Mrs. C.O. Doub reads:

“Can we call that a modest dress which leaves the arm bare? or is it modest to expose an expanse of neck and shoulders? or is it modest to dress in these thin, sheer, transparent materials? Are short skirts modest? We are told in Testimonies, Volume I, pages 460, 461, that our skirts for wear away from home should come ***a little below the tops of shoes of ordinary height***, with house dresses permissibly a little shorter. They ‘should be short enough to clear the filth of the sidewalk,’ we are instructed (page 462).”

Popular 1900 boot



So, in 1924 the sisters were told that the skirts were to be a little below the tops of the shoes, but not dragging on the ground.

But in a few years, the hems were clearly rising.

In the Southwestern Union Record, March 20, 1928, it was declared that the General Conference had adopted some general standards for office workers. Skirts were required to come four or five inches below the knee.

In an article in Review and Herald, July 23, 1942, one female writer quoted from a letter of another sister who was calling for a reform: “The truth is that many of our women wear their dresses shockingly short. And 'shocking' is the correct word. . . . Many do not have any idea what a shocking sight they present, especially when seated, or when bending over”

Then there was a call for a campaign to fix the problem: “It remains for some woman (not some man) to start a campaign to try to remedy the present fault.”

But the writer of those strong comments went on to state that she wore her skirts from 12 to 14 inches from the floor. This shows the futility of one calling for a reform when she herself is not in harmony with the divine standard. It's just one person's opinion against another.

The writer, wearing the 1930 style, was calling for a reform, because of the “shocking length” of the 1940 style, which was a few inches shorter. But both are contrary to God's standard.



1930



1940

It's interesting to notice that several authors in our publications in the early to mid 1900s referred to Spirit of Prophecy quotations, but they missed an important point. When Ellen White discussed the acceptable length of skirts, it was either ankle length, which would "clear the filth of the streets an inch or two" or it was as short as 10 inches from the floor, but always with pants underneath. The ankle length skirt with no pants was to be lower than the boot top.



Thus, no part of the leg or ankle would ever be showing. For some reason, our people seemed to totally miss this point when wrestling about skirt lengths in the 1920s onward. They forgot that Ellen White said, “Whatever may be the length of the dress, females should clothe their limbs as thoroughly as the males.” {2SM 478.3}



The “short dress” was laid aside, and the ladies were specifically instructed, “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}

And yet, the “short dress” without pants was introduced by fashion around 1915, and, without the word of the Lord, the ladies in the church began baring their ankles and legs an inch at a time.

They gave the devil an inch, and he took it all the way to the top! The hemlines just continued to rise.

The legs have been progressively bared, from just a few inches above the floor, to five inches below the knee, then to just below the knee. But the fashions are pushing for more legs to show. So we go to the next level.



An educator, in appealing to the teachers, sets up a new standard of approximately to the knees. “Surely we can help our girls understand that wearing sensible clothes—dresses which come approximately to the knees, and of a style which enables them to be seated modestly—will not make them a gazing-stock. It may make them different from those who are dressed in miniskirt brevity, but it is the kind of difference which sensible people will admire.” PACIFIC UNION RECORDER June 3, 1968



Again in 1969, in the midst of the miniskirt fashion, our young ladies were encouraged to wear their dresses at the middle of the knee.

“As society becomes ‘more and more corrupt,’ a girl who wears a dress that comes to **mid-knee** will be strikingly different. But it is an attractive difference, a difference that will commend our faith to men and women of good taste and high ideals.” Joe Engelkemire, The Youth's Instructor, July 15, 1969


That would have been a shocking length a couple of decades earlier. But, as society changed, our church changed right along with it.

This kind of reasoning and the ever-changing standard has led our people to give up in the effort to reform the sisters in their dress. Unless there is a divine standard, no man-made rules can bring about a reform.

That is why the church has left the matter alone for many years. Since the church has laid aside the divine standard, those who are following worldly fashions “conservatively” have no authority to “get after” those who are not quite so conservative.



100 YEARS OF WOMEN'S FASHION



1920's
 3.7X GREATER THAN TODAY
 COSTUME JEWELRY, SHEER STOCKINGS, DROP WAIST FLAPPER DRESSES, STRAP SHOES

1930's
 2.5X GREATER THAN TODAY
 PATTERNED SWEATERS, LONG FLOWING GOWNS, FOX FUR COLLARS, SHOULDER PADS

1940's
 2.8X GREATER THAN TODAY
 HALTER TOPS, COLE SOLE SHOES, MATCHING SKIRTS AND SWEATERS

1950's
 2.9X GREATER THAN TODAY
 FULL SKIRTS WITH PETTICOATS, BLACK LEOTARDS, PLEATED PANTS, POODLE SKIRTS, BELLYCROPPERS, STRIPED BANGLE BRACELETS, SADDLE SHOES

1960's
 2.7X GREATER THAN TODAY
 WHITE VINYL "GO-GO" BOOTS, PEACE SIGNS, LEOTARDS WITH WRAP AROUND SKIRTS, EARTH TONES, LEGGINGS, DENIM, PANTS SUITS, WESTERN BOOTS

1970's
 2.6X GREATER THAN TODAY

1980's
 1.7X GREATER THAN TODAY
 THICK WOOL LINED PAIR-GLE SWEATERS, FRILLS ON COLLARS AND HEMS, "POWER SUITS" WITH BIG SHOULDER PADS, FAKE PEARL LONG NECKLACES, ANKLE SOCKS, JOBY HATS, LEVY BOYS, BANGLE BRACELETS

1990's
 1.6X GREATER THAN TODAY
 DESIGNER SNEAKERS, BARE MIDRIFTS, DESIGNER ATHLETIC SHOES, HOODED SWEATSHIRTS, PUFFY JACKETS

2000's
 1.1X GREATER THAN TODAY
 LOW RISE PANTS, BARE MIDRIFTS, SKINNY JEANS, GRAPHIC SHIRTS, BLAZERS, TANK TOPS, BELL BOTTOM JEANS

2010+ CURRENT
 AROUND \$40.00/month
 DESIGNER DENIM, EMBELLISHED BOOTS, NAUTICAL STRIPES, PALE NEUTRALS, FUR, BOHO CHIC

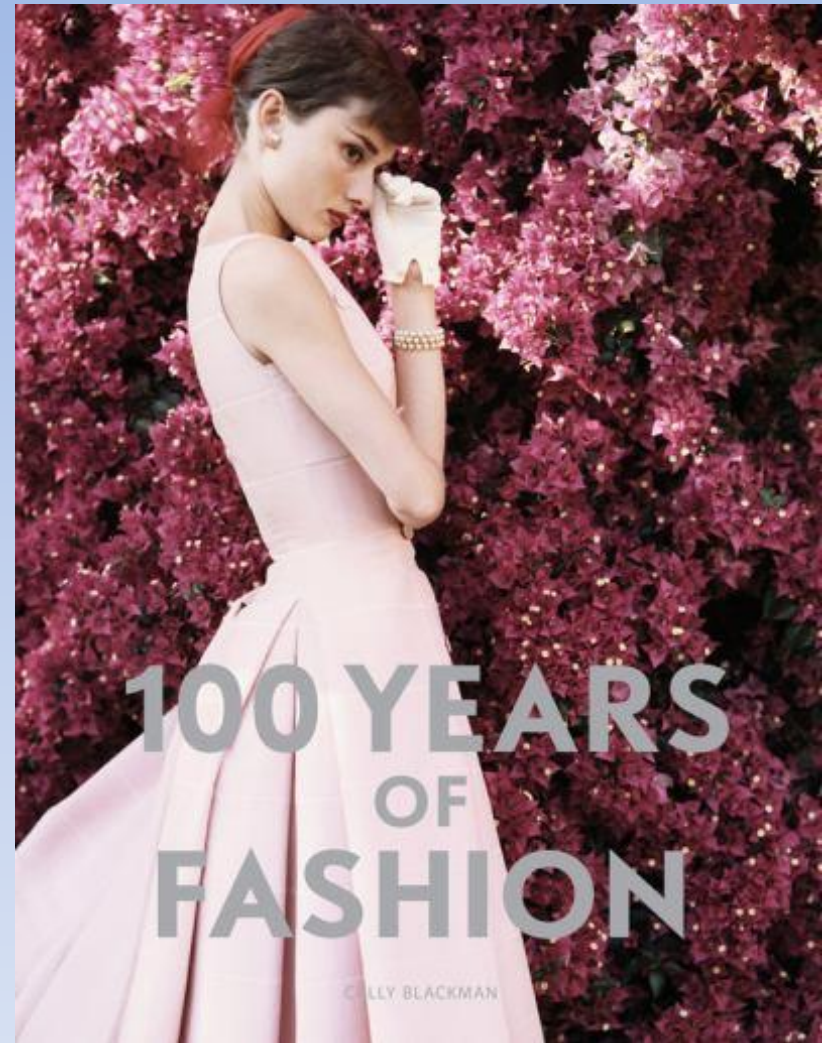
More Facts:

- In 1919, the average consumer was spending today's equivalent of about \$150/month on clothing items, as compared to only spending about \$100/month in 1914.
- Prices dropped significantly after 1919 to about an average of \$95/month in 1934.
- After a brief rise in prices again in 1945 to about \$120/month for clothing items, the price has continued to drop to an average of around \$40/month in today's society.

PRIMITIVE CLOTHING
 NATIONAL POSITIONS

Our Seventh-day Adventist women have had 100 years of experience in following fashion “conservatively.”

Pope’s poem has been our creed regarding fashion from around 1915 to the present time.





What does this philosophy look like in a practical application?

Just look around next time you go to church, or at any gathering where Seventh-day Adventists are present. You will see that, in general, the church has obeyed this teaching very well. As a whole, we have followed fashion “conservatively.”



No only are the words *conservative* and *modest* used subjectively, they also can be made to apply to a changing standard. Therefore, what was considered immodest in 1930 becomes modest in 1970, based on the changing styles of fashion. And so on as the years roll on.

And so we have an ***ever changing standard*** of what is modest and appropriate for a Seventh-day Adventist Christian to wear.

This literally means that we have no standard except to stay a few steps behind the world. As the standards of the world plummet into deeper degeneration, the Seventh-day Adventist sisters follow along, lagging just a little.



One sister could consider certain attire to be worldly, immodest and very inappropriate while another sister could consider it to be conservative, modest, and appropriate. It becomes merely a matter of opinion.

Seventh-day Adventists in general now go by what “feels” right for them to wear, and by what their peers are wearing.



Spring Collection / 2012

**DON'T TELL ME
WHAT TO WEAR**



Officially, our only gauge to determine appropriate attire is by the world's standard. If we see that society in general is following a particular fashion that we consider immodest, then we just need to make sure our clothes are a little more "conservative" than the world.

We feel quite smug in our conservatism.



The “conservatives” among us often accuse the “liberals” of bringing worldliness into the church.

But, in reality, the conservatives are perhaps even more set in their ways than the liberals. They are convinced that their manner of dress is acceptable with God, and are some of the strongest opponents of the idea that Seventh-day Adventists need a reformation in the area of dress. Many conservatives, walking in their obligatory few steps behind the worldly fashions, will argue in a heated debate that the majority of the sisters are “just fine” in their style of dress, and it is “judgmental” and “legalistic” to even discuss the matter!

Here is an interesting quotation. Conservatism, or the “stuck in a rut” attitude is what causes fashion followers to be unwilling to reform! Conservatives are afraid of “losing caste.” They want to keep their status quo position; they don’t want their boat rocked!

“Reformatory action is always attended with sacrifice. It demands that love of ease, selfish interest, and the lust of ambition be held in subjection to the principles of right. Whoever has the courage to reform must encounter obstacles. ***He will be opposed by the conservatism of those whose business or pleasure brings them in contact with the votaries of fashion, and who will lose caste by the change.***” {4T 636.2}

"I'M A CONSERVATIVE"

This is a caution to all those who label themselves “conservative” and yet are resistant to reform.

Even though we may not have been instrumental in the initial lowering of the standard of modesty, we need to understand that this has indeed taken place, before many of us were even born. Some who came before us set aside principle and accepted popularity in its place.

“If those who occupy positions of trust in the institution are not true to principle, they will be the ones to lower the standard of reform.” {8MR 382.3}

“The warnings that worldly conformity has silenced or withheld, must be given under the fiercest opposition from enemies of the faith. And at that time the superficial, ***conservative*** class, whose influence has steadily retarded the progress of the work, will renounce the faith, and take their stand with its avowed enemies, toward whom their sympathies have long been tending.” {5T 463.2}

Ellen White links this ***conservative spirit*** with the compromising, superficial, stubborn attitude that is unwilling to move forward in the work of reform. The truth of the matter is, both liberals and conservatives have inherited the apostasy from a prior generation.

Now we come down to these last days, just before the coming of our Lord.

Fashion declares that women can bare their arms up to their shoulders, their legs up to their knees and beyond, and their upper chests down to where cleavage could show. And if those areas are not bare, it is the fashion for the clothes to be so tight as to reveal the form.



Bare arms, legs, low necklines, and tight clothes constitutes the current styles, dictated by the goddess of fashion.

And the church has said, We will follow right with you, Fashion Goddess, but just a few steps behind.

And to God, the church says, We want to be called Christians, but let us wear our own clothes! (see Isa. 4:1)



But God says, “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

If our church rules regarding dress were deficient in the 1880s, what about our total lack of any meaningful standard of dress in 2013?

There is a TERRIBLE sin resting on our church. What have our leaders done to remove this terrible sin?

“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



Have our churches become demoralized?

If we have no moral standard when it comes to dress, no “church rules” or clear-cut guidelines, how could our churches NOT have become demoralized?

A demoralized church is a corrupted church, one that has lost her moral standard. The dictates of fashion now rule.



**Ungodly
fashion
designers**

God's standard involves moral principles. God's standard does not fluctuate, but remains constant throughout all time.

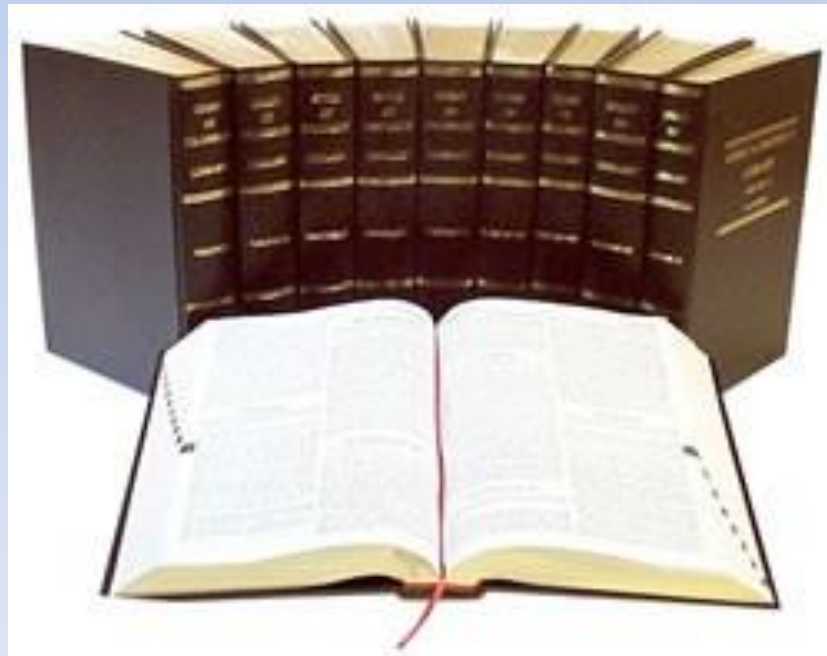
A style connotes a certain design, a pattern, which will go in and out of fashion.

A style is considered a worldly style when it is out of harmony with God's standard. **Because our church has not clearly taught God's standard, we now go by society's standard. The practice of our church is to condone the following of fashion, even when the styles conflict with God's standard.**

God does have a standard of dress, and we should be talking about it, studying it, teaching it, practicing it. We are in the last days, and God is desiring to prepare a people to stand through the last great conflict. We are to be overcomers of all sin and lust and pride. We can't just gloss this over and pretend God is happy with the way we dress.



God's standard of dress is not constantly changing with the times. It has remained constant throughout the history of humankind. That's why we can find it in the Bible. And we find it in the Spirit of Prophecy. And those inspired counsels are just as applicable today as they were in the past.



We are to lay aside every style that is unhealthful, immodest, unfeminine and prideful.

After laying those worldly fashions behind, what is left is a beautiful standard of modesty that covers the body comfortably and is beautiful and representative of godliness.



The biblical rule, God's standard of modesty, has been the same ever since the fall of mankind.

This standard of modesty, the covering of women, has had many styles, but only one standard, which has been the same for every age. It has been followed conscientiously and consistently by godly women during and since Bible times.

(For further clarification, please read our other presentations.)



Please notice that we are NOT advocating that Seventh-day Adventist women dress in the styles of the 1800s. These old fashioned styles can be safely laid aside!



But we are advocating that Seventh-day Adventist women dress according to the standard of modesty that was upheld in the 1800s, the 1700s, the 1600s, and so on back to Bible times. This standard of modesty would be easily recognizable by any godly woman who has ever lived on this earth throughout history.



Yes, let's lay aside old styles. We don't need to wear the styles of the 1800s, or of any other era. But we must continue to uphold God's timeless standard, no matter what is in style!



While many styles came and went throughout the last 500 years, the basic standard of a long flowing garment for women remained the same.



Do a study on what women have worn throughout history. Except for the reprobate heathen idolaters, women in cultured society have covered themselves completely with a long, full garment throughout history, particularly women who feared God.



Other civilized cultures have recognized this standard, and followed it for centuries.



Other religions have advocated a similar standard of modesty for many years.



In Jerusalem today, this large sign shows that this particular neighborhood understands God's standard of modesty: *Closed blouse, long sleeves, long skirt, no tight-fitting clothes.*

TO WOMEN & GIRLS
WHO PASS THROUGH OUR NEIGHBORHOOD

WE BEG YOU WITH ALL OUR HEARTS

PLEASE DO NOT PASS THROUGH OUR NEIGHBORHOOD IN IMMODEST CLOTHES

MODEST CLOTHES INCLUDE: CLOSED BLOUSE, WITH LONG SLEEVES. LONG SKIRT. NO TIGHT-FITTING CLOTHES

PLEASE DO NOT DISTRESS US BY DISTURBING THE SANCTITY OF OUR NEIGHBORHOOD AND OUR WAY OF LIFE AS JEWS COMMITTED TO G-D AND HIS TORAH.

רשמים נאמנים למוסורת צווי האלקי
RESIDENTS, FAITHFUL TO THE TRADITION OF THE DIVINE COMM
רשמי איתנו לה. פנים איתם לה. ונראה מוסר קדוש

מעבר
בשכוננו
קשות
אנא, ה

שכונתנו
צנוע
שרוול ארוך.
א בלבוש צר
קדושת שכונתנו
לה' ולתורתו!

How well those Jewish people summarized God's standard of modesty, which their ancestors have followed for thousands of years:

Closed blouse, long sleeves, long skirt, no tight-fitting clothes.

On this sign, they are **begging** women and girls to follow this standard in their neighborhood, because of their commitment to God and His Torah.

They put us to shame in our careless indifference and lax standards in these matters.

It has always been a problem with the church, that God's professed people have not been willing to follow the Bible rules for modest dress.

Do we somehow think that in these last days, when it is prophesied that evil seducers shall proceed from bad to worse, that God skips over this issue and smiles on His fashion following church?



The prophetess wrote, “My heart is pained to see those who profess to be followers of the meek and lowly Saviour, so eagerly seeking to conform to the world's standard of dress.” {RH, December 6, 1881 par. 4}

When Ellen White wrote this in 1881, she wasn't speaking of the worldliness in Satan's last day fashion campaign. She was talking of the prideful decorations in excess lace, embroidery, trimmings, feathers and other unnecessary adornment.

What would she say if she were alive today?

During Ellen White's last years, many styles were promoted. Some aspects of these styles could have been acceptable during this era, because the basic standard of modesty was upheld. The long flowing skirt was part of every one of these styles. The unhealthful, prideful and revealing aspects are never acceptable to God.



As we consider how dress fashion has changed over the last century, much of it has to do with the:

- Length of the skirt
- Fullness of the skirt
- Length of the sleeves
- Cut of the neckline



While these elements all affect the style, they also impact the standard. The raising of the hemline has moral implications. So does the shortening of the sleeves and the lowering of the neckline.

Notice also how the shortened skirt prepared the way for the acceptance of pants on women.

1910 **1920** **1930** **1940** **1950** **1960** **1970** **1980** **1990** **2000**



The fashion goddess [a masquerade for the devil] likes to do things gradually so as to keep people off guard. Fashions have becoming increasingly immodest over the last 100 years.

“The work of the enemy is not abrupt; it is not, at the outset, sudden and startling; it is a secret undermining of the strongholds of principle. It begins in apparently small things--the neglect to be true to God and to rely upon Him wholly, ***the disposition to follow the customs and practices of the world.***” {PP 717.2}



The goddess of fashions provides various styles in which one may worship her. But none of these reflect the standard of modesty that has been recognized by all of God's daughters before 1915.



Why have we ignored the following quotation? For what other reason than to follow fashion did our sisters raise their hemlines right along with the world? God did not sanction it then, and He does not sanction it today.

“But the word of God gives us no sanction in making changes in our apparel merely for the sake of fashion, that we may appear like the world.” {6MR 158.2} {BTS, May 1, 1908 par. 2} {6T 96.2}



1950

For many years, Seventh-day Adventist women followed the fashion of barely clad legs, actually believing that they were “supposed” to do that! And they bitterly complained about being miserable in cold weather!

“For years my wife wore skirts and sheer nylons ***to keep in harmony with our church standards***, all the while complaining bitterly of the cold and discomfort.” Adventist Review, July 19, 1979



The ankle length, long sleeve, high neck clothing the women wore up until the early 1900s was more than merely a style. It reflected a moral standard of society, which was in harmony with the divine standard.



Spencer & Co. ROY, PA.



Did God lower the moral standard for society after 1915? Did God give His daughters permission to follow the fashions of the world so they could reflect the lowered moral standard of society?



Who gave God's daughters permission to shorten their skirts? It was none other than the goddess of fashion!

This re-enactment photo, taken in 1945, shows the shock and dismay of the ladies in their 1890 and 1900 floor length dresses when they see the bare legs on the 1945 lady.

This “modern fashion” of 1945 would have been shocking to every godly woman who had lived up until 1915.



What has taken away the shock?

“Through familiarity with sin, their senses become so blunted that evil seems attractive to them, rather than abhorrent.” {CTBH 155.2} Jesus’ suffering was so intense because He knew that “though familiarity with evil, man had become blinded to its enormity.” {DA 752.4}

We are no longer shocked because we are blind and naked, and we don’t know it!



What if all the women who loved God with all their hearts throughout history, who had died by 1915, were resurrected in the apparel of their time? Even though the styles, designs, patterns, and fabric of their apparel would be distinctive to the era in which they lived, they would all have the same standard of modesty in common.

For nearly six thousand years, these God-fearing sisters have obeyed God's will for them to be modestly attired.



Then, the final generation, those living in the time of the last 100 years are noticed in comparison. With the legs bared under skirts anywhere from mid-calf, to knee length, to mini length, or with their tight pants and shorts, and low cut or tight tops, they stand with their bare arms outstretched to welcome their Lord.

The first group stares in utter disbelief. This final generation was supposed to display before the watching universe the power of God to deliver them from all sin.

Do these scantily-clad women actually expect to be translated?

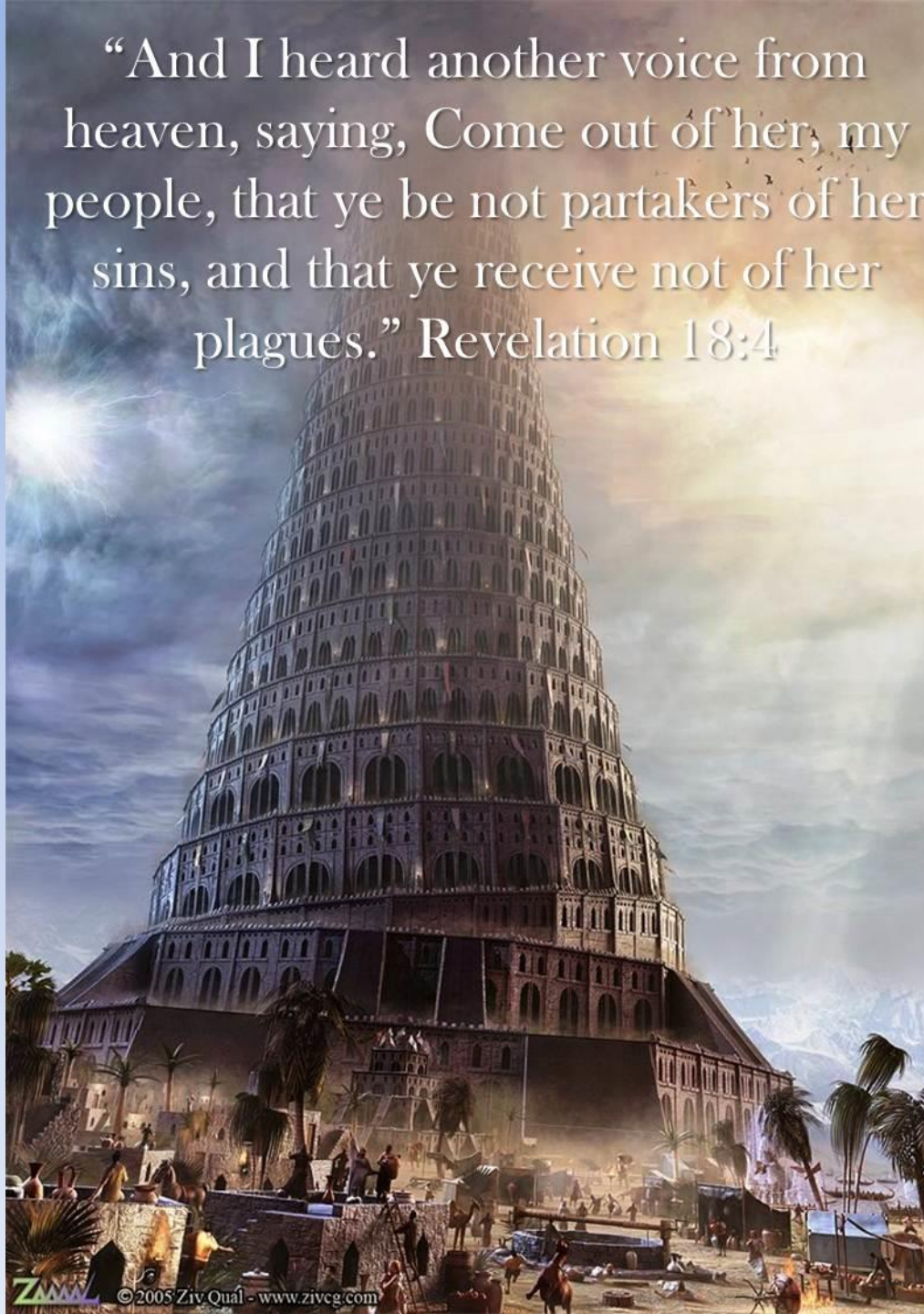


How could it be that God's daughters clearly understood and followed God's standard of modesty for 6000 years, covering themselves completely, and then, during the last 100 years, the people who claimed to love God became increasingly more immodest with every passing year. Something is very wrong with that picture!



At the very end of time, when the fashions are the most degenerate, God is calling His true daughters to uphold the very highest standard of modesty, not just a few steps behind the world. He is calling for a revival of primitive godliness. It should be quite obvious that there is a work of reformation before the people of God.

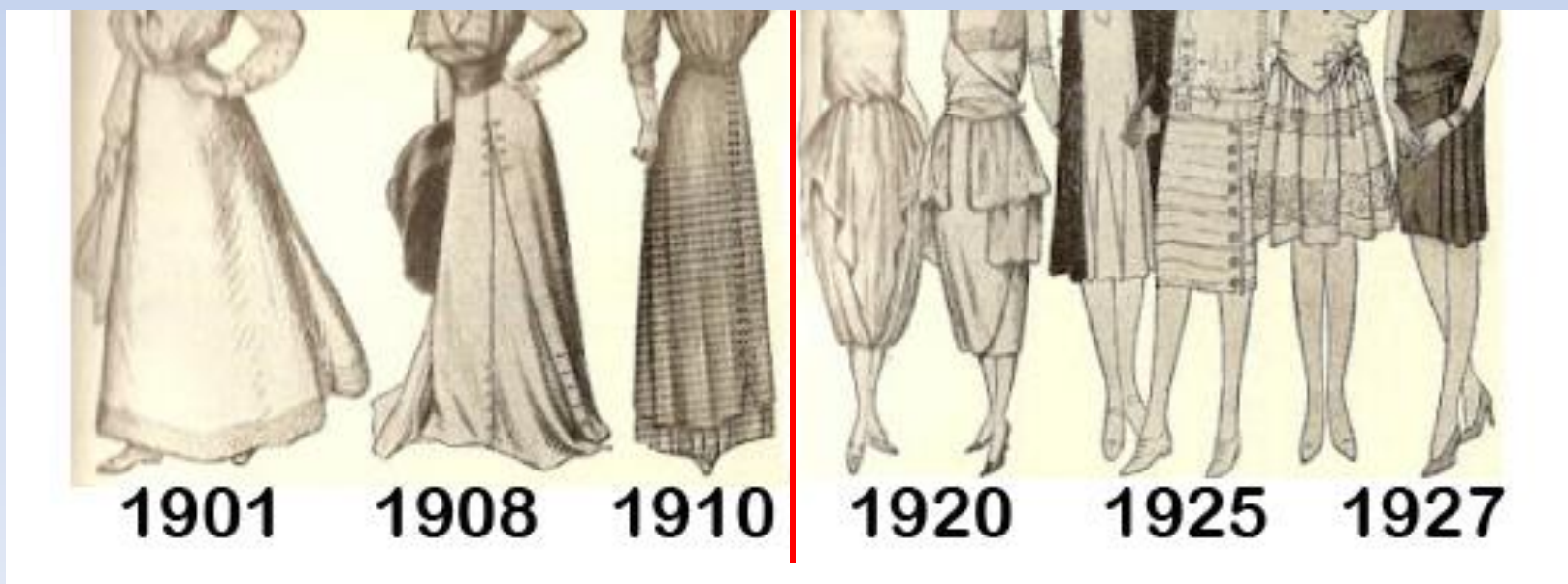
“And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.” Revelation 18:4



Many years ago, God's prophetess wrote:

“The church has turned back from following Christ her Leader and is steadily retreating toward Egypt.” {5T 217.2} 1882

“Daily the church is being converted to the world.” {COL 315.3} 1900



If this was the condition of our church over 100 years ago, do we have clear evidence that the church at large has turned around? Or is the church still, daily, being converted to the world?

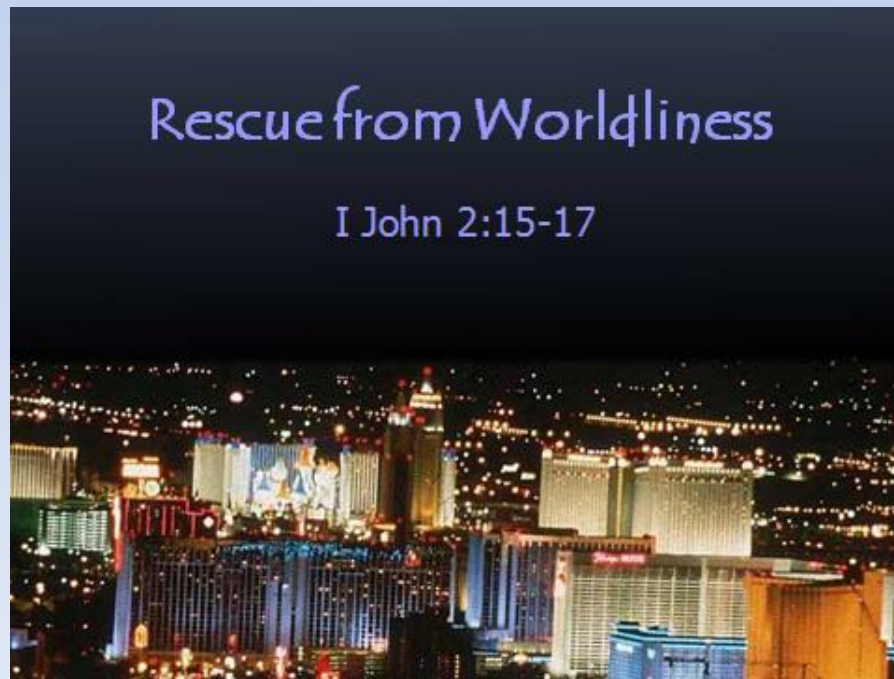
How far has the church traveled toward the world in over 100 years, one step at a time?



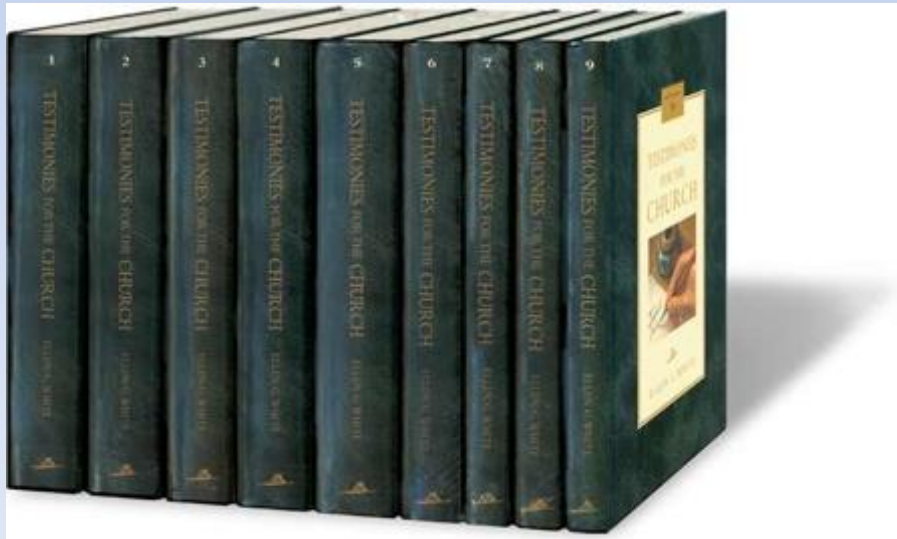
Let's say, for sake of illustration, that the church has taken 1 step toward the world per year, for 100 years. So now, we are 100 steps closer to the world as a church. That would mean that there are 100 steps that we need to backtrack in order to get back to where God wants us to be.



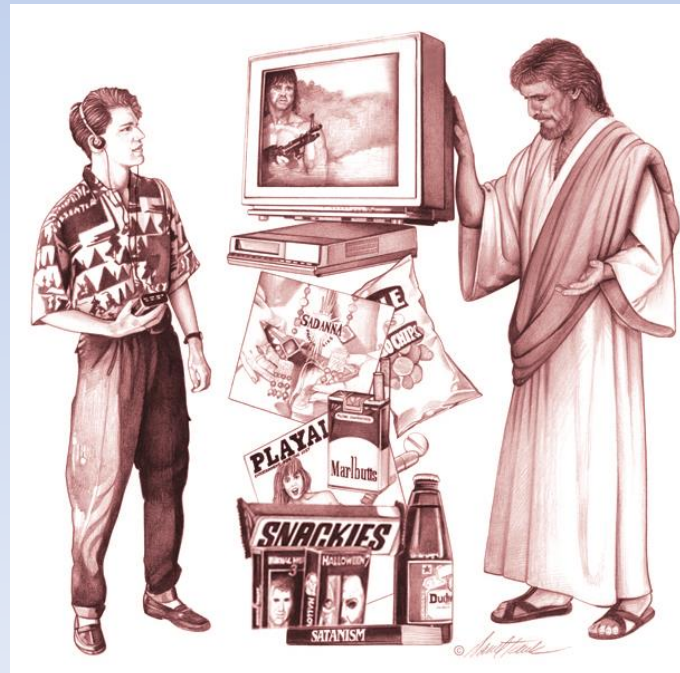
Will this be an easy journey? Or will there be some deep heart-searching and self-denial necessary? Is there a need for corporate repentance for our worldliness? How is this church-wide reformation going to take place? We don't have Elijah to gather us on Mt. Carmel, or John the Baptist preaching by the Jordan calling God's people to repentance.



But we do have the Spirit of Prophecy, and the messages there are plain and pointed. The problem is, these messages are unread and unappreciated. And while most SDA's claim to believe them, many of the counsels are discounted and ignored. Especially when it comes to the counsel regarding following the fashions of the world. We seem to turn a deaf ear to what we don't want to hear. It's not popular to study dress reform.



Those 100 steps we have taken toward the world involve more than external following of the fashions and practices. It has to do with our heart condition, our philosophy toward God's standards. This inward journey away from God and toward the world is reflected in our clothing, our entertainment, our music, our diet, and many other worldly pursuits. We need an internal revival so God can purge us of our idols and bring about reformation.



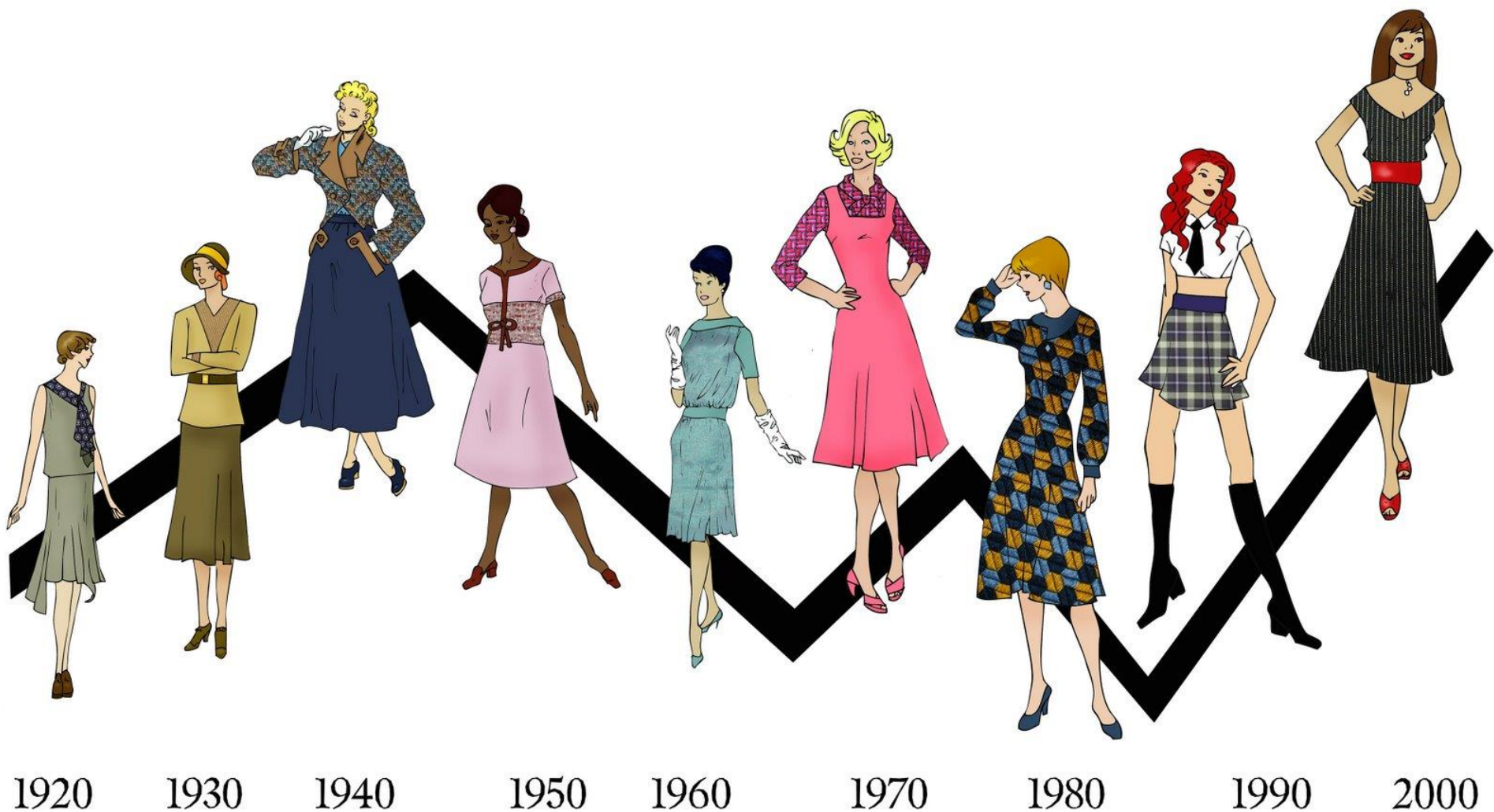
“When the church is converted, there will be a very great reformation in dress. . . . Many of you who profess the name of Christ, both old and young, have walked away from Jesus into much appearance and display.” {PH157 14.2} (This was written in 1897, during the time when the standard of modesty for society included a long, full garment. What would she say today?)

If we as a church have 100 steps to retrace to God’s ideal, we shouldn’t be contented with retracing just 10 steps, and think that’s enough. Even going back 50 or 75 steps doesn’t get us to where God wants us. We need to retrace our steps to the point where we know God approved.

We can trace the point of God's approval back to 1915 when the women of God wore clothing that fully covered and concealed the body, which was consistent with the 6000 years before that. We have no divine approval of fashions once the skirts started to rise.



It just doesn't make sense that God would change His standard of modesty for women during the last 100 years of earth's history, so they could fit in with the world!



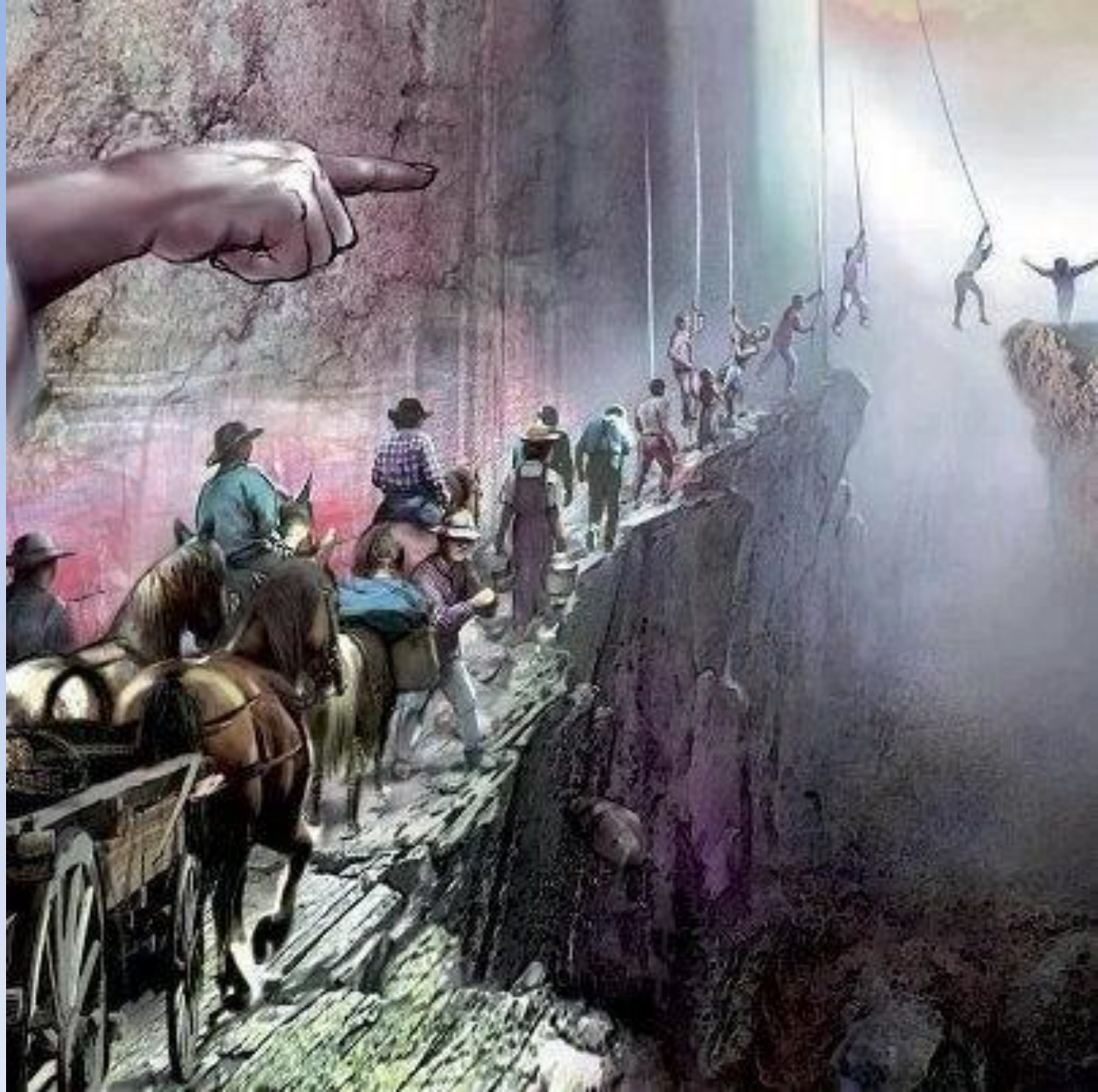
What a tragedy it is that the final generation, who are called to overcome on every point, and be fully clothed with the righteousness of Christ, has sunk to the lowest standard of modesty of any generation ever!



Can God's true people follow the fashions of the world when it is at the lowest level, while aspiring to attain the highest level of purity and holiness? It doesn't make sense.



Jesus is
calling us to
walk on the
NARROW
way.



How many steps will the Holy Spirit lead us to take? All 100 steps! While it may be a process, we simply do not have another 100 years to get back to where God's wants us to be. The important thing is that we are walking toward God, and not continuing to walk toward the world. God is willing to help us take steps in the right direction toward Him. By His strength we can stand in opposition against the fashions of the world, and seek to please Him in our appearance.



Here is why we believe that full covering is God's standard of modesty:

- Historical evidence indicates that from Bible times until approximately 1915, cultured and civilized women, especially godly women, were fully covered by a long, full garment.
- Ellen White upheld this standard, and strongly opposed violations of this standard. She condemned the hoop skirts and the American Costume as abominations to the Lord because they failed to maintain this standard of modesty.

- Ellen White stated that Paul's statement in 1 Tim. 2:9 that women should be clothed with modest apparel rebukes the immodesty of short (knee length) skirts, even with pants underneath.
- Ellen White stated that women's limbs should be clothed as thoroughly as men's, and that women's ankles should be covered.

(All of these quotations and supporting evidence are fully document in our other presentations.)

What we are presenting is not a man-made test, mere human opinion. We don't promote rules to compel people to follow God's way.

We are simply uplifting God's standard that has been trailing in the dust for many years. Our leaders of yesteryear who witnessed the gradual lowering of standards are now gone. Many spoke out in loving appeals, but sadly, many remained silent. Some were even ringleaders in following the immodest fashions.

What will be our response today? Will we continue on in rebellion, or will we turn around, with repentant hearts?

We have a choice before us, as women of God. Will we lay aside our own desires, and accept God's standard?

Will you, dear sister, make this commitment: "Make it the law of your life to eat, to drink, to dress, to do everything you do, to the glory of God. Let no influence or circumstance seduce you from conscientious, holy piety." MS 167, July, 1897

God does care what we wear. Our clothes are either glorifying Him, or exalting self and promoting worldliness. We can know for a certainty what God's standard of modesty is.

“Will my sisters accept this style of dress and refuse to imitate the fashions that are devised by Satan and continually changing?” {4T 640.2} 1881

What is this style of dress that Ellen White was appealing the sisters to wear?

“A simple, unadorned dress of modest length. . . short enough to avoid the mud and filth of the streets.” In other words, it would be ankle length, and it would have had sleeves that covered the arms, and a high neckline. “The same attention should be given to the clothing of the limbs as with the short dress.” {4T 640.1} (The “short dress” was 8-10 inches from the floor and had pants underneath.)

Apart from the modesty issue, because it is the fashion to bare the arms and shoulders, women follow this fashion even when it would be more comfortable for them to cover their limbs. Especially in air conditioned homes, cars, churches and public buildings, it is more healthful to cover the limbs. Ellen White clearly said that women's limbs should be covered as thoroughly as men's. Compare the man and woman here.



Notice this counsel from Ellen White: “We advocate that the limbs of women should not be exposed, but sensibly, neatly, and comfortably, clad.” {HR, May 1, 1872 par. 3}

“We inquire, Why should not women clothe their limbs as thoroughly as men do theirs?” {HR, May 1, 1872 par. 11}

“In order for women to be protected against the sudden changes of our variable climate, the feet and limbs must be equally clothed as other portions of the body. The arms and hands being near the heart will better take care of themselves, for they are not in as much danger as the lower limbs. The feet and limbs need especial care.” {HR, May 1, 1872 par. 12}

What is the excuse for continuing to wear the fashions of the world which are out of harmony with God's standard?



“It is a shame to our sisters to so forget their holy character and their duty to God as to imitate the fashions of the world. There is no excuse for us except the perversity of our own hearts. We do not extend our influence by such a course. It is so inconsistent with our profession of faith that it makes us ridiculous in the eyes of worldlings.” {4T 641.1}

The fashions of the world include any style that is not in harmony with God's standard. They should be very easy for us to detect!



Too low neck

Too short sleeves

Too showy

Too tight

Too short length

Too high heels



We could go through all the fashions that have been popular for the last 100 years, and clearly see all the styles that were out of harmony with God's standard. Styles change. God's standard is changeless!

Today, we can find attractive styles that are in harmony with God's standard.



But, what if there are no styles in current fashion that are in harmony with God's standard? Does that give us an excuse to follow the fashions of the day, so we can "fit in"?

"Our only safety is to stand as God's peculiar people. We must not yield one inch to the customs and fashions of this degenerate age, but stand in moral independence, making no compromise with its corrupt and idolatrous practices." {CG 449.3}

Even if all the world wears immodest styles, we cannot afford to compromise and lower God's standard.

“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.” {1T 458.4}



Let us pray for that noble independence and moral courage to follow God's standard of modesty. We have been blessed that maxi skirts are currently in fashion. We can wear this style because it is in harmony with God's standard.



Now you can understand the devastating effect this little poem has had on our church's philosophy of dress:

“They will not be the first to adopt the new styles of dress or the last to lay the old aside.”

In words, as fashions, the same rule will hold; Alike fantastic, if too new, or old: Be not the first by whom the new are tried, Nor yet the last to lay the old aside.

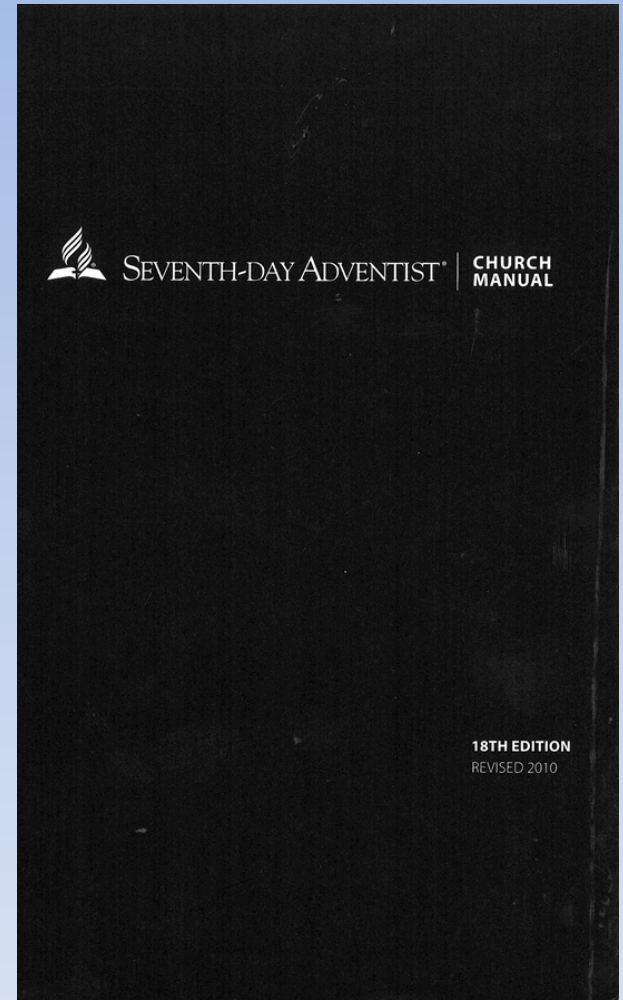


Alexander Pope
English poet
1688-1744

QuoteHD.com

I am happy to report that, after more than 50 years of shaping our ideals regarding dress standards, as of 2010, this philosophy has been removed from our official church manual!

Now it is time to remove it from our hearts. How I pray that we as a church will lay aside this idea which confuses styles and standards!



Let us determine NEVER to adopt any style of dress that is contrary to the Bible standard which has been demonstrated by holy women throughout history.

And NEVER are we to lay aside the old standards, but instead we are to “ask for the old paths, where *is* the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.” Jer. 6:16



God wants His daughters to be preparing for translation, when they will be clothed with white raiment down to the foot, forever!

Tragically, the fashion worshippers will not be found in that number. Let us wake up before it is forever too late!

“And as soon as any have a desire to imitate the fashions of the world, that they do not immediately subdue, just so soon God ceases to acknowledge them as His children.” {1T 137}



As we seek for a revival of primitive godliness, let us also be willing to wear the apparel which is reflective of primitive godliness. "So the dress of Christ's followers should be symbolic." {6T 96.2}





“Our words, our actions, and our dress are daily, living preachers, gathering with Christ or scattering abroad. This is no trivial matter to be passed off with a jest. The subject of dress demands serious reflection and much prayer.” {4T 641.3}

May God help us as we pray for revival and reformation in our church, that we may discover God's true standard of modesty for the daughters of God.





We invite you to read
our other presentations
on this topic, which can
be found at
www.SistersInSkirts.com

May God bless you!