

TESTIMONY

FOR

THE CHURCH,

No. 11.

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STEAM PRESS

OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST PUBLISHING ASSOCIATION.

BATTLE CREEK, MICH.

1867

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DRESS.

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 by those who, perhaps, 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 how 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 they are not two views, one contradicting the other, as some may imagine; but if there is any difference, it is simply in the form of expression. In Testimony to 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 any

course to lead unbelievers to think us more so than our faith requires us to be.

“If some who believe the truth should think it would be more healthful for the sisters to adopt the American Costume, yet if that mode of dress should cripple our influence among unbelievers that we could not so readily gain access to them, we should by no means adopt that mode of dress, if we suffered much in consequence. But some are deceived in thinking there is so much benefit to be received from this costume. Where it may prove a benefit to some, to others it is an injury.

“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 Deut. xxii, 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 Dress Reform. It is immodest apparel, wholly unfitted for modest, humble females who are Christ’s followers.

“An influence is increasing to have women in their appearance and dress as near like the other sex as possible, and fashion their dress very much like the men, but God pronounces it abomination. ‘In like manner also that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety.’ 1 Tim. ii, 9.

“Those who feel called out to join the movement of Women’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 women and men. 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 not listen to them, but would place them on a level with Spiritualists.

“With the so-called Dress Reform, there goes a spirit of levity and of boldness just in keeping with the dress. Modesty and reserve seem to depart from many of them as they adopt that manner 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 destroy their own influence and that of their husbands. They would be a by-word 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 from Testimony to the Church, No. 10 :

“ We do not think it in accordance with our faith to dress in the American Costume, or wear hoops, or go to an extreme in wearing long dresses, which sweep the sidewalks and streets. If females would wear their dresses so as to clear the filth of the streets an inch or two, their dresses would be modest, and kept cleanly 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 said upon this subject :

“ Christians should not take pains to make themselves gazing-stocks by dressing differently from the world. But if, in accordance with their faith and duty in respect to their 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 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. Christians should follow Christ, and conform their dress 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. They need to have their limbs and feet clad as warmly as men. The length of the fashionable female dress is objectionable for several reasons.

“1. It is extravagant and unnecessary to have the dress of that length that it will sweep the sidewalks and streets.

“2. A dress thus long gathers dew from the grass, and mud from the streets, which makes it uncleanly.

“3. In its bedraggled condition it comes in contact with the sensitive ankles, which are not sufficiently protected, quickly chilling them, and is one of the greatest causes of catarrh, and of scrofulous swellings, and endangers health and life.

“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 will be adopted by a class of so-called Dress Reformers. They will imitate the opposite sex, as nearly as possible. They will 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, are carrying the so-called Dress Reform to very objectionable lengths. Confusion will be the result. Some who adopt this costume may be correct in their views in general upon the health question, and they could 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. Deut. xxii, 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.’ This style of dress, God would not have his people adopt. It is not modest apparel, and is not at all fitting for modest, humble, females, who profess to be Christ’s followers. God’s prohibitions are lightly regarded by all who would advocate the doing away of the distinction of dress between males and females. The extreme position taken by some Dress Reformers upon this subject, cripples their influence.

“God designed there should be a plain distinction between male and female dress, 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. St. Paul would utter a rebuke, were he alive, and should behold females professing godliness with this style of dress. ‘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 disregard 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, for the extreme short dress, 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 females in reference to health, without making so great a change as to disgust the beholder.

“The female form should not be compressed in the least with corsets and whale bones. 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 females, when doing their housework, and especially, for those women who are obliged to perform more or less out-of-door labor. With this style of dress, one light skirt, or at most, two, are all that is necessary, and these 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 females, their weight dragging down upon the hips, have been the cause of various diseases, which are not easily cured, because the sufferers seem to be ignorant of the cause which has produced them, and they continue to violate the

laws of their being by girding the waists and wearing heavy skirts, until they are made life-long invalids. 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, females should clothe their limbs as thoroughly as the males. 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 limbs and feet are kept comfortable with warm clothing, the circulation will be equalized, and the blood will remain healthy and pure, because it is not chilled or hindered in its natural passage through the system."

The principle difficulty in the minds of many, is in regard to the length of the dress. Some will have it 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 was 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 since:—

“ Since the article on dress has appeared in ‘How to Live,’ there has been with some a misunderstanding of the idea I wished to convey. Some have taken the extreme meaning of that which I have written in regard to the length of the dress of females, and have evidently had a very hard time over the matter. They have discussed the question of shortening the dress of females, with their distorted views of the matter, until their spiritual vision became so confused that they could only see men as trees walking. They 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 to have fears that I shall by my life contradict my own testimony, or that I should fail to notice any real contradiction in the views given me.

“ In my article on dress, in How to Live, I have tried to present a healthful, convenient, economical, yet modest and becoming style of

dress for Christian sisters to wear, if they should choose so to do. I have tried, perhaps imperfectly, to describe such a dress. 'The dress should reach about to the top of the boot, but should be short enough to clear the filth of the side-walk and street without being raised by the hand.' Some have contended that by the top of the boot, I meant to be understood such high-topped 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. If I had thought I should have been misunderstood, I would have written more definitely. If it was 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 need 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 side-walk and street, without being raised by the hand. A still shorter dress than this would be proper, convenient, and healthful for females, when doing their house work, and especially, for those women 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 female dress, if I had reference to high-topped boots reaching nearly to the knee, why should I add, 'but the dress should be short enough to

clear the filth of the side-walk and street, without being raised by the hands?" If high-topped boots were meant, the dress would most certainly be short enough to keep clear of the filth of the streets 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 Sabbath-keeping sisters, and if such a style of dress should be enforced, she should 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 one 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 and 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 up such a dress. Have it arranged to order, to fit nicely the form. 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 merely 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 sacred to every wife and

mother above all others. Christian sisters should not at any time dress extravagantly, but at all times dress as neat, modest, and healthful, as their work will allow."

The foregoing-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 them. 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 dress resembling a coat, vest, and pants. This dress reaches about half way from the hip to the knee. This dress I have opposed from what has been shown me, which is in harmony with the word of God; while the other I have recommended as modest, comfortable, convenient, and healthful.

Another reason which I have to offer to you, my dear brethren and sisters, as an apology for calling your attention again to the subject of female dress, is that not one in twenty of my sisters, who profess to believe the Testimonies, have 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 cut off the ears of the people by wearing a dress which would be objectionable to them. But when I have brought the subject before

them, and fully explained 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 has got entirely out of sight of them. It cannot use them. And it is altogether too late to talk about wearing hoops, large or small. My position upon the hoop 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 perversions of my private conversations on this subject, and ask that what I have written and published be regarded as my settled position.

OUR MINISTERS.

IN the vision given me in Rochester, N.Y., Dec. 25, 1865, I was shown that a most solemn work was before us. Its importance and magnitude are not realized. As I marked the indifference which was everywhere apparent, I was alarmed for ministers and people. There seemed to be a paralysis upon the cause of present truth. The work of God seemed stayed. Ministers and people are unprepared for the time in which they live, and nearly all who profess to believe present truth are unprepared to understand the work of preparation for this time. In their present state of worldly ambition, and their lack of

consecration to God, their devotion to self, their own selfish interests characterizing their lives, they are wholly unfitted to receive the latter rain, and having done all to stand against the wrath of Satan and his inventions to cause them to make shipwreck of faith, by first fastening upon them some pleasing self-deception. They think they are all right when they are all wrong.

Ministers and people must make greater advancement in the work of reform. They should commence without delay to correct their wrong habits of eating, drinking, dressing, and working. I saw that quite a number of the ministers were not awake upon this important subject. Ministers are not all where God would have them. The result is, with some there is but little fruit of their labors. Ministers are not safe from Satan's temptations. They are the very ones that Satan will seek to ensnare. If he can succeed in lulling one minister to carnal security, and by thus doing divert his mind from the work, or deceive him with regard to his own true condition before God, he has accomplished much. Ministers should be ensamples to the flock of God.

I saw that the cause of God was not progressing as it might, and as it should. Ministers fail to take hold of the work with that devotion, decided perseverance and energy, which the importance of the work demands. They have a vigilant adversary to contend with, whose diligence and perseverance is untiring. The feeble effort of ministers and peo-

ple can bear no comparison with those of their adversary, the Devil. On one side they are battling for right, and have the help of God and holy angels. They should be strong and valiant, and wholly devoted to the cause in which they are engaged, having no separate interest. They should not be entangled with the things of this life, that "they may please Him who hath chosen them to be soldiers."

On the other side, Satan and his angels with all his agents on earth, are making every effort, using every device, to advance error and wrong, to cover up their hideousness and deformity with a pleasing garb. Selfishness, hypocrisy, and every species of deception, he clothes with a garment of apparent truth and righteousness. He triumphs in his success, even with ministers and people who profess to understand his wiles. The greater distance they keep from their great Leader, Jesus Christ, the less they are like him in character, and the more close is their resemblance in life and character to the servants of their great adversary, and the more sure is he of them at last. While they profess to be servants of Christ, they are servants of sin.

Ministers have received their wages, and some have their minds too much on their wages. They labor for wages, and lose sight of the sacredness and importance of the work.

Some become neglectful and slack in their labor, pass over the ground, and are weak and unsuccessful in their efforts. Their hearts are not in the work. The theory of

truth is clear. Many of them had no part in searching out this truth by hard study and earnest prayer, and have had no experience of its preciousness and value, by being compelled to sustain their positions on the truth against the opposition of its enemies. They do not see the necessity of preserving a spirit of entire consecration to the work. Their interest is divided between themselves and the work.

I saw that before the work of God can make any decided progress, ministers must be converted. They will, when converted, place less estimate upon wages, but far more value upon the important, sacred, solemn work which they have accepted at the hand of God to perform, and which he requires them to do faithfully and well, as those who must render to him a strict account. A faithful record is daily made by the recording angels of all their works. All their acts, and even the intents and purposes of the heart, stand faithfully revealed. Nothing is hid from the all-seeing eye of "Him with whom we have to do." Those who have thrown their whole energies into the cause of God, and feel that the work of God is a part of them, and have ventured out and have invested something in this all-sacred work, will labor not merely for wages. They will not be eye-servants, and seek to please themselves, but consecrate themselves and all their interests to this solemn work.

Some in their public labors with the churches are in danger of making mistakes from a lack of thoroughness. It is for the interest of

ministers and God's cause that they should search closely, try their motives, and be certain to divest themselves of selfishness; and watch, that while they preach straight truths to others they do not fail to live by the same rule. Let not Satan substitute something else for the deep heart work. They should be thorough with themselves, and with the cause of God, lest they should work for wages and lose sight of the high, important, and exalted character of the work. They should not let self rule instead of Jesus Christ. Be careful, and not say to the sinner in Zion, "It shall be well with him," when God has pronounced a curse upon him.

Ministers must arouse and manifest life, zeal, and a devotion to the work, that they have for quite a length of time been almost strangers to, because they have failed to walk with God. The cause of God in many places is not improving. Soul work is needed. The people are overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life. They are entering deeper and deeper into a spirit of worldly enterprise. They are ambitious to get gain. Spirituality and devotion are rare things. The spirit that prevails is to work, work, to accumulate and add to that which they already possess. What will be the end of these things, was the burden of my inquiry.

Conference meetings have amounted to nothing lasting. Those who attend the meetings carry their spirit of enterprise with them. Ministers and people frequently bring their merchandise to these large gatherings, and