

# Christian Women Dress Code

## What does the Spirit of Prophecy say?

(Testimonies for the church)

**“There should be uniformity as to the length of the reform dress among Sabbathkeepers” .**

“ I would earnestly recommend uniformity in length, and would say that **nine inches** as nearly accords with my views of the matter as I am able to express it in inches”

(The spirit of prophecy)

**EXTRACTS FROM:**

**Testimonies for the Church Volume One:**

**[Ellen G. White, Year 1868]**

## Chapter 33—The Laodicean Church (Page 189 to 192)

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

The inhabitants of earth are growing more and more corrupt, and the line of distinction between them and the Israel of God must be more plain, or the curse which falls upon worldlings will fall on God's professed people. I was directed to the following scriptures. Said the angel: "They are to instruct God's people." 1 Timothy 2:9, 10: "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works." 1 Peter 3:3-5: "Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves."

Young and old, God is now testing you. You are deciding your own eternal destiny. Your pride, your love to follow the fashions of the world, your vain and empty

conversation, your selfishness, are all put in the scale, and the weight of evil is fearfully against you. You are poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked. While evil is increasing and taking deep root, it is choking the good seed which has been sown in the heart; and soon the word that was given concerning Eli's house will be spoken to the angels of God concerning you: Your sins "shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering forever." Many, I saw, were flattering themselves that they were good Christians, who have not a single ray of light from Jesus. They know not what it is to be renewed by the grace of God. They have no living experience for themselves in the things of God. And I saw that the Lord was whetting His sword in heaven to cut them down. Oh, that every lukewarm professor could realize the clean work that God is about to make among His professed people! Dear friends, do not deceive yourselves concerning your condition. You cannot deceive God. Says the True Witness: "I know thy works." The third angel is leading up a people, step by step, higher and higher. At every step they will be tested.

The plan of systematic benevolence [See Appendix.] is pleasing to God. I was pointed back to the days of the apostles, and saw that God laid the plan by the descent of His Holy Spirit, and that by the gift of prophecy He counseled His people in regard to a system of benevolence. All were to share in this work of imparting of their carnal things to those who ministered unto them in spiritual things. They were also taught that the widows and fatherless had a claim upon their charity. Pure and undefiled religion is defined, to visit the widows and fatherless in their affliction, and to keep unspotted from the world. I saw that this was not merely to sympathize with them by comforting words in their affliction, but to aid them, if needy, with our substance. Young men and women to whom God has given health can obtain a great blessing by aiding the widow and the fatherless in their affliction. I saw that God requires young men to sacrifice more for the good of others. He claims more of them than they are willing to perform. If they keep themselves unspotted from the world, cease to follow its fashions, and lay by that which the lovers of pleasure spend in useless articles to gratify pride, and give it to the worthy afflicted ones, and to sustain the cause, they will have the approval of Him who says, "I know thy works."

There is order in heaven, and God is well pleased with the efforts of His people in trying to move with system and order in His work on earth. I saw that there should be order in the church of God, and that system is needed in carrying forward successfully the last great message of mercy to the world. God is leading His people in the plan of systematic benevolence, and this is one of the very points to which God is bringing up His people which will cut the closest with some. With them this cuts off the right arm, and plucks out the right eye, while to others it is a great relief. To noble, generous souls the demands upon them seem very small, and they cannot be content to do so little. Some have large possessions, and if they lay by them in store for charitable purposes as God has prospered them, the offering seems to them like a large sum. The selfish heart clings as closely to a small offering as to a larger one, and makes a small sum look very large.

I was pointed back to the commencement of this last work. Then some who loved the truth could consistently talk of sacrificing. They devoted much to the cause of God, to send the truth to others. They have sent their treasure beforehand to heaven. Brethren, you who have received the truth at a later period, and who have large possessions, God has called you into the field, not merely that you may enjoy the truth, but that you may aid with your substance in carrying forward this great work. And if you have an interest in this work, you will venture out and invest something in it, that others may be saved by your efforts, and you reap with them the final reward. Great sacrifices have been made and privations endured to place the truth in a clear light before you. Now God calls upon you, in your turn, to make great efforts and to sacrifice in order to place the truth before those who are in darkness. God requires this. You profess to believe the truth; let your works testify to the fact. Unless your faith works, it is dead. Nothing but a living faith will save you in the fearful scenes which are just before you.

## Chapter 52—A Question Answered

The question is often asked by those who fall under the influence of my enemies: “Is Sister White getting proud? I have heard that she wore a bonnet filled with bows and ribbons.”

I hope I am not getting proud. My manner of dress is the same as it has been for several years. I am opposed to hoops and to wearing unnecessary bows and ribbons. I have worn one velvet bonnet two years without change of strings except to cleanse them with soap and water. I put the same velvet upon a new frame and am wearing it again this winter. I believe Sabbathkeepers should dress plainly and study economy in dress. Those who wish to talk will talk though we give them no occasion. I do not expect to suit every taste in regard to dress, but I believe it to be my duty to wear durable clothing, to dress neatly and orderly, and suit my own taste if it does not disagree with the word of God.

## Chapter 78—Extremes in Dress

We do not think it in accordance with our faith to dress in the American costume, to wear hoops, or to go to an extreme in wearing long dresses which sweep the sidewalks and streets. If women would wear their dresses so as to clear the filth of the streets an inch or two, their dresses would be modest, and they could be kept clean much more easily, and would wear longer. Such a dress would be in accordance with our faith. I have received several letters from sisters inquiring my opinion in regard to wearing corded skirts. These questions were answered in a letter which I sent to a sister in Wisconsin. I will give the letter here for the benefit of others:

“We as a people do not believe it our duty to go out of the world to be out of the fashion. If we have a neat, plain, modest, and comfortable plan of dress, and worldlings choose to dress as we do, shall we change this mode of dress in order to be different from the world? No, we should not be odd or singular in our dress for the sake of differing from the world, lest they despise us for so doing. Christians are the

light of the world, the salt of the earth. Their dress should be neat and modest, their conversation chaste and heavenly, and their deportment blameless.

“How shall we dress? If any wore heavy quilts before the introduction of hoops, merely for show and not for comfort, they sinned against themselves by injuring their health, which it is their duty to preserve. If any wear them now merely to look like hoops, they commit sin; for they are seeking to imitate a fashion which is disgraceful. Corded skirts were worn before hoops were introduced. I have worn a light corded skirt since I was fourteen years of age, not for show but for comfort and decency. Because hoops were introduced I did not lay off my corded skirt for them. Shall I now throw it aside because the fashion of hoops is introduced? No; that would be carrying the matter to an extreme. “I should ever bear in mind that I must be an example and therefore must not run into this or that fashion, but pursue an even and independent course and not be driven to extremes in regard to dress. To throw off my corded skirt that was always modest and comfortable, and put on a thin cotton skirt, and thus appear ridiculous in the other extreme, would be wrong, for then I would not set a right example, but would put an argument into the mouths of hoop wearers. To justify themselves for wearing hoops they would point to me as one who does not wear them, and say that they would not disgrace themselves in that way. By going to such extremes, we would destroy all the influence which we might otherwise have had, and lead the wearers of hoops to justify their course. We must dress modestly, without the least regard to the hoop fashion. “There is a medium position in these things. Oh, that we all might wisely find that position and keep it. In this solemn time let us all search our own hearts, repent of our sins, and humble ourselves before God. The work is between God and our own souls. It is an individual work, and all will have enough to do without criticizing the dress, actions, and motives of their brethren and sisters. ‘Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought His judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord’s anger.’ Here is our work. It is not sinners who are here addressed, but all the meek of the earth, who have wrought His judgments or kept His commandments. There is work for everyone, and if all will obey, we shall see sweet union in the ranks of Sabbathkeepers.”

## Chapter 83—Reform in Dress

[See also in Appendix.]

Dear Brethren and Sisters,

My apology for calling your attention again to the subject of dress is that some do not seem to understand what I have before written; and an effort is made, perhaps by those who do not wish to believe what I have written, to make confusion in our churches upon this important subject. Many letters have been written to me, stating difficulties, which I have not had time to answer; and now, to answer the many inquiries, I give the following statements, which it is hoped will forever put the subject at rest, so far as my testimonies are concerned. Some contend that what I wrote in Testimony for the Church No. 10 does not agree with my testimony in the work entitled, How to Live. They were written from the same view, hence are not two views, one contradicting the other, as some may imagine; if there is any difference, it is simply in the form of expression. In Testimony for the Church No. 10, I stated as follows: “No occasion should be given to unbelievers to reproach our faith. We are considered odd and singular, and should not take a course to lead unbelievers to think us more so than our faith requires us to be. Some who believe the truth may think that it would be more healthful for the sisters to adopt the American costume, yet if that mode of dress would cripple our influence among unbelievers so that we could not so readily gain access to them, we should by no means adopt it, though we suffered much in consequence. But some are deceived in thinking there is so much benefit to be received from this costume. While it may prove a benefit to some, it is an injury to others.

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

“There is an increasing tendency to have women in their dress and appearance as near like the other sex as possible, and to fashion their dress very much like that of

men, but God pronounces it abomination. 'In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety.' 1 Timothy 2:9. “

Those who feel called out to join the movement in favor of woman's rights and the so-called dress reform might as well sever all connection with the third angel's message. The spirit which attends the one cannot be in harmony with the other. The Scriptures are plain upon the relations and rights of men and women. Spiritualists have, to quite an extent, adopted this singular mode of dress.

Seventh-day Adventists, who believe in the restoration of the gifts, are often branded as spiritualists. Let them adopt this costume, and their influence is dead. The people would place them on a level with spiritualists and would refuse to listen to them. “ With the so-called dress reform there goes a spirit of levity and boldness just in keeping with the dress. Modesty and reserve seem to depart from many as they adopt that style of dress.

I was shown that God would have us take a course consistent and explainable. Let the sisters adopt the American costume and they would destroy their own influence and that of their husbands. They would become a byword and a derision. Our Saviour says: 'Ye are the light of the world.' 'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.' There is a great work for us to do in the world, and God would not have us take a course to lessen or destroy our influence with the world.” The foregoing was given me as a reproof to those who are inclined to adopt a style of dress resembling that worn by men; but at the same time, I was shown the evils of the common style of woman's dress, and to correct these, also gave the following found in Testimony for the Church, No. 10: “We do not think it in accordance with our faith to dress in the American costume, to wear hoops, or to go to an extreme in wearing long dresses which sweep the sidewalks and streets. If women would wear their dresses so as to clear the filth of the streets an inch or

two, their dresses would be modest, and they could be kept clean much more easily, and would wear longer. Such a dress would be in accordance with our faith.”

I will now give an extract from what I have elsewhere said upon this subject: “Christians should not take pains to make themselves a gazing stock by dressing differently from the world. But if, when following out their convictions of duty in respect to dressing modestly and healthfully, they find themselves out of fashion, they should not change their dress in order to be like the world; but they should manifest a noble independence and moral courage to be right, if all the world differ from them.”

If the world introduces a modest, convenient, and healthful mode of dress, which is in accordance with the Bible, it will not change our relation to God or to the world to adopt such a style of dress. Christians should follow Christ and make their dress conform to God’s word. They should shun extremes. They should humbly pursue a straightforward course, irrespective of applause or of censure, and should cling to the right because of its own merits. “Women should clothe their limbs with regard to health and comfort. Their feet and limbs need to be clad as warmly as men’s. The length of the fashionable dress is objectionable for several reasons:

1. It is extravagant and unnecessary to have the dress of such a length that it will sweep the sidewalk and street.
2. A dress thus long gathers dew from the grass, and mud from the streets, and is therefore unclean.
3. In its bedraggled condition it comes in contact with the sensitive ankles, which are not sufficiently protected, quickly chilling them, and thus endangering health and life. This is one of the greatest causes of catarrh and of scrofulous swellings.
4. The unnecessary length is an additional weight upon the hips and bowels.
5. It hinders the walking, and is also often in other people’s way.

“There is still another style of dress which is adopted by a class of so-called dress reformers. They imitate the opposite sex as nearly as possible. They wear the cap, pants, vest, coat, and boots, the last of which is the most sensible part of the costume. Those who adopt and advocate this style of dress carry the so-called dress reform to very objectionable lengths. Confusion will be the result. Some who adopt this costume may be correct in their general views upon the health question, but they would be instrumental in accomplishing vastly more good if they did not carry the matter of dress to such extremes. “In this style of dress God’s order has been reversed and His special directions disregarded. Deuteronomy 22:5: “The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman’s garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the Lord thy God.’”

God would not have His people adopt this style of dress. It is not modest apparel, and is not at all fitting for modest, humble women who profess to be Christ’s followers. God’s prohibitions are lightly regarded by all who advocate doing away with the distinction of dress between males and females. The extreme position taken by some dress reformers upon this subject cripple their influence. “God designed that there should be a plain distinction between the dress of men and women, and has considered the matter of sufficient importance to give explicit directions in regard to it; for the same dress worn by both sexes would cause confusion and great increase of crime. Were the apostle Paul alive, and should he behold women professing godliness with this style of dress, he would utter a rebuke. ‘In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.’ The mass of professed Christians utterly disregards the teachings of the apostles, and wear gold, pearls, and costly array. “God’s loyal people are the light of the world and the salt of the earth, and they should ever remember that their influence is of value. Were they to exchange the extreme long dress for the extreme short one, they would, to a great extent, destroy their influence. Unbelievers, whom it is their duty to benefit and seek to bring to the Lamb of God,

would be disgusted. Many improvements can be made in the dress of women in reference to health without making so great a change as to disgust the beholder.

“The form should not be compressed in the least with corsets and whalebones. The dress should be perfectly easy that the lungs and heart may have healthy action. The dress should reach somewhat below the top of the boot, but should be short enough to clear the filth of the sidewalk and street without being raised by the hand. A still shorter dress than this would be proper, convenient, and healthful for women when doing their housework, and especially for those who are obliged to perform more or less out-of-door labor. With this style of dress, one light skirt, or two at most, is all that is necessary, and this should be buttoned on to a waist, or suspended by straps. The hips were not formed to bear heavy weights. The heavy skirts worn by some, and allowed to drag down upon the hips, have been the cause of various diseases which are not easily cured. The sufferers seem to be ignorant of the cause of their sufferings, and continue to violate the laws of their being by girding their waists and wearing heavy skirts, until they are made lifelong invalids. When told of their mistake, 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. I do not speak unadvisedly when I say that the way in which women clothe themselves, together with their indulgence of appetite, is the greatest cause of their present feeble, diseased condition. There is but one woman in a thousand who clothes her limbs as she should. Whatever may be the length of the dress, their limbs should be clothed as thoroughly as are the men’s. This may be done by wearing lined pants, gathered into a band and fastened about the ankle, or made full and tapering at the bottom; and these should come down long enough to meet the shoe. The limbs and ankles thus clothed are protected against a current of air. If the feet and limbs are kept comfortable with warm clothing, the circulation will be equalized, and the blood will remain pure and healthy because it is not chilled or hindered in its natural passage through the system.”

The principal difficulty in the minds of many is in regard to the length of the dress. Some insist that “the top of the boot,” has reference to the top of such boots as are usually worn by men, which reach nearly to the knee. If it were the custom of women to wear such boots, then these persons should not be blamed for professing to understand the matter as they have; but as women generally do not wear such boots, these persons have no right to understand me as they have pretended. In order to show what I did mean, and that there is a harmony in my testimonies on this subject, I will here give an extract from my manuscripts written about two years ago:

“Since the article on dress appeared in How to Live, there has been with some a misunderstanding of the idea I wished to convey. They have taken the extreme meaning of that which I have written in regard to the length of the dress, and have evidently had a very hard time over the matter. With their distorted views of the matter, they have discussed the question of shortening the dress until their spiritual vision has become so confused that they can only see men as trees walking. They have thought they could see a contradiction in my article on dress, recently published in How to Live, and that article on the same subject contained in Testimony for the Church, No. 10. I must contend that I am the best judge of the things which have been presented before me in vision; and none need fear that I shall by my life contradict my own testimony, or that I shall fail to notice any real contradiction in the views given me. “In my article on dress in How to Live I tried to present a healthful, convenient, economical, yet modest and becoming style of dress for Christian women to wear, if they should choose so to do. I tried, perhaps imperfectly, to describe such a dress. ‘The dress should reach somewhat below the top of the boot, but should be short enough to clear the filth of the sidewalk and street, without being raised by the hand.’ Some have contended that by the top of the boot, I meant the top of such boots as men usually wear. But by ‘the top of the boot,’ I designed to be understood the top of a boot, or **gaiter shoe**, usually worn by women. Had I thought I should be misunderstood, I would have written more definitely. If it were the custom for women to wear high-topped boots like men, I could see sufficient excuse for this misunderstanding. I think the language is very plain as it now reads, and no one needs to be thrown into confusion. Please read again: ‘The dress should reach somewhat below the top of the boot.’ Now look at the qualification: ‘But should be short enough

to clear the filth of the sidewalk and street, without being raised by the hand. A still shorter dress than this would be proper, convenient, and healthful for women when doing their housework, and especially for those who are obliged to perform more or less out-of-door labor.’ “I can see no excuse for reasonable persons misunderstanding and perverting my meaning. In speaking of the length of the dress, had I referred to high-topped boots reaching nearly to the knee, why should I have added, ‘but [the dress] should be short enough to clear the filth of the sidewalk and street, without being raised by the hand’?

If high-topped boots were meant, the dress would most certainly be short enough to keep clear of the filth of the street without being raised, and would be sufficiently short for all working purposes. Reports have been circulated that ‘Sister White wears the American costume,’ and that this style of dress is generally adopted and worn by the sisters in Battle Creek. I am here reminded of the saying that ‘a lie will go around the world while truth is putting on his boots.’ One sister gravely told me that she had received the idea that the American costume was to be adopted by the Sabbathkeeping sisters, and that if such a style of dress should be enforced, she would not submit to it, for she never could bring her mind to wear such a dress. “In regard to my wearing the short dress, I would say, I have but one short dress, which is not more than a finger’s length shorter than the dresses I usually wear. I have worn this short dress occasionally. In the winter I rose early, and putting on my short dress, which did not require to be raised by my hands to keep it from dragging in the snow, I walked briskly from one to two miles before breakfast. I have worn it several times to the office, when obliged to walk through light snow, or when it was very wet or muddy. Four or five sisters of the Battle Creek church have prepared for themselves a short dress to wear while doing their washing and house cleaning. A short dress has not been worn in the streets of the city of Battle Creek, and has never been worn to meeting.

My views were calculated to correct the present fashion, the extreme long dress, trailing upon the ground, and also to correct the extreme short dress, reaching about

to the knees, which is worn by a certain class. I was shown that we should shun both extremes. By wearing the dress reaching about to the top of a woman's gaiter boot we shall escape the evils of the extreme long dress, and shall also shun the evils and notoriety of the extreme short dress. "I would advise those who prepare for themselves a short dress for working purposes to manifest taste and neatness in getting it up. Have it arranged in order, to fit the form nicely. Even if it is a working dress, it should be made becoming, and should be cut after a pattern. Sisters when about their work should not put on clothing which would make them look like images to frighten the crows from the corn. It is more gratifying to their husbands and children to see them in a becoming, well-fitting attire than it can be to mere visitors or strangers. Some wives and mothers seem to think it is no matter how they look when about their work and when they are seen only by their husbands and children, but they are very particular to dress in taste for the eyes of those who have no special claims upon them. Is not the esteem and love of husband and children more to be prized than that of strangers or common friends? The happiness of husband and children should be more sacred to every wife and mother than that of all others. Christian sisters should not at any time dress extravagantly, but should at all times dress as neatly, modestly, and healthfully as their work will allow."

The above-described dress we believe to be worthy of the name of the reform short dress. It is being adopted at the Western Health Reform Institute and by some of the sisters at Battle Creek and other places where the matter is properly set before the people. In wide contrast with this modest dress is the so-called American costume, resembling very nearly the dress worn by men. It consists of a vest, pants, and a dress resembling a coat and reaching about halfway from the hip to the knee. This dress I have opposed, from what has been shown me as in harmony with the word of God; while the other I have recommended as modest, comfortable, convenient, and healthful.

Another reason which I offer as an apology for calling attention again to the subject of dress is that not one in twenty of the sisters who profess to believe the Testimonies

has taken the first step in the dress reform. It may be said that Sister White generally wears her dresses in public longer than the dress she recommends to others. To this I reply, When I visit a place to speak to the people where the subject is new and prejudice exists, I think it best to be careful and not close the ears of the people by wearing a dress which would be objectionable to them. But after bringing the subject before them and fully explaining my position, I then appear before them in the reform dress, illustrative of my teachings. As to the matter of wearing hoops, the reform in dress is entirely in advance of them. It cannot use them. And it is altogether too late to talk about wearing hoops, large or small. My position upon that question is precisely what it ever has been, and I hope not to be held responsible for what others may say on this subject, or for the course pursued by those who put on hoops. I protest against the perversion of my private conversations on this subject, and ask that what I have written and published be regarded as my settled position.

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## Chapter 88—The Reform Dress

In answer to letters of inquiry from many sisters relative to the proper length of the reform dress, I would say that in our part of the State of Michigan we have adopted the uniform length of about nine inches from the floor. I take this opportunity to answer these inquiries in order to save the time required to answer so many letters.

I should have spoken before, but have waited to see something definite on this point in the Health Reformer. I would earnestly recommend uniformity in length, and would say that nine inches as nearly accords with my views of the matter as I am able to express it in inches. As I travel from place to place I find that the reform dress is not rightly represented, and am made to feel that something more definite should be said that there may be uniform action in this matter. This style of dress is unpopular, and for this reason neatness and taste should be exercised by those who adopt it. I have spoken once upon this point, yet some fail to follow the advice given. **There should be uniformity as to the length of the reform dress among Sabbathkeepers.** Those who make themselves peculiar by adopting this dress should not think for a moment

that it is unnecessary to show order, taste, and neatness. Before putting on the reform dress, our sisters should obtain patterns of the pants and sack worn with it. It is a great injury to the dress reform to have persons introduce into a community a style which in every particular needs reforming before it can rightly represent the reform dress. Wait, sisters, till you can put the dress on right.

In some places there is great opposition to the short dress. But when I see some dresses worn by the sisters, I do not wonder that people are disgusted and condemn the dress. Where the dress is represented as it should be, all candid persons are constrained to admit that it is modest and convenient. In some of our churches I have seen all kinds of reform dresses, and yet not one answering the description presented before me. Some appear with white muslin pants, white sleeves, dark delaine dress, and a sleeveless sack of the same description as the dress. Some have a calico dress with pants cut after their own fashioning, not after "the pattern," without starch or stiffening to give them form, and clinging close to the limbs.

There is certainly nothing in these dresses manifesting taste or order. Such a dress would not recommend itself to the good judgment of sensible-minded persons. In every sense of the word, it is a deformed dress.

Sisters who have opposing husbands have asked my advice in regard to their adopting the short dress contrary to the wishes of the husband. I advise them to wait. I do not consider the dress question of so vital importance as the Sabbath. Concerning the latter there can be no hesitation. But the opposition which many might receive should they adopt the dress reform would be more injurious to health than the dress would be beneficial. Several of these sisters have said to me: "My husband likes your dress; he says he has not one word of fault to find with it." This has led me to see the necessity of our sisters' representing the dress reform aright, by manifesting neatness, order, and uniformity in dress. I shall have patterns prepared to take with me as we travel, ready to hand to our sisters whom we shall meet, or to send by mail to all who may order them. Our address will be given in the Review. Those who adopt the short dress should manifest taste in the selection of colors. Those who are unable

to buy new cloth must do the best they can to exercise taste and ingenuity in fixing over old garments, making them new again. Be particular to have the pants and dress of the same color and material, or you will appear fantastic. Old garments may be cut after a correct pattern and arranged tastefully, and appear like new. I beg of you, sisters, not to form your patterns after your own particular ideas. While there are correct patterns and good tastes, there are also incorrect patterns and bad tastes.

This dress does not require hoops, and I hope that it will never be disgraced by them. Our sisters need not wear many skirts to distend the dress. It appears much more becoming falling about the form naturally over one or two light skirts. Moreen is excellent material for outside skirts; it retains its stiffness and is durable. If anything is worn in skirts, let it be very small. Quilts are unnecessary. Yet I frequently see them worn, and sometimes hanging a trifle below the dress. This gives it an immodest, untidy appearance. White skirts, worn with dark dresses, do not become the short dress. Be particular to have your skirts clean, neat, and nice; make them of good material and in all cases at least three inches shorter than the dress. If anything is worn to distend the skirt, let it be small and at least one quarter or one half a yard from the bottom of the dress or outside skirt. If a cord, or anything answering the place of cords, is placed directly around the bottom of the skirt, it distends the dress merely at the bottom, making it appear very unbecoming when the wearer is sitting or stooping. None need fear that I shall make dress reform one of my principal subjects as we travel from place to place. Those who have heard me upon this matter will have to act upon the light that has already been given. I have done my duty; I have borne my testimony, and those who have heard me and read that which I have written must now bear the responsibility of receiving or rejecting the light given. If they choose to venture to be forgetful hearers, and not doers of the work, they run their own risk and will be accountable to God for the course they pursue. I am clear. I shall urge none and condemn none.

This is not the work assigned me. God knows His humble, willing, obedient children and will reward them according to their faithful performance of His will. To many the

dress reform is too simple and humbling to be adopted. They cannot lift the cross. God works by simple means to separate and distinguish His children from the world; but some have so departed from the simplicity of the work and ways of God that they are above the work, not in it. I was referred to Numbers 15:38-41: “Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband of blue: and it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the Lord, and do them; and that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye use to go a whoring: that ye may remember, and do all My commandments, and be holy unto your God. I am the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I am the Lord your God.” Here God expressly commanded a very simple arrangement of dress for the children of Israel for the purpose of distinguishing them from the idolatrous nations around them. As they looked upon their peculiarity of dress, they were to remember that they were God’s commandment-keeping people, and that He had wrought in a miraculous manner to bring them from Egyptian bondage to serve Him, to be a holy people unto Him. They were not to serve their own desires, or to imitate the idolatrous nations around them, but to remain a distinct, separate people, that all who looked upon them might say: These are they whom God brought out of the land of Egypt, who keep the law of Ten Commandments. An Israelite was known to be such as soon as seen, for God through simple means distinguished him as His.

The order given by God to the children of Israel to place a ribbon of blue in their garments was to have no direct influence on their health, only as God would bless them by obedience, and the ribbon would keep in their memory the high claims of Jehovah and prevent them from mingling with other nations, uniting in their drunken feasts, and eating swine’s flesh and luxurious food detrimental to health. God would now have His people adopt the reform dress, not only to distinguish them from the world as His “peculiar people,” but because a reform in dress is essential to physical and mental health. God’s people have, to a great extent, lost their peculiarity, and have been gradually patterning after the world, and mingling with them, until they

have in many respects become like them. This is displeasing to God. He directs them, as He directed the children of Israel anciently, to come out from the world and forsake their idolatrous practices, not following their own hearts (for their hearts are unsanctified) or their own eyes, which have led them to depart from God and to unite with the world. Something must arise to lessen the hold of God's people upon the world. The reform dress is simple and healthful, yet there is a cross in it. I thank God for the cross and cheerfully bow to lift it.

We have been so united with the world that we have lost sight of the cross and do not suffer for Christ's sake. We should not wish to invent something to make a cross; but if God presents to us a cross, we should cheerfully bear it. In the acceptance of the cross, we are distinguished from the world, who love us not and ridicule our peculiarity. Christ was hated by the world because He was not of the world. Can His followers expect to fare better than their Master? If we pass along without receiving censure or frowns from the world we may be alarmed, for it is our conformity to the world which makes us so much like them that there is nothing to arouse their envy or malice; there is no collision of spirits. The world despises the cross. "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God." 1 Corinthians 1:18. "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." Galatians 6:14.

[See Appendix.]

## Appendix

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Pages 421, 456, Dress Reform—The dresses generally worn by women in America at the time this was written (1863, 1867), were very deleterious to health. They were especially objectionable because of their extreme length, the constriction of the waist by the corset, and the weight of the heavy skirts which were suspended from the hips. About a decade earlier a few women of national prominence initiated a movement to adopt a new style of dress that would be free from these serious objections. The new mode of dress was somewhat like the Turkish costume worn by men and women alike. The movement became so popular that for a time “dress reform” conventions were held annually. “The American costume,” here referred to by Mrs. White, was a modification of the earlier style and was sponsored by Dr. Harriet Austin of Dansville, New York. It combined the short skirt, “reaching about halfway from the hip to the knee,” with mannish-looking trousers, coat, and vest. See description on page 465. This “so-called reform dress” was in 1864 shown to Mrs. White to be unsuitable for adoption by God’s people.

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In 1865 Mrs. White, through How to Live, No. 6, appealed to our sisters to adopt a style of dress which was both modest and healthful. The next year the newly opened Health Reform Institute in Battle Creek took steps to design a pattern of dress that would correct the extremes of the short American costume or the ultra-long heavy dresses as commonly worn.

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In 1867 Testimony No. 11 appeared with its first article, “Reform in Dress.” See pages 456-466. In this the dress question was fully reviewed and further counsel given. A general pattern was recommended as embodying the principles revealed to Mrs. White, and was referred to as “worthy of the name of the reform short dress.” No particular pattern was revealed to her in vision, and, when discussing the matter at a later date, Mrs. White stated: “Some have supposed that the very pattern given was

the pattern that all were to adopt. This is not so. But something as simple as this would be the best we could adopt under the circumstances. No one precise style has been given me as the exact rule to guide all in their dress.”—E. G. White Letter 19, 1897. Quoted in *The Story of Our Health Message*, 442.

As the years passed, the prevailing styles of women’s dress changed for the better, becoming more sensible and healthful. The old health reform dress in its exact pattern was no longer urged, but there was ever a uniform testimony borne by Mrs. White regarding the fundamental principles that should guide the Christian in this matter. Thus in 1897 she wrote: “Let our sisters dress plainly, as many do, having the dress of good material, durable, modest, appropriate for this age, and let not the dress question fill the mind.”—*The Story of Our Health Message*, 442.

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Page 525—For further explanation of the subject of dress the reader is referred to *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, No. 30, article, “Simplicity in Dress.”