History of Women's Dress in Pictures

The History of Pants on Women/The American Costume





As we consider the history of women's dress, and the development of pants on women, we go back to a time when Ellen White was still living. Consider the prevailing fashions of the day:.



 Prevailing fashions of 1850s and 1860s included corsets, dragging skirts, and hoops. These dresses were unhealthful and impractical.

EGW: "From what has been shown me, hoops are an abomination. They are indecent, and God's people err if they follow, in the least degree, or give countenance to, this fashion." {4bSG 66.1}







EGW: "While traveling in the cars and stages I have often been led to exclaim, O modesty, where is thy blush? I have seen large companies crowding into the cars, and in order to make any headway, the hoops had to be raised and placed into a shape which was indecent. {4bSG 68.1}



EGW: "And the exposure of the form was ten-fold more with those who wore hoops than with those who did not; and were it not for fashion, those who immodestly expose themselves would be hissed at, but modesty and decency must be sacrificed to the god of fashion. May the Lord deliver his people from this grievous sin. God will not pity those who will be slaves to fashion. {4bSG 68.1}



 It was in the 1850's when Elizabeth Smith Miller first put on a "short" skirt over pantaloons, launching a revolt to free women from their "clothes prison." Her cousin was Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who, along with her friend **Amelia Bloomer, also** wore similar attire.



This particular style, which consisted of pants under a dress went through various changes, and was eventually dubbed the **American** Costume.

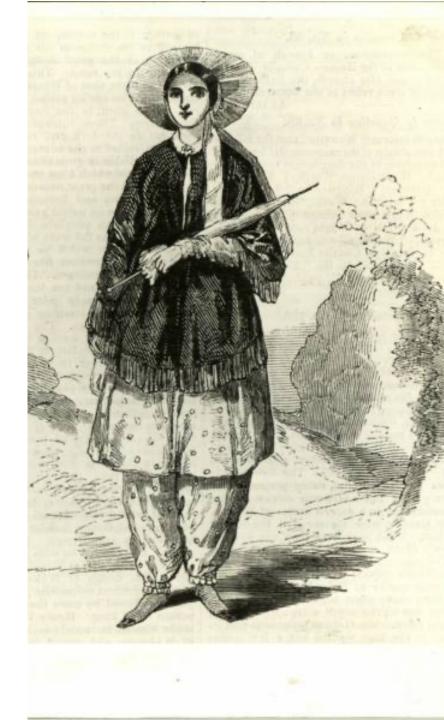


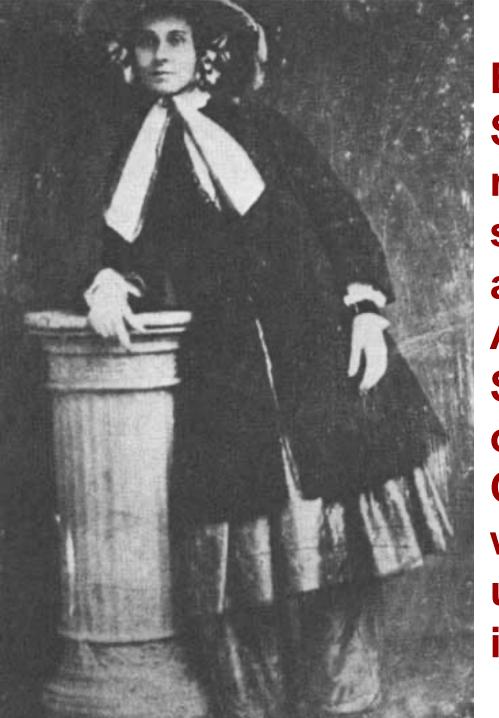


 In May 1851 Amelia Bloomer introduced Susan B. Anthony, a spiritualist, to Elizabeth Cady Stanton as depicted in these lifesized bronze figures. These ladies were all women's rights advocates. Ellen White spoke out against the "American Costume" as well as the rebellious spirit of the women's rights advocates, which was incompatible with true Seventh-day **Adventist Christian** women.



 EGW: "Those who feel called out to join the movement in favor of woman's rights and the socalled 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." {1T 457.3}





Elizabeth Cady Stanton, a women's rights leader, spiritualist and advocate of the **American Costume.** She believed organized **Christianity relegated** women to an unacceptable position in society.





Amelia Bloomer, a spiritualist, stated: "We shall no longer be answerable to the laws of God or man, no longer be subject to punishment for breaking them."



EGW: "God would not have His people adopt the so-called reform dress [American Costume]. It is immodest apparel, wholly unfitted for the modest, humble followers of Christ." {1T 457.1}



 EGW: "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 [American Costume]. 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." {1T 457.3}







• Ellen White spoke out against the prevailing fashions as well as against the American Costume, but it was not because she was against dress reform. She clearly declared, "My sisters, there is need of a dress reform among us. There are many errors in the present style of female dress." {2SM 473.1}



The present style [1850s-1860s] of female dress included hoops, and dragging skirts.





The Dress Reform **Movement in America** The **American** Costume pants under an approximate ly knee While there were some obvious health and practical advantages to the **American** Costume, there were also some negative features.



 At its worst, the **American Costume was** too masculine. This prompted Ellen White to write: "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." {CG **427.2**}



She stated that this style disregarded God's special directions to have a "plain distinction between the dress of men and women," and those who promoted it advocated doing away with that distinction. The distinction between men and women was plainly that men wore pants and women wore dresses. When more than a few inches of pants were showing, the pants became a focal point of the outfit, and the distinction was blurred.



Thus, the American **Costume was** masculine, not only in the style of the dress, but because of the amount of the pant leg that was revealed. The short dress [American Costume] that came about to the knee and above the knee was declared to be immodest.



 When the first ladies put on the "short" dress over their bloomers, the dresses came approximately to the knee. Within a short while, the dresses got shorter, until finally some were about half way from the hips to the knee. Many of the pictures we have below show the knee length dress.



 Dr. Lydia Sayer Hasbrouck, hydropathist lecturer, and editor of Th Sibyl: A Review of the Tastes, Errors and Fashions of Society, the official newsletter of the **National Dress Reform Association (NDRA) Hasbrouck adopted** the short skirt [American Costume] worn over pantaloons, the "Bloomer" dress, in 1849.)



 Now we will look at various styles of the American Costume, and see how it became increasingly masculine. The pictures were from the 1850s and 1860s.



• EGW: "This is the style and influence of the "American Costume," taught and worn by many at "Our Home," Dansville N. Y." {RH, October 8, 1867 par. 7} ["Our **Home-Danville**" was a secular health sanitarium.]



• EGW: "They have all styles of dress here. (Our Home-Danville) Some are very becoming, if not so short. We shall get patterns from this place and I think we can get out a style of dress more healthful than we now wear and yet not be bloomer or the American costume.



EGW: "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.... The foregoing was given me as a reproof to those who are inclined to adopt a style of dress resembling that worn by men; {1T 457.2}



 EGW: "There is still another style of dress which is adopted by a class of so-called dress reformers [American Costume]. 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. {1T 459.7}



 EGW: "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." {1T 457.1}



• EGW: "God would not have His people adopt the so-called reform dress [American Costume]. It is immodest apparel, wholly unfitted for the modest, humble followers of Christ." {1T 457.1}



 EGW: "We shall never imitate Miss Dr. Austin or Mrs. Dr. York. They dress very much like men." {5MR 380.4}





 Dr. Harriet N. Austin in the **American** Costume of her own design, with straight trouser legs.)



Dr. Mary Walker started out wearing the regular **American** Costume, but became increasingly masculine in her attire.



EGW: "Those who adopt and advocate this style of dress carry the socalled dress reform to very objectionable lengths. Confusion will be the result." {1T 459.7}





She was proud that she was arrested several times for 'impersonating a man' - she had taken to fully wearing men's clothing, from the top hat, wing collar and bow tie to the pants and shoes.



EGW: "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." {1T 460.1}



 EGW: "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.



EGW: "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 cripples their influence." {1T 459.8}



 Mary Tillotson, spiritualist, charter member of the National **Dress Reform** Association; c. 1866-1870. She first adopted a short dress [American Costume] in 1842, then shortened it 12 inches when she heard about Amelia Bloomer.







 EGW: Our dresses according to my idea should be from four to six inches shorter than now worn [touching the ground] and should in no case reach lower than the top of the heel of the shoe and could be a little shorter even than this with all modesty. I am going to get up a style of dress on my own hook which will accord perfectly with that which has been shown me. Health demands it. Our feeble women must dispense with heavy skirts and tight waists if they value health. {5MR 380.2}



EMBROCATION The American **Costume was** popular in the 1850s and 1860s but lost popularity in the 1870s. In the 1890s the bicycle craze again brought back pants-like outfits into the wardrobes of some American women.

 EGW: "Satan is leading them on to be a proverb in the mouth of unbelievers because of their boldness, their lack of reserve and womanly modesty. {AH **52.2**}



 EGW: "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." {1T 457.4}





 In the 1870s, after the hoops went out of style, the bustles came in. The dresses were still dragging, and still required corsets.



EGW: "We are urged by the Spirit of the Lord to bear a pointed testimony against the idolatry of dress in this age. If we are right with God, we will discard everything of a deforming character, such as paniers, (a type of bustle) bustles, unnecessary plaiting, and fashionable arrangement of the dress upon the body. "Testimonies on the Case of Elder E. P. **Daniels** (1890)



The Dress Reform Movement in the **Seventh-day Adventist** Church **The SDA Reform Dress -1865 - 1881**

 Now, we will look at the Seventh-day Adventist Reform Dress, advocated and worn by Ellen G. White. We will see clearly that this dress is designed to be feminine in style, with a longer length than the American Costume. EGW: "In wide contrast with this modest dress [the Seventh-day Adventist reform 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." {1T 465.1}

 Ellen G.
 White in God's version of the Reform Dress)



 Very little of the pantslike undergarment was visible, so that the dress was the main feature, not the pants. It's advantage over the prevailing fashion of the very long dress is that it didn't drag in the dirt, it was looser at the waist, hanging from the shoulders, and it was plain.



 Thus, it was in full harmony with the 4 basic principles of dress reform that Ellen White advocated: Modesty, Simplicity, Femininity and Healthfulness. EGW-1865: "God would now have His people adopt the reform dress [SDA 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." {1T 524.2}

 EGW: "The Lord has let light shine, and in His providence a style of dress modest, healthful and convenient [SDA] Reform Dress], has been proposed and adopted by those who were conscientious to follow the light." **Testimony to the Church at Battle Creek** 1872, p. 61



 EGW: "While none were compelled to adopt the [SDA] reform dress, <u>our</u> <u>people could and should have</u> <u>appreciated its advantages and</u> <u>accepted it as a blessing." {4T 638.5}</u>

• The length of the "American Costume" dress compared with Ellen White's SDA Reform Dress

 EGW: "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 [American Costume], reaching about to the knees, [about 19-21 inches above the floor] which is worn by a certain class. I was shown that we should shun both extremes.

 EGW: "By wearing the dress reaching about to the top of a woman's gaiter boot [about 9 inches from the floor] we shall escape the evils of the extreme long dress, and shall also shun the evils and notoriety of the extreme short dress [American Costume]. " **{1T 464.1}**





The Reform Dress Had an Approved Pattern

 EGW: "Before putting on the reform dress, our sisters should obtain patterns of the pants and sack worn with it." {1T 521} Ellen White wanted to make it clear that the SDA Reform Dress had a specific pattern. Just shortening any dress didn't qualify it as an SDA Reform Dress. It needed to be made by the approved pattern.



• EGW: "Anything eight or nine inches from the floor is not the reform dress. It should be cut by an approved pattern, and fitted and made by directions from one who has experience in this style of dress." {HR, September 1, 1868 par. 18}



 EGW: "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." {1T 458.2}

- Ellen White wrote:
- "I put on the [SDA] reformed dress September, 1865, when I visited Dansville with my sick husband. It was the same length I now wear, and I was distinctly given to understand that it was not the "American Costume." I have worn this style of dress ever since that time, excepting at meetings, in the crowded streets of villages and cities, and when visiting distant relatives. Since I commenced to write No. 11, in January, 1867, I have worn no other than the reformed dress." {RH, October 8, 1867 par. 13}

 EGW: "I put on the dress [SDA Reform Dress], in length as near as I had seen and described as I could judge. My sisters in Northern Michigan also adopted it. And when the subject of inches came up in order to secure uniformity as to length everywhere, 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." {RH, October 8, 1867 par. 10}

 EGW: "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." {1T 463.1}

 (Notice how Ellen White discredited the rumor that she was wearing the American Costume, so that none would be confused in this area. The SDA Reform Dress was designed to correct the errors of the American Costume) A vision given to Ellen White in 1867, confirmed God's approval of the Reform Dress.

 EGW: "But three companies of females passed before me, with their dresses as follows with respect to length:" {3SM 277.5}

EGW: "The first were of fashionable length, burdening the limbs, impeding the step, 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." {3SM 278.1}



EGW: "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 [American Costume] as to disgust and prejudice good people, and destroy in a great measure their own influence.



EGW: "This is the style and influence of the 'American Costume,' taught and worn by many at Our Home, Dansville, New York. It does not reach to the knee. I need not say that this style of dress was shown me to be too short." {3SM 278.2}



EGW: "A third class passed before me with cheerful countenances, and free, elastic step. Their dress was the length I have described as proper, modest and healthful. It cleared the filth of the street and sidewalk a few inches under all circumstances, such as ascending and descending steps, etc." {3SM 278.3} --Review and Herald, October 8, 1867.



 Note: While we cannot know for sure exactly what Ellen White saw in this vision as the acceptable dress to God, we do know that it cleared the ground by a few inches.

 The dress pattern that was developed averaged 9 inches from the floor.

EGW: "And when the subject of inches came up in order to secure uniformity as to length everywhere, 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." {RH, October 8, 1867 par. 10}

 The Reform Dress Was Laid Aside in 1881

 Lack of uniformity, wrong attitudes--both by those who adopted it and those who resisted it--cause many problems. Therefore, in 1881, the SDA Reform Dress was laid aside. While the approved Reform **Dress received some** acceptance from the Seventhday Adventist sisters, it was not widespread, and serious difficulties developed. Around 1868 she said, "As I travel from place to place I find that the [SDA] reform dress is not rightly represented...."

- EGW: "The [SDA] reform dress, which was once advocated, proved a battle at every step." {SpM 91.1, 1885}
- The battle was caused by the rebellious hearts of the sisters.
- Therefore, our sisters were not encouraged to adopt this style of dress after 1881

 EGW: "The Lord has not moved upon any of our sisters [after 1881] to adopt the [SDA] reform dress. The difficulties that we once had to meet are not to be brought in again. There was so much resistance among our own people that it was removed from them. It would then have proved a blessing." {5MR 405.1} 1885

 Because of the continued rebellion against the "short dress (9 inches above the floor)," EGW counseled: "...do not again introduce the short dress and pants [SDA Reform Dress] unless you have the Word of the Lord for it." {SpM 92.2} 1895

EGW: "The Lord has not indicated that it is the duty of our sisters to go back to the [SDA] reform dress." {1MR 33.2} 1897





• A Less Objectionable Style of Dress Advocated in 1881

EGW: "As our sisters would not generally accept the **SDA Reform Dress as it** should be worn, another, less objectionable style is now presented. It is free from needless trimmings, free from the looped-up, tied back overskirts. It consists of a plain sack or loosefitting basque, [bodice] and skirt, the latter short enough to avoid the mud and filth of the streets. {4T 640.1}



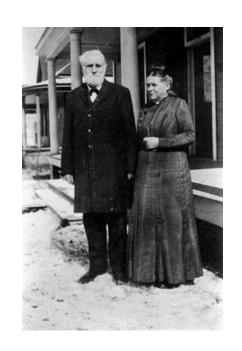


EGW: "The material should be free from large plaids and figures, and plain in color. The same attention should be given to the clothing of the limbs as with the short dress [SDA Reform Dress]." {4T 640.1}



 It was to be a simple, unadorned dress of modest length. But there was no specific pattern or style to follow. It was to be longer than the Reform Dress, reaching close to the ankle. The limbs were to be covered.

EGW: "The dress of our people should be made most simple. The skirt and sacque or sac [a modest bodice that covers the upper part of a woman's body, feminine jacket] I have mentioned, may be used,--not just that pattern and nothing else should be established; but a simple style, as was represented in that dress. {1MR 33.1}



EGW: "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. . . . The Lord has not indicated that it is the duty of our sisters to go back to the reform dress. Simple dresses should be worn. Try your talent, my sisters, in this essential reform." Letter 19, 1897, pp 2, 3. (To Brother J. H. Haughey, July 4, 1897.) {1MR 33.2}

Lessons From the Past

 God guided Ellen White to call for a dress reform, that corrected the errors of the prevailing fashion, but also guarded against the extreme fashion of the **American Costume. The Seventh-day** Adventist reform dress was laid aside because of the lack of acceptance and uniformity among the Seventh-day Adventist sisters. We can learn from this experience what is acceptable to God, and what is not acceptable to Him.

 By the early 1890s, the prevailing fashion was coming more into line with God's principles on dress-modesty, femininity, and healthfulness. It was a "more sensible style of dress." It didn't drag on the ground, it didn't require corsets, and it wasn't so heavy, but hung from the shoulders. Extravagance was still an issue, but God's daughters were counseled to leave off the extra trimmings, and dress with simplicity.





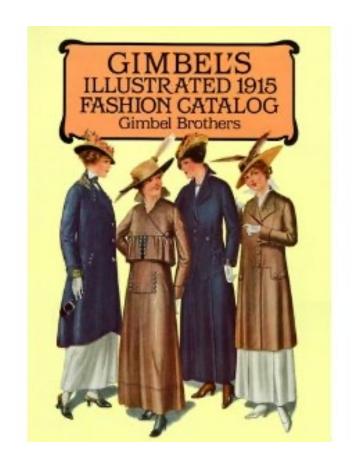


EGW: "But the more sensible style of dress now being adopted does not embrace the objectionable features. The fashionable part may be discarded, and should be by all who will read the Word of God. The time spent in advocating the dress reform should be devoted to the study of the Word of God." {SpM 91. 1}

 The following secular source, written in 1913, describes how the unhealthful issues that Ellen White spoke against were no longer fashionable:



 In the one-piece dresses now in vogue the weight is borne from the shoulders, and the hips are relieved by reducing the skirts in weight, length, and number. The skirt no longer trails upon the street. The women who, for conscientious reasons, refused to squeeze their waists, and in consequence suffered the scorn of their sex, now find themselves on the fashionable side.



 A thirty- two-inch waist is regarded as permissible, where formerly a twenty-inch waist was thought proper. A fashionably gowned woman of the present day can stoop to pick up a pin at her feet.--New York Independent, Oct. 23, 1913



Street-Costumes, Simple and Elaborate



We can understand why Ellen White made the following statement when we consider how some of the prevailing fashions actually provided a style of dress that could be worn while still upholding God's standards.

EGW: "If the world introduce a modest, convenient, and healthful mode of dress, which is in accordance with the Bible, it will not change our relation to God or to the world to adopt such a style of dress." {CG 414.3}



 In other words, Ellen White was counseling Seventh-day Adventist women that they could now wear the modest, convenient and healthful style that was currently in fashion in the late 1800s and early 1900s, as long as they kept it free from extravagance. During the late 1800s, it was much easier to find clothing that was compatible with God's principles than previously. However, worldly fashion generally has certain aspects that cannot be conscientiously followed by God's people.





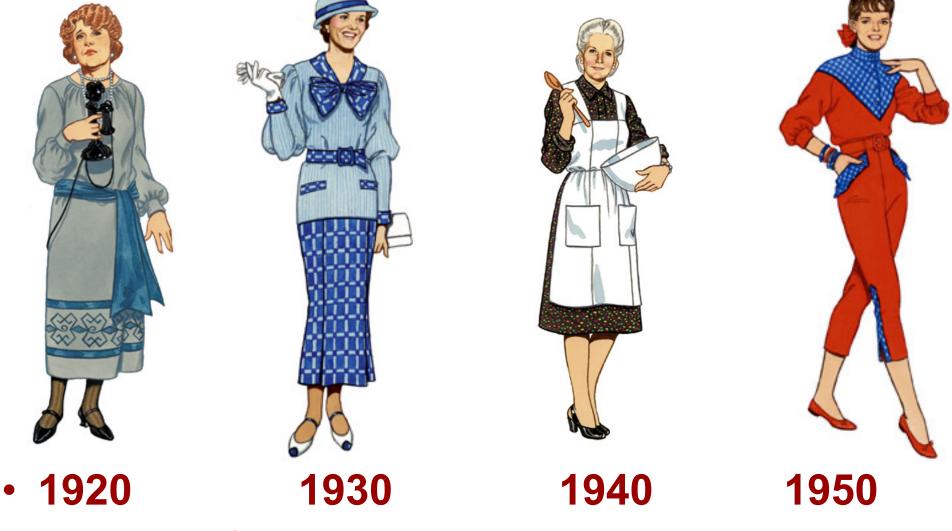
 We can learn from the experiences of the past that, regardless of the prevailing fashions, God wants His daughters to dress modestly, femininely, simply and healthfully. We need to reject those areas that are not in compliance, making sure we uphold God's principles.

Now we will look at the progression of fashion from 1870 to our current day

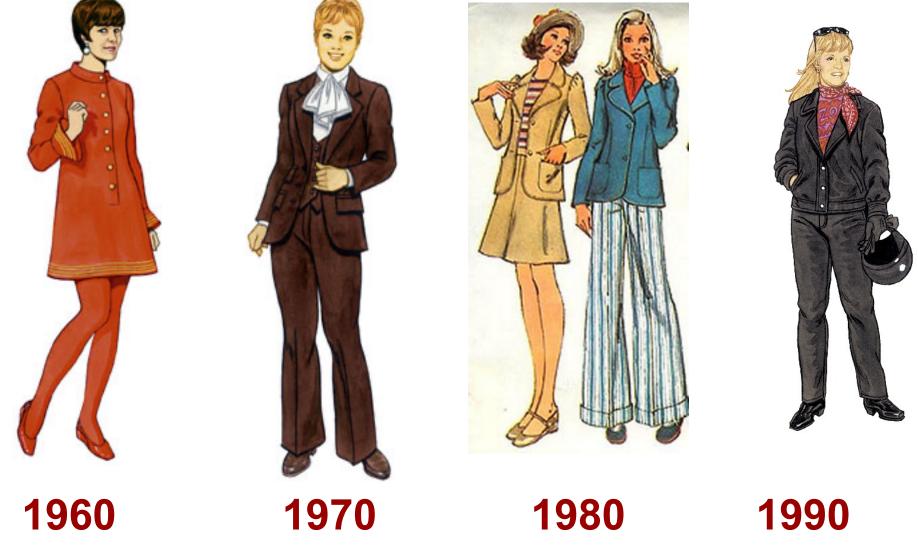
The five decades depicted next were tending toward a more healthful style of dress. No more hoops, no more dragging dresses, no more heavy weight on the hips, no more corsets.



1870 1880 1890 1900 1910

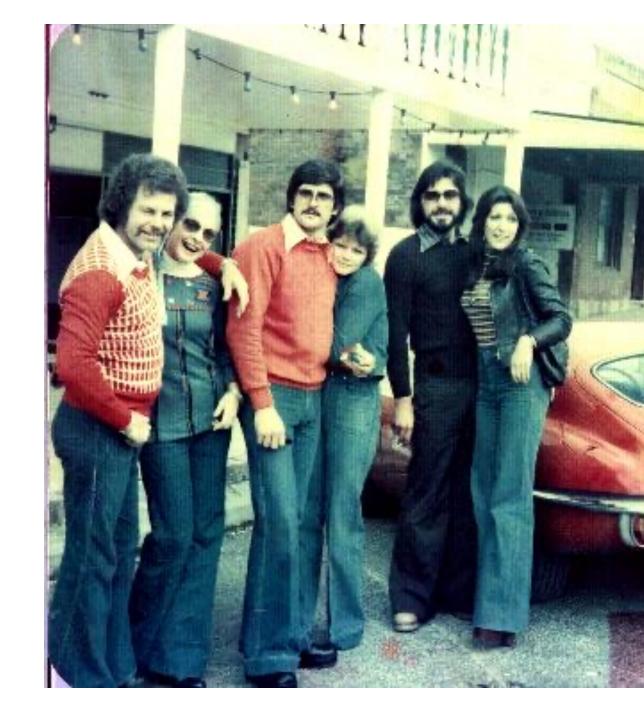


 The next four decades made startling changes to the hemlines. Pants and tailored suits were becoming popular in the 1950's.



 Pant suits, mini skirts, bell bottoms, unisex styles became popular in the next four decades.

- Unisex
 style
 jeans in
 the 1970s
- Many SDA
 Christians
 joined
 with the
 world in
 this
 rebellion.





In the 1850's-1860's, Satan worked with the **Spiritualists** and Feminists to induce women to wear masculine clothing.

Over the years, Satan used fashion to promote rising hemlines which make women's legs cold. Then women rationalized that pants were OK, since they kept their legs warm!







He used the feminist movement, communism, the military and the homosexual agenda to blur the distinction between the sexes.







Satan used
World War 1
and World War
2 to further his
goals of having
women wear
men's clothing.







He used famous people and movie stars to get people used to the idea of women in pants.



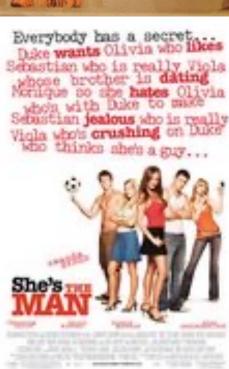












He used the media to get us to laugh at cross dressing.





Androgyny is an Abomination to Jesus. And it's breaking His heart.

Satan wants us to be entertained by his most blatant attack on our Lord.





The enemy has kept up his unwearied efforts until he has fully reached his goal.





Here is a sample of what we see around us today







 Where is the "plain distinction" between the dress of men and women" that God designed?





 "The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the LORD thy God." **Deuteronomy 22:5**





 Is it not obvious that the line of distinction between the dress of men and women has been increasingly blurred?



How do you think God feels when we trivialize something that pains Him in the depths of His heart? When we laugh at androgyny? When we scoff at His counsel? When we ridicule those who conscientiously oppose Satan's gender blurring agenda?



 Are we willing to learn the lesson that God was trying to teach us many years ago through His prophetess?





 God's prophetess, in speaking about the American Costume, said, "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." {1T 457.2}

What used to be shocking in the early 1900's is now totally acceptable in our society.







But as if that's not bad enough, now Satan is working on the men, to get them to wear feminine clothing!





Nothing shocks us any more.





Nothing shocks us any more.

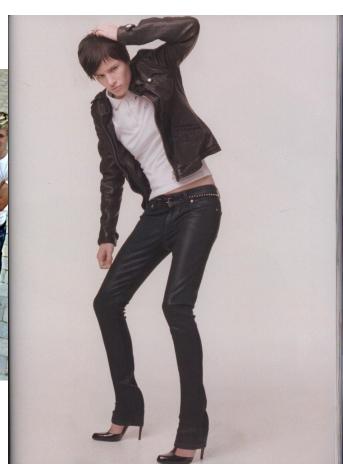




Skinny Jeans for the guys!







Can you tell if these are men or women?





Now it's skirts for men!



Gender confusion and perversion are rampant!



Androgynous People - Male or female?





Homosexuality is at an all time high!



Lesbianism is celebrated!



Male cross dressing is the latest rage!







Did God know what He was talking about when He told His prophetess: "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." {CG 427.3}?



Is it not time to listen to the Laodicean message, which counsels us to receive the eye salve which will take away our spiritual blindness?

Have we not wandered in the wilderness of insubordination long enough?



Today, it is not difficult to find clothing that is pleasing to God. It is not a huge sacrifice to follow His will in how we dress. But it does take moral courage, and the willingness to go against the tide of fashion.

EGW: "Even the style of the apparel will express the truth of the gospel. Their dress bears its testimony to their own family, to the church and the world, that they are being purified from vanity and selfishness. They demonstrate that they are not idolaters." {6MR 161.1}

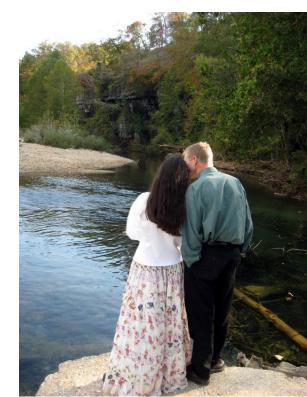


" 'If any man will come after me,' said Christ, 'let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.' Self denial and self-sacrifice will mark the Christian's life. **Evidence that the taste is** really converted will be seen in the dress of all who walk the narrow path of holiness, the path cast up for the ransomed of the Lord to walk in." {6MR 160.4}





"The remnant that purify their souls by obeying the truth gather strength from the trying process, exhibiting the beauty of holiness amid the surrounding apostasy." 2 **SM 380**



May God help us to wake up, and return to His principles as given in His inspired testimonies!



May God help us to trust Him enough to obey Him!

