

Advent Movement Survey 6

Dress Reform

Study given by Helen Frazee - January 31, 1962

“‘My sisters, there is need of a dress reform among us. There are many errors in the present style of female dress.’ With these words [Sister] White introduced her sixth and last article on ‘Disease and Its causes,’ in the series entitled ‘How to Live,’ which appeared in print ... 1865” Dores Eugene Robinson, *The Story of Our Health Message*, page 112, third edition.

I thought tonight in our class we would discuss that phase of health reform that has to do with the dress reform. The historical facts will be of interest to you. Perhaps new to many of you are some of the facts concerning the beginning of the dress reform among us as a people.

I’d like us to go back in our imagination to 1850. As we picture the way women were dressed at that time, I’d like each of you to answer the question; was Sister White correct in saying, “There is a need in dress reform among us”?

In order to help us understand a little bit of how some of these things looked, that most of us have never seen, I have these dolls which we have dressed up to represent the different styles of dress that we are going to study tonight.

This one represents the fashionable dress of the year 1850. I will have to tell you a little bit about some of these things. Some of you, of course, know what was wrong with these dresses and I’d be glad for you to answer what you do remember. What do you remember was wrong with the dresses from a health standpoint of the time that we are speaking of?

They swept the street. The dresses were too long. All right. That was number one. Now, why did that have anything to do with health? Picked up dirt and something else: the wetness. That’s right, and these wet, dirty dresses would dangle around their limbs. And in what condition were their limbs, as far as clothing was concerned? Remember what they had on their limbs? They were scantily clothed. She spoke of them as scantily clothed limbs with these long, wet dresses dangling around the limbs.

Someone spoke of another difficulty? The hoops, that’s right. The hoops were from a modesty standpoint. I was thinking about health. Let’s get the health thoughts down first.

Too tight around the waist. That’s right. You remember that the ideal was for a woman’s husband to be able to get his two hands around her waist. Now, you think of compressing the waist to that little space. Think where the organs went. I don’t know exactly which direction they went, either up or down, but in whichever direction they went, imagine the

body trying to function with the waist compressed in that way.

So with a compressed waist, the long skirts. Where were these long skirts suspended from? Suspended from the hips. That's right. The tightness of the waist, the length of the dress dangling on the ground, all made this a very unhealthy dress.

From the modesty standpoint, there were some other features that weren't so good. These hoop skirts that distended the dresses - when the person had to get in or out of cars it made the dress a very immodest arrangement.

Then, can you see anything else from a standpoint of what we know as dress reform today? Perhaps you can't tell so much, because I wasn't able to get all the frills on this dress. But some of these pictures, taken from the Old Goldie's fashion book, show how the dresses were ornamented. They spent days and weeks making a dress to get all those ornaments on the dress.

Do you think with the dress of the world in this predicament, a dress reform is needed among us? Is that a good message back at that time? Very definitely. We can think of a number of things that we would like to see different, can't we, about the dress as it appeared back then?

Now, about this time, the women of the world began to be concerned about the matter of dress. They were tired of the ill health and the uselessness that this dress imposed upon them. They were not well, and they were not able to do much. You can see that with the dress of this length and all these heavy skirts. Not only did they have skirts as we know them, but they wore six or seven skirts, all hanging on the hips. Imagine a woman doing what normal women do today, in working and walking. All that was denied to the women at that time.

Around 1850, the women's suffrage movement began. One of the early things that the women wanted to do was to become emancipated from this terrible type of dress. There were three women that particularly led out in this work, as relates to the women's suffrage movement and the dress reform: Mrs. Elizabeth Miller, Mrs. Elizabeth Stanton, and Amelia Bloomer. These three women led out in the dress reform. This is the worldly dress reform. These were just women of the world that were tired of this. In fact, this is what Mrs. Stanton said after she went and visited her cousin, Mrs. Smith. I will read what she says after her visit:

“To see my cousin with a lamp in one hand and a baby in the other, walk upstairs with ease and grace, while with flowing robes I pulled myself up with difficulty, lamp and baby out of the question, readily convinced me there was a sore need of reform in women's dress, and I promptly donned a similar costume” Elizabeth Stanton.

Now, you might be interested in seeing a picture of this dress. This is taken out of a book called *Ferment of Freedom*, and it's discussing the women's rights movement. It pictures one of the early attempts at this dress. You will notice that the dress was somewhat like a Turkish costume. They had pants and a shorter dress, and it was free from many of the problems that this common dress that the women were wearing at this time had. This Turkish

costume was the first that was adopted. I think the dress, to begin with, was even longer, possibly, than this one in this picture, but women felt such a freedom in this dress. No more tight corsets. No more long sweeping dresses.

For several years, different women over the country, were emancipated from the terrible unhealthful attire of this early costume. Now, this is what was called the Turkish costume. Notice that some of the women had their hair cut. Along with the freedom from the bondage of these things, they cut their hair and entered into positions in work in town where women hadn't worked before. There was just a freedom in this whole women's suffrage movement, as you perhaps have read about.

This came to the attention of Dr. Harriet Austin, in *Our Home at Danville* (You have heard about that in your class, this worldly health retreat where Sister White had gone to spend some time with her husband.). When Dr. Austin heard about this women's suffrage reform in dress, she was very interested in it, but she carried the dress reform further, in the wrong direction. She made a dress that was later called the American Costume. This dress had a much more mannish appearance than that first one, of which I showed you the picture. There were the pants. There were high-top boots. The skirt reached about to the knee. There was a sort of a vest-like coat and they had a cap that went along with it, a rather mannish looking cap.

This is the dress that you will read about in Volume 1. Some of you have your Volume 1 and I thought we would read a little from that. On page 457, it describes this American Costume:

“Some who believe the truth may think it would be more healthful for the sisters to adopt the American costume”
Testimonies for the Church, Volume 1, page 457.

That is this costume here. This mannish looking costume that came after the Turkish one which you see there in the picture. But she says the mode of dress would cripple our influence because, for one thing, spiritualists adopted this mode of dress. Then she says that those who adopt the American Costume are disregarding the Lord's instructions about a woman not wearing that which pertains to a man. See that, there in the middle of page 457?

“There is 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 an abomination” *Testimonies for the Church*, Volume 1, page 457.

Looking at some of the good features of this dress, what can you see is better about this dress than this one? Yes, I suppose they were amply covered, all right. Yes, it didn't have the evils of the long dress, did it? Their limbs were clothed. That was one of the best features about it. What about the waist? There was more freedom at the waist. It didn't have a tight waistband. It was more convenient, wasn't it? You think of those three features, the limbs well covered, the waist free to breath properly, and the convenience of not having the long trailing dress. Now, those were the good features of the American Costume, and some of our people thought we ought to accept that. But, the bad features of it is it being mannish, it

looking like men's apparel. Then at the bottom of the page, it says:

“With the so-called dress reform there goes a spirit of levity and boldness just in keeping with the dress” *Testimonies for the Church*, Volume 1, page 457.

See, cutting the dress off short, wearing the mannish apparel brought in that spirit of levity into the so called dress reform. The Lord says that we couldn't accept it from that standpoint.

This was around 1860. From 1850 to 1860 this transition was going on of the women feeling free. But you see, they didn't have any Spirit of Prophecy to guide them. They didn't have the Lord to guide them in knowing what was proper and what was right. So we come up to the period soon after 1860 with this sort of a confusion. Here was this terrible bondage, the prison that you might say the women were in, the common way that they were dressing. Then here was this freedom, which was too free, in the American Costume.

Any questions about these two dresses? These dresses you will find mentioned in the Spirit of Prophecy. The American Costume by name, and then just the dress that was being worn at that time, and the things that were wrong with it. Now, seeing these dolls helps you to realize a little bit more of what the Spirit of Prophecy is talking about, when it mentions these two types of dress.

Now, for the second reason, as Sister White said at the very beginning, there is a need of dress reform among us. The world didn't have anything that could be worn. And when they tried to make something different, they did something we couldn't accept as a movement. So you can see that it was necessary that God's people do something about what was happening in the world. Our people were being stirred up. Our women didn't enjoy having their waist constricted and all those heavy skirts on, any more than the women of the world did, and they wanted something different. They wanted a freedom, the right kind. So it was necessary that God should take a hand and help His people know what to do in this situation.

At this time the Lord gave Sister White a vision. I said that rather slow and emphatically, I would like to say that again. At this time the Lord gave Sister White a vision. Sometimes that thought is overlooked. You may read things that sound like, well, people just sort of thought this up, but that was not so.

In this book that you have been studying, *The Story of Our Health Message*, part of this vision is recorded, on page 111. I would like to read it as it goes just a little further, as this appeared in the *Review and Herald*:

“Three companies of females passed before me, with their dresses as follows with respect to length:

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

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

“ A third class passed before me with cheerful countenances, and free, elastic step. Their dress was the length I have described as proper, modest and healthful. It cleared the filth of the street and side-walk a few inches under all circumstances, such as ascending and descending steps, et cetera.

“As I have before stated, the length was not given me in inches, and I was not shown a lady's boot. ... As I wrote upon the subject of dress the view of those three companies revived in my mind as plain as when I was viewing them in vision; but I was left to describe the length of the proper dress in my own language the best I could ...

“... I put on the dress, in length as near as I had seen and described as I could judge. ... When the subject of inches came up in order to secure uniformity ... a rule was brought and it was found that the length of our dresses ranged from eight to ten inches from the floor. Some of these were a little longer than the sample shown me, while others were a little shorter”
Second Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, October 8, 1867.

Not quite all of that is quoted in here in your *The Story of the Health Message*, but that is most of the article. God gave Sister White a vision, and you can see the need for that with the confusion that there was in the world over this matter.

At that time, the things that she wrote, was the very first vision, which came out in a little tract and on the front is the picture of the dress that was given, the reform dress. I have copied that for our little model to wear. That will give you a little idea of what is meant, when it speaks here, in Volume 1, of the reform dress. Can you see some of the features, some of the wrong things that were corrected, in the worldly costume? The waist is free, no tight band. The skirt is suspended from the shoulders, not hanging around the waist. The skirt is either sewed on, or buttoned on, to a waist, and hung from the shoulders. The feet were clothed with warm shoes, and the legs with pants, as they were spoken of. The dress is simple, plain, unadorned, convenient, modest, and healthful in every phase.

There were things about this dress, of course, that were objectionable. But let's look, first of all, at the features of it, that would appeal to a person at that time. Those people were looking

for some things along health lines, they were looking for something that would free them from all the terrible things that had been imposed on them by fashion, and this dress surely did that. They could freely go about their work. They could get their exercise, do their work without all of the problems, and they would become healthful.

In fact, in our health institute, this dress was prescribed by the doctors, part of their prescription. When women would come with all their ailments to see our doctors, our doctors would tell them, "Well, one of the things you need to do is accept the dress reform." That was just put on the prescription list. It was done by Dr. Austin over at Our Home. She would just write on a prescription for them to do it. At the Health Institute, the women would come there and see the other women with this dress on, and they would say, "Now I can see how that would solve some of my problems." Many of them accepted it because of the healthful advantages of it.

But can you see that along with the blessing that came from this, that there would be a problem to a person who had been used to all the frills and the fussiness of the dress of the world? It would be a cross. It was hard for our people to accept, because the Lord said the dress should be plain, unadorned, and shouldn't be following the fashions. But what a blessing it brought to our people. What a deliverance it brought to them. The dress is not following the American Costume in the mannishness of it. It's a very feminine type of dress.

I might mention just a few features, that to me, as a dress maker, appeal. This particular pattern is a dress that looks well on anyone. The bolero type dress is a dress that looks well on anyone whether you are tall or short or fat or thin. It is considered by dressmakers as a good type of dress.

There is another feature that I think we need to consider. You know, if this came in vision, as we have read here, that means that the Lord gave it to Sister White, doesn't it? This was God's ideal to handle the dress problem. It is very important in our thinking that we understand what God's ideal was. That we understand the reasons for the various features of God's ideal.

You know, I was thinking of the matter of proportion. At the time I was making these dolls, I made one that was like the dresses were at the time, twenty years ago. It looks rather shocking, at least it has, up until recently. But when I made this, she wasn't shocking-looking at all, because this is what everybody was wearing. It was just the current style. Of course, the last year or two is getting back up to that style.

But, the thing that I want you to notice is this matter of proportions. A dress that is just cut in two, (as a real short dress is, the blouse and the skirt are just about cut in half) isn't really as beautiful and as graceful as one where the skirt is twice as long as the waist.

In making dresser drawers, we don't make them all the same size, do we? There is the matter of proportion that makes things look more graceful. So in dressing, a dress is more gracefully proportioned if it isn't just half and half, as if it's cut in thirds as it is in this.

(I don't know if you even want to look at this woman or not, she is not very attractive, I don't think. I will lay her down.) I had names for all of these dolls and that one as you might well

imagine, is named Jezebel. I think it is a good name for her. I am afraid we are coming to the time when we are going to see a lot of women dressed just as she is, walking the streets. We are already seeing quite a bit of it, aren't we?

This was given to us, as we understand, in vision, and it is very important that we see in it, the beauty, the healthfulness, the convenience; that we see God's ideal in that dress.

We have been discussing the matter of the freedom of the waist, not having to have heavy skirts. The shorter dress was surely more convenient than the one that was sweeping the floor, wasn't it? What about this matter of clothing the limbs? You women that have struggled with that problem, do you feel that having these pants down into a high-topped shoe would help solve the problem of keeping your limbs warm? I think any of us who have tried anything like trying to get our limbs clothed properly, would welcome that sort of an opportunity. To me, it would seem like a wonderful solution to the problem of keeping your limbs warm. Because it is hard to get enough on your legs to keep them amply covered. If you have tried wearing anything in addition, like a snow suit or a ski suit or something of that kind, it surely does provide an added warmth that is very important.

I am going over this, sort of in a story form. After we have finished our story, then we will come back to our books and read the references on the different things that I have been giving. I want to give a picture of this whole story; of how it developed, and then we will come back and read the references and make some of the applications.

Now, another thought about these pants. They seem a little odd to us today, but they weren't odd back then. You just saw the picture of the Turkish costume, didn't you? The women of the world wore the pants with the Turkish costume. You have seen here the American Costume with the pants. Then perhaps some of you have seen little old fashioned pictures of the pantaloons, that little girls wore. They were worn more for decoration. There wasn't any particular warmth about them. They were little starched pantaloons that hung out at the bottom of their skirts. That was a current style at that time.

So the idea of the pants at the time it was given, was not just an unheard-of thing like it would be today. I think that's an important thing to get into our minds. God didn't give some unheard-of style, something that was very foreign to their thinking. It was being worn in a number of ways by different types of people, but it proved to be one of the most objectionable features of the reform dress. The people at that time disliked the pants more than any other feature, and the fact that the dress was so short seemed to be the thing that they objected to the most.

But when we think of this dress, free waist, skirts hung on the shoulders, shorter skirt to make it more convenient, and the limbs and feet amply clothed, it surely met every specification that a person with good judgment would want in the matter of dress. The fact that it was not trimmed up and dolled up like the dresses worn by the world, would appeal to a Christian. Of course, that would not appeal to a worldly-minded person.

Now, what did our people do about it? Did they accept God's plan for freedom from all of this terrible bondage and ill health and problems that came with the worldly dress? Did they accept it? Some did and some didn't. It wasn't the fashion, and so it was not accepted by

some. Some accepted part of it and didn't accept it all. Some of them wore the shorter dress, but they trimmed it up and fixed it up just as fancy as they had their worldly costumes.

Then others felt like, "If I am going to wear that thing, I am going to make everybody else do it". You can see what kind of spirit that would bring in, can't you? The sort of thought that if I have to take this bitter pill, why, everybody else has to. And that wouldn't bring a good spirit into a church, would it?

Then, some who accepted it didn't put it on in a neat, orderly way. Some of them wore white sleeves and white pants with a dark dress. You can see how ill sorted that would look. In various ways they made the thing not tasty and orderly.

Others just murmured about it. They didn't want to wear it. They didn't like one feature or the other feature of it.

Well, what did the Lord do? Yes, the Lord said, "Well, I gave you what I felt was the ideal, would have solved your problems, but it brought in so many more problems because of your lack of accepting it." You remember one time when the Lord did something like that with the children of Israel? They wanted to go across into Canaan, they wanted to go and then they got afraid of going. The Lord said, "You don't have to go. If you are going to murmur and complain, you don't have to go."

Well, that's what the people did back then. They murmured and complained so much about it that the Lord took it away. Here again, I would like to stress that fact, that the Lord took it away. Sister White didn't just change her mind. I want in what we are studying tonight, to help you know how to meet criticism of Sister White on this point.

The first thing that I have stressed is that this was given in a vision. Don't try to just slide over that. If you are brought into question about this matter, as we will be someday, let's be very clear and plain that God gave us that dress. Then if we understand the reasons that the Lord took it away, we can be just as clear that the Lord took it away. The Lord took away the dress that He had given because they didn't accept it in the right spirit. We need to keep both of those facts very clear in our minds.

When the Lord took it away, He told them that they could adopt a dress, a simple, unadorned dress that would be longer, that was one of the things they objected to, but not as long as the other dress had been, not as long as the worldly dress was. It was to clear the filth of the street by a few inches. The dress reached around five or six inches from the floor. The dress was to be plain and unadorned.

(These skirts aren't quite as full as I would make them if I were making them today, because at the time I made them they seemed plenty full because people weren't wearing very full skirts. But the skirts were really fuller than this.)

She warned them that when this second dress was given there wasn't any particular pattern for it, but that they were to be sure that the limbs were amply clothed as they had with the other dress.

Those of you who have your Volume 4, let's turn to page 640, and read the Lord's appeal to our sisters on this matter. I think we will read through this paragraph beginning on the top of the page:

“If all our sisters would adopt a simple, unadorned dress of modest length, the uniformity thus established would be far more pleasing to God, and would exert a more salutary influence on the world, than the diversity presented four years ago” *Testimonies for the Church*, Volume 4, page 640.

See, the problem that came over this dress, the Lord let it rest a little while and then four years later He said, “We'll take away that dress. You don't have to wear it.”

“As our sisters would not generally accept the reform dress as it should be worn, another, less objectionable style is now presented. It is free from needless trimmings, free from the looped-up, tied back overskirts. It consists of a sack or loose-fitting basque (jacket or blouse, we would call it) and skirt, the latter short enough to avoid the mud and filth of the streets” *Testimonies for the Church*, Volume 4, page 640.

See, she didn't say just exactly how short. It would be shorter than the dress of the world, but not as short as the one they had before.

“The material should be free from large plaids and figures, and plain in color. The same attention should be given to the clothing of the limbs as with the short dress” *Testimonies for the Church*, Volume 4, page 640.

The short dress is this dress here, the reform dress.

“Will my sisters accept this style of dress and refuse to imitate the fashions that are devised by Satan and continually changing?” *Testimonies for the Church*, Volume 4, page 640.

Well, they did, to an extent, and were glad for those who did accept this second dress that was given. But you notice that in it the limbs were clothed as they had been in the other dress. There was no tight skirts. The main difference was that the pants were taken away and the dress was allowed to be a little longer. Since that is what they had objected to.

Now, in the years that went by, some of the people began to wonder if they shouldn't go back to that dress. And in the appendix of *The Story of Our Health Message* is Sister White's answer to that. It would be well for you to read carefully this appendix, because in it is the answer to many of the questions as to why it was taken away and why it should not be accepted back again.

“Because that which was given as a blessing was turned into a curse, the burden of advocating the reform dress was removed”

MS 167, 1897.

See, the Lord took it away and some of them, as I say, wanted to go back to it, but she told them, “No, this wasn’t the time to do that.” In another article written at the same time, you find this interesting statement where she says:

“Follow the custom of dress in health reform, but do not again introduce the short dress and pants unless you have the word of the Lord for it” Letter 19, 1897.

That is the same year as this appendix was written. This is letter 19, 1897. It was written the same year that this article was written. This is a manuscript written in 1897.

“Do not again introduce the short dress and pants unless you have the Word of the Lord for it” Letter 19, 1897.

So even though we know that this was God’s ideal at the time it was given, we are not to go back to that, in following out dress reform today. What relation should we have to that?

Possibly before we go into that, we will have time, now that we have gone through this story, to go back and read a few of the references on what we have gone over tonight. I want us to see them here in the volumes and you will want to get down your references for study. In fact, I think I will give that to you right now. The chapters to read on this matter: Volume 1, beginning on page 456; Volume 1, beginning on page 521; and Volume 4, page 628. Those are the three chapters that cover the matter of dress. Most of what is said in the Spirit of Prophecy on dress, is in these three chapters.

After Volume 4, you will find very little written on the matter of the dress reform. The Lord gave us the light, and He expects us to follow it out in our living today.

But going back a little bit now to these different styles of dress, now that we have had this story, I would like us to read a little bit from our books on these different styles of dress. Volume 1, page 459. She describes this first dress, the style of the day, and the problems with it:

“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” *Testimonies for the Church*, Volume 1, page 459.

That is particularly on the length of the dress and the unhealthfulness of that. Then the next paragraph says:

“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” *Testimonies for the Church*, Volume 1, page 459.

So there we have a description of these two classes of dress, and how, from the health standpoint, they fail of carrying out God’s plan.

Now, this matter of clothing the limbs. I feel that this is one of the most important features that is touched on. And you will notice beginning right above where I was reading there on 459:

“Women should clothe their limbs with regard to health and comfort. Their feet and limbs need to be clad as warmly as men’s” *Testimonies for the Church*, Volume 1, page 459.

And that is repeated again on page 461:

“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 men’s” *Testimonies for the Church*, Volume 1, page 461.

And she makes some suggestions how they could do it back then that we can adapt today.

Now, I would like us to notice in Volume 4, the references on what I was describing to you, as the reason why the Lord took away the reform dress. We need to have these reasons very clear in our minds; why He took away this particular style of dress.

“Why has this dress been laid aside, and for what reason has dress reform ceased to be advocated?” The reason for this change I will briefly state here. ... Fashion had so strong a hold upon them that they were slow to break away from its control,

even to obey the dictates of reason and conscience”
Testimonies for the Church, Volume 4, page 635.

That was the number one reason we found, that fashion had such a hold on them they didn't want to give up the worldly dress, because they loved to be in fashion.

“And many who profess to accept the reform made no change in their wrong habits of dress, except in shortening the skirts and clothing the limbs” *Testimonies for the Church*, Volume 4, page 635.

They just accepted a couple parts of it and went right ahead with the fashionable part of the world's dress.

“Nor was this all. Some who adopted the reform were not content to show by example the advantages of the dress, giving, when asked, their reasons for adopting it, and letting the matter rest there. They sought to control other's conscience by their own. If they wore it, others must put it on” *Testimonies for the Church*, Volume 4, page 635.

Now, folks, you notice as we mention these different things, we are getting principles aren't we? Principles that are to guide us in our attitude toward dress reform today, and this is a very important principle. They forgot that none were to be compelled to wear the reform dress. That was true back then when God gave them a particular style of dress. That surely would be true today, wouldn't it? None are to be compelled.

“Still others, who were apparently the most zealous reformers, manifested a sad lack of order and neatness in their dress. It was not made according to the approved pattern” *Testimonies for the Church*, Volume 4, page 636.

“Some who wore the dress sighed over it as a heavy burden. ‘Anything but this,’ they said. If we felt free to lay off this peculiar style, we would willingly adopt a plain, untrimmed dress of ordinary length. The limbs could be clothed as warmly as before, and we could secure all the physical benefits, with less effort. It requires much labor to prepare the reform dress in a proper manner.’ Murmuring and complaining were fast destroying vital godliness” *Testimonies for the Church*, Volume 4, page 637.

These are the reasons why God's people failed to take hold and accept these reforms.

Now, coming to our attitude toward this today.

Before I take that up, does anyone have a question, either on the historical facts that I presented, or any phase of what we have gone over?

[A question is asked.]

Dress reform does apply more to women's dress, that is true. The health features mentioned, of course, expect whatever principles apply. But I have felt this way. I think that our men need to understand several things about this study tonight. There are two things you might think of. We could give this whole study and not think anything about the way we are dressed tonight, couldn't we? Because it is a historical study and that is one reason for bringing it into this class. You might say the main reason. The historical facts are presented, you folks, need to understand.

If some of you had been confronted before class tonight by some critic of the Spirit of Prophecy, and asked you about this thing, that a woman gave them a dress to wear and then after a while she decided to not have them do it any more, and you had never heard anything about this, as some of you perhaps hadn't, before tonight, might that upset you just a little bit in your thinking about the Spirit of Prophecy? So we need to understand the historical background, so that we are prepared with the right answer when the critics come; that we are fully settled in our own minds that God did the thing right, and we need to understand how He did it and what He did. You will get the picture more clearly with this story that I have given you tonight. And as you read in these various chapters, you will get the picture more clearly, so you will know how to meet the critics. That is the first thing and all of us need to understand that, men and women alike, don't we?

Then there is another angle that I feel is very important for our young men to understand some phase of dress. We are not going into many details of how we can do it today, like some of the girls might like to study out, but women dress for men. Isn't that right? There are a lot of things we wouldn't do if there weren't any men in the world. And that is right. It's right for us to desire to please our fathers and brothers and husbands. There is nothing wrong about that.

If our men do not understand these principles of dress, might they be a hindrance to a Christian woman that wanted to dress in the right way? Most women who try to accept dress reform have to meet that hurdle, with husbands who are not Adventist or with some who are that don't understand the principles. So I feel from that standpoint it is well for our young men and our older men to understand what the Lord has said on the matter of dress. It will help you in helping your wife as she tries to carry out these principles. It will help you, young men, in evaluating the young woman that the Lord may want to be your companion for life, if you understand these principles of dress, and understand those who are trying to carry them out, in the things that they are doing in their dress today.

The matter of dress touches a very vital thing in our hearts, and that's pride. And in closing I just wanted to read just a few references along that line.

I might say this one thing first, before I go into that, and that is this. It is something that came to me several years ago, that was a great blessing to me in knowing how to relate myself to the reform dress given back there in Volume 1. What does that mean to us today? Is there anything about it, except just historically we need to understand it? Is there any other reason that we need to understand it?

I would like to put it this way, just as simply as I can. That was given to us as God's ideal. It expressed what God felt was best from a health standpoint, a modesty, convenience, and simplicity standpoint. From all those standpoints it represented God's ideal. If I have any prejudice against that dress, I need to get that out of my heart, don't I? Because that is God's ideal.

If according to this little reference that we have read, where it says to not introduce the pants and short skirt unless you have the word of the Lord for it - I don't know what might be involved in that reference, but - it could indicate that the word of the Lord might come again on the subject of dress. I don't know what the Lord is going to do to get the remnant people ready for translation, but there aren't many of our people today who understand, and are carrying out or even trying to carry out many of the principles that need to be carried out in the matter of dress reform.

Some who have studied it long and earnestly wish they had some more light, wish they understood more of what God has said on this matter. It might be, someday, that the Lord will give us some more prophetic light on this subject of what to do today. If He did, would it be contrary to what He gave before? It might even be something similar to what He gave before, mightn't it? Now, I don't know that He is going to do it, don't take that I am saying that He will give us more prophetic light on it. But if He should, it would not be out of harmony with what He gave before, and it might even include some of the features of the dress that He gave before.

So, from that standpoint, I need to have my mind fully defused of any thought or prejudice against the reform dress that God gave His people back in the 1860s. Then I need to study that dress in detail, and see why God asked them to do the different things that He asked them to do in that dress. Because there was a reason for it. And then take those principles and ask God to help me to apply them to our present time, to follow the custom in dress today, applying these principles to it.

I need to study through each one: the health standpoint, the modesty standpoint, the standpoint of adornment, and ask the Lord, "Now, Lord, how can I carry out this principle in the present style that is being worn today. What can I do today that will help me to be in harmony with your plan, and still not be just a gazing-stock, by wearing something that is so definitely out of line with what is being worn today." Each of us must do that personally.

[A question is asked.]

(This reform dress was given. She saw it in vision. They put the dress on, as I read at the beginning. They measured the dresses and found that the dresses ranged from 8-10 inches, and she said some were a little longer than the pattern shown, and some a little shorter, and so she gave as about 9 inches the dress length for this reform dress. That is the only place that I know that that's mentioned. That's in Volume 1, page 521, that page that I gave you there, that chapter to read.)

Let's get that thought clearly in our minds. That we are going to take this dress, we're going to learn the principles that are in it, and apply it to our dress today.

Now, I wanted to read just one or two references on the thought that as much as we endeavor to carry out these principles and be in harmony, not be made a gazing-stock among those around us, that the Lord does tell us that there is a cross in the dress reform. Volume 1, page 524 says:

“They cannot lift the cross” *Testimonies for the Church*, Volume 1, page 524.

“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” *Testimonies for the Church*, Volume 1, page 525.

She goes on to say we are not to invent crosses, to make crosses, but when we accept God’s plan in dress reform, there will be a cross in it. I am so glad that on this same page she compares the dress reform to the ribbon of blue that the children of Israel wore around the bottom of their dresses. Whenever you saw someone with that ribbon of blue on their dress, you knew that they belonged to the children of Israel. It was different. It marked them as a peculiar people.

So God wants today that the dress reform that He has given us will make us look different. It should make us look different, as a king’s daughter looks from the common herd. That is the kind of difference that God wants, not as a gazing-stock, but different because we are carrying out heaven’s principles. And you know folks, I think of one other thing about this dress. If God’s people had accepted it back then, it would have been, Sister White says, a barrier against the world:

“God designed the reform dress as a barrier to prevent the hearts of our sisters from becoming alienated from Him by following the fashions of the world” *Testimonies for the Church*, Volume 4, page 639.

Just think what would have been if to become a Seventh-day Adventist you had to accept this dress. Suppose that were the plan today. Do you suppose that it might keep some unconverted people out of the church? Think that through. Think what a protection it would be to God’s people today, and how it would keep out of the church the worldly element that has become such a curse in the church today. When I think of it from that standpoint, I just wish many times, that our people hadn’t murmured and we had kept it. It would have kept our people in a much closer relationship to the Lord.