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I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Barbara Alice Waln entitled "An Investigation of Written Church Comments Concerning Modesty as Observed in Women's Dress in the United States from 1900-1964." I recommend that it be accepted for nine quarter hours of credit in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science, with a major in Textiles and Clothing.



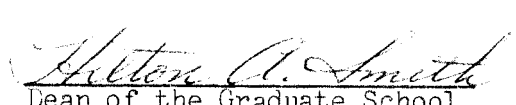
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AN INVESTIGATION OF WRITTEN CHURCH COMMENTS CONCERNING
MODESTY AS OBSERVED IN WOMEN'S DRESS IN THE
UNITED STATES FROM 1900-1964

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate Council of
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of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science

by
Barbara Alice Waln
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Today's fashions with the emergence of the extreme décolletage neckline, the initiation of the topless bathing suit as a sequel to the bikini, the increase in emphasis on the leg as a result of the shorter skirt length, and the low back or absence of backs in dresses have raised the question of modesty as observed in women's dress. This inquiry was not a novel concern. Immodesty as observed in women's dress has been considered a problem in the past.

In the Middle Ages the problem existed, and a special attempt was made by the church through sumptuary legislation to curb excessive and improper dress. Sumptuary laws according to Webster were "laws regulating extravagance in food, clothing, etc. on religious or moral grounds."¹ Religious control of dress through the use of sumptuary legislation continued in Europe, and in the seventeenth century legislative action was adopted by the American colonists.

The concern with modesty as observed in women's dress was also evident in the flapper era in the twentieth century. Women, long restricted in their activities and limited in their choice of costume, finally found themselves with new freedom in addition to new responsibility. As a result of the new freedom, women's dress was shocking in

¹ Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language, College Edition (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1957), p. 1461.

its scantiness and revolutionary in its conception. Authors of the twentieth century re-emphasized the new trend in dress as depicted in the characters of their novels and plays.

Social influences on clothing and dress have been the topic of many studies, and sociologists and psychologists have realized that social conditions of the time influence dress. The concept of modesty as a social influence played a role in the fashions of the time. A problem was confronted in referring to this concept because of the lack of uniformity in other people's definition of the term. Webster defined modesty as:

. . . the quality of behaving according to a standard of what is proper or decorous; decent; pure; now, especially, not displaying one's body; not extreme, showing moderation.²

Consequently, what was considered modest or proper at one period of time, in one social situation, or in one country might not be considered so in another period of time, another situation, or another country. In this thesis Webster's definition was adapted so that modesty as observed in dress referred to the quality of dressing according to what was considered by members of a specific culture to be a standard of propriety. This standard included not only extent of exposure or display of one's body, but also degree of extreme, in contrast to moderation, in dress styles.

Throughout history the prevailing religious emphasis of the time played an important role in defining the social situation. Sumptuary

²Ibid., p. 946.

legislation in colonial times was an example of religious influence on conduct and dress. The term "religion" in this thesis was based on Webster's definition as "any specific system of belief, worship, conduct, etc., often involving a code of ethics and a philosophy."³ When these organized religious groups were Christians, the term "church" was used; when Jewish, "synagogue" was the appropriate term.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to survey the extent of religious comments dealing with modesty as observed in women's dress in the United States from 1900-1964. The intent was to study written comments, condemnations, and restrictions made by the church or synagogue against certain types of women's apparel on the grounds that they indicated immodest or improper dress and to determine the extent of the religious concern with women's apparel as expressed in the sources available.

In the past the church or synagogue played an important part in influencing women's dress. The desire was to ascertain whether religious comments in the twentieth century continued to be antagonistic to movements in fashion as Nystrom claimed:

The established church has always opposed fashion movement, particularly in apparel and adornment of both men and women. New fashions have been declared to be both immodest and sinful. It would be easy to compile large volumes of quotations of judgments and pronouncements of church dignitaries against fashion. They have apparently appeared in every age and against every innovation and the more powerful the church, the greater its opposition to fashion.⁴

³Ibid., p. 1228.

⁴Paul H. Nystrom, Economics of Fashion (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1928), p. 144.

Assumptions

The following assumptions were made which affected the procedure and the writing of this study:

1. Comments expressing a religious concern with a change in modesty as observed in women's dress were available in publications of the period.

2. These religious comments were dependent to some extent on the social atmosphere of the time; therefore, the comments were considered in reference to the social and political conditions of the time.

Limitations

For interest and feasibility of the study limitations were established. The survey was limited to the dress of women of the United States from 1900 to 1964.

Religious comments which appeared in publications of the time and were considered an indication of a concern with modesty as observed in women's dress were not correlated according to denomination. Catholic, Jewish, and Protestant viewpoints were included in the study wherever possible.

Due to the nature of the investigation, sources of information usually included contemporary periodical literature. Therefore, availability of these sources, especially in the beginning of the twentieth century, was a significant limitation.

Justification of the Study

Justification for the study lay in the desire that the survey would contribute to a better understanding of the relationship between social conditions of the time, in this case, the religious emphasis, and women's dress. No study to date has been located that attempted to correlate these two aspects; and thus, the hope was to elicit some interrelationships that would aid educators in teaching sociological aspects of clothing in the future.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were proposed for verification:

1. Religious comments expressing a concern with modesty as observed in women's dress were not consistent in their appearance in publications in the United States during the period, 1900-1964.

2. "Fashion," or the prevailing style of the time, played a more important role in influencing women's apparel than did comments from the church. In other words, what was considered to be fashionable attire at the time of the writings was altered very little by comments from the church complaining that the dress was immodest.

Procedure

The nature of this twentieth century study made it necessary to review the background factors that influenced the situation of the present century. Therefore, church comments on dress from colonial times to the beginning of the twentieth century were included. A brief review of the social and political conditions and a description of the general clothing characteristics of each decade were presented in the section dealing with the twentieth century.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A review of literature revealed that closely related studies were limited in nature. Therefore, discussions on the origin and concept of modesty and the religious influence on dress were included.

Concept of Modesty and Its Origin

In order to understand the term modesty and its significance to dress, theories of the origin of modesty were considered. Psychologists and sociologists have presented various interpretations of the origin of modesty. Ellis claimed that the primary factors of modesty were developed long before either ornamentation or clothing existed and involved such things as social fear, disgust, and shame.¹ He had many followers who agreed with his idea that shame and disgust for the naked body were the natural elements in the origin of modesty. Another school of thought attributed modesty as beginning "when society by its laws and religion made the public uncovering of the human body a criminal offense."² Most authorities have agreed with this latter concept that modesty was the result, not the cause of wearing clothes.

Laver developed a theory of "shifting erogenous zones," based on

¹Havelock Ellis, Studies in the Psychology of Sex (New York: Random House, 1942), I, 58.

²Lawrence Langner, The Importance of Wearing Clothes (New York: Hastings House, 1959), p. 71.

the writings of Flugel, to explain the origin of modesty.³ He believed modesty to be a result of clothes which were used to cover a part of the body that was considered to be erotic at a certain time. He claimed, "The whole body nude becomes a bore. Fashion operates by shutting off parts of the body until they achieve erotic capital."⁴ Thus, every part of the body had the capacity to be acclaimed immodest if exposed, but whether it was considered improper depended on the existing style of the time.

The concept of modesty has been called by Flugel a "negative" or "inhibitory" impulse directed against social or sexual forms of display, such as the tendency to display the naked body or the tendency to display gorgeous or beautiful clothes.⁵ This concept was in agreement with Webster's definition of modesty as including not only conduct that was in accordance with propriety, but also in accordance with requirements for moderation. Flugel continued to say that:

. . . interest in the naked body became, to some extent displaced on clothes, so that, in turn, a new effort of modesty was needed . . . and thus . . . disapproval on the part of ecclesiastical authority of gorgeousness or extravagance in dress was expressed almost as vigorously as disapproval of the cult of the body itself.⁶

Another concept claimed that modesty was not always caused by

³"Laver's Law," Women's Wear Daily, July 13, 1964, p. 4.

⁴Ibid.

⁵J. C. Flugel, The Psychology of Clothes (London: Hogarth Press Ltd., 1950), p. 58.

⁶Ibid., p. 54.

the absence of clothes, but was the result of wearing clothes for the first time. This theory was related by Hurlock:

When primitive peoples are unaccustomed to wearing clothing, putting it on for the first time does not decrease their immorality, as the ladies of the missionary societies think it will. It has just the opposite effect. It draws attention to the body, especially to those parts of it which are covered for the first time.⁷

Thus, the concept of modesty varied not only from one culture to another, but also from one individual to the next.

Whether modesty preceded or followed clothes was an interesting discussion, yet both schools of thought agreed that religion played an important role in one's concept of modesty. Ellis claimed in his theory that this "natural emotion and sexual reserve . . . [were] united by Christianity."⁸ On the other hand, Langner believed that modesty resulted from clothing, and religion made uncovering of the human body an offense.

The importance attached to the religious influence in one's concept of modesty as observed in the subject of women's dress was a controversial matter. How much adherence existed to the religious pleas of the time for modest dress was merely a matter of opinion. The importance attached to the religious comments concerning dress might have been significant as Langner and Ellis suggested, but Flugel claimed that one should beware of exaggerating this influence since it

⁷Elizabeth B. Hurlock, The Psychology of Dress (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1929), p. 17.

⁸Ellis, op. cit., p. 25.

was "probably no more effective than sermons on many other subjects."⁹

Modesty in Dress and Religion

Studies have been done that involve the concept of modesty with dress. In her thesis Huber compared the attitudes of men and women concerning modesty in women's dress. She discovered that those subjects, both male and female, who were characterized by a greater amount of religious participation, also exhibited more conservatism in dress.¹⁰ Huber claimed that modesty in women's clothing has been the subject of fierce arguments by "moralists, philosophers, and church leaders," and that "institutionalized religions have affixed moral overtones to modesty in women's dress."¹¹ This restraining limit imposed by the religious emphasis of the time was one of the factors involved in modesty or propriety in women's dress.

Dwyer studied religious commitment as a factor in female college students' concepts of conservatism and modesty in dress. She concluded that although there was a tendency for religious affiliation to increase one's concept of conservatism in dress, the relationship was not significant.¹²

⁹Flugel, op. cit., p. 58.

¹⁰Joyce Annette Huber, "A Comparison of Men's and Women's Attitudes Toward Modesty in Women's Dress and Some Background Factors Relating to Those Attitudes" (unpublished Master's thesis, Ohio State University, Columbus, 1962).

¹¹Ibid., pp. 11 and 21.

¹²Kathleen Marie Dwyer, "Religious Commitment as a Factor in Conservatism in Dress" (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Illinois, Urbana, 1964).

Dwyer's study required that students choose apparel to be worn to church, a dance, or a sports event. In the replies of her participants, who were members of three religious groups, Protestant, Catholic, and Hebrew, she found no significant correlation between the degree of religious commitment to conservatism for clothing to be worn to church or to a dance. Likewise, no correlation between religious commitment and modesty was discovered. However, there was a highly significant relationship between the religious commitment and degree of conservatism in the selection of sportswear by the Catholic respondents.¹³ Religious denomination of the respondent and the occasion for which the clothes were to be worn seemed to be the factors involved in the conservatism index. Dwyer concluded that socio-economic variables usually were as important or more important than the religious commitment of the respondents in determining the individual's conservatism in dress.¹⁴

That religion played an important part in the colonial times of America in influencing dress was emphasized by Phillips in her study of sumptuary legislation in the seventeenth century.¹⁵ The religious atmosphere of the early American colonies played an important part in restricting the use of certain garments through the passage of sumptuary laws. These laws to some extent were a voice of the church, and they prohibited the wearing of immodest, as well as extravagant, apparel.

¹³Ibid., pp. 42-43.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 50.

¹⁵Joana W. Phillips, "Sumptuary Legislation and Other Regulations Pertaining to Personal Appearance in the Seventeenth Century" (unpublished Master's thesis, University of North Carolina, Greensboro, 1961).

Religious influence on dress has been further emphasized by more basic examples such as the habits of the Catholic nuns and the conventional dress that the Pennsylvania Dutch, the Amish, the Shakers, and the Quakers imposed on the members of their faith.

Religion as a Social Force

Traditionally religion has been regarded as an important influence in establishing the social atmosphere of the time. Benson claimed that religion played such an important part in regulating the individual's personality and the group life of a society that indirectly religion could be assumed to have an effect on clothing behavior.¹⁶ The studies by Phillips and Huber were based on religious influence on dress, but Dwyer found that the religious power in determining dress was not as significant a force as it had been in the past. Not only was there a difference according to religious groups, but the social conditions of the time had a great influence on the indexes of conservatism and modesty.

The influence from socio-economic variables and their effect on religious policy have been emphasized by several sociologists. Mack and associates indicated that the influence the Protestant and Catholic subcultures have on the adherents to their faith has been overridden by the American dream of vertical mobility, so that religious dogma has shown a lessened effect on its members than it did in the past.¹⁷

¹⁶Purnell Benson, Religion in Contemporary Culture (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1960), p. 490.

¹⁷Raymond Mack, Raymond J. Murphy, and Seymour Yellin, "The Protestant Ethic, Level of Aspiration, and Social Mobility: An Empirical Test," American Sociological Review, XXI (1956), 300.

A similar opinion was held by Glock in his discussion of church policies on social issues. He claimed that the policy of the churches on social issues can be seen as an adaptation to or compromise with the dominant secular point of view, so that the church can be considered to "function to preserve the status quo."¹⁸

Summary of Studies Concerning Religious Influence
on Dress and Modesty

Review of studies in the field that have been completed up to this time disclosed a variety of types. Studies on modesty as observed in dress mentioned the amount of religious participation as a factor in the individual's liberal or conservative attitude. The influence resulting from socio-economic factors and secular views on religious policy was also suggested. Reference to the religious emphasis of a specific period in United States history was made in Phillips' thesis on sumptuary legislation. These studies seemed to indicate that a religious influence on dress was present in United States history.

The writer's contention was that a bridge existed between the religious comments concerning dress and the religious influence as an important factor in one's concept of modesty. To span the gap a survey of periodical literature to reveal religious comments concerning modesty or immodesty of the dress of women from 1900-1964 was undertaken.

¹⁸Charles Glock and Benjamin Ringer, "Church Policy and Attitudes of Ministers and Parishioners on Social Issues," American Sociological Review, XXI (1956), 149.

CHAPTER III

BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Comprehension of religious comments concerning modesty of the dress of women in the twentieth century required that background factors be reviewed. These background factors included discussion of the religious restrictions on dress as observed in colonial America and mention of the religious emphasis in the United States up to the twentieth century. The review was intended to set the stage for a twentieth century study. Reference to modesty in women's dress was observed in The Holy Bible.

I. BIBLICAL REFERENCE

Since the time Adam and Eve saw that they were naked and clothed themselves, modesty has been associated with clothing. This concern with immodest apparel was echoed in Isaiah 3:18 when the daughters of Zion were reprimanded and threatened with removal of certain possessions because of their haughtiness:

In that day the Lord will take away the finery of the anklets, the headbands, and the scarfs; the headdresses, the armlets, the sashes, the perfume boxes, and amulets; the signet rings and nose ring; the festal robes, the mantles, the cloaks, and the handbags; the garments of gauze, the linen garments, the turbans and the veils.¹

Another reference in the Scripture presented a positive approach

¹The Holy Bible, Revised Standard Version (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1952), p. 532.

to the importance of dress. Proverbs related that the "good wife" wore garments of fine linen and provided for the comfort and well-being of her family by supplying them with garments of wool and flax.²

Regardless of whether clothing was a result or a cause of the origin of modesty, the Biblical reference continued to be a significant factor in influencing dress. This influence was quite noticeable in the colonial times of America. The early Puritan fathers who settled in the New World to obtain freedom of worship closely adhered to their interpretation of the Scripture.

II. THE COLONIAL TIMES

Religious freedom, which was one of the reasons for settlement in the New World, was not wholly attained in colonial America. The Puritans believed the "spiritual contract existed not only between God and the individual but also between God and the entire group, and that the group was to act as one in fulfilling God's laws."³ This group responsibility negated the concept of individual freedom in religious matters. In an attempt to fulfill God's laws as observed in the Holy Scripture, sumptuary legislation was enacted to prohibit the wearing of certain apparel by the colonists. Religious sects other than Puritans and allied forms were not welcome in New England.⁴ Thus, true religious freedom

²Ibid., Proverbs 31:13-31, p. 516.

³Joseph Gaer and Ben Siegel, The Puritan Heritage (New York: The New American Library, 1964), p. 25.

⁴Alice Morse Earle, Two Centuries of Costume in America (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1903), I, 388.

was not the situation in the early colonies and much regulation actually existed.

Sumptuary laws were considered indicative of religious attitudes concerning dress. Although these laws were the products of legislators, religion could not be divorced from law in colonial times. Influence from the churches was extremely prevalent in all forms of life, including the law-making system of the colonies. Although religion did permeate New England life, the Puritans did not intend to create laws. As Phillips stated, "The Puritans were not seriously interested in making laws, but they did influence the laws which were made by the secular ruling groups in the Massachusetts and Connecticut colonies."⁵ Because of this influence from the strong religious feeling of the times, Phillips felt the Puritan authority in formation of laws should not be ignored. Thus, in attempting to achieve religious freedom, the Puritans established a way of life that placed demands on their members.

Colonial religion could not be characterized by one adjective, because differences existed between northern and southern colonies. Virginia and other southern colonies were more independent and developed a rural society that did not rely on town life to so great an extent as did the New England colonies. Individual initiative, rather than a voice from the church, played a greater role in the southern colonies than it did in the northern Puritan settlements.⁷

⁵Phillips, "Sumptuary Legislation," op. cit., p. 37.

⁶Ibid., p. 43.

⁷Albert Bushnell-Hart, Social and Economic Forces in American History (Chautauqua, New York: Chautauqua Press, 1915), p. 27.

According to Bushnell-Hart, the religious influence on life outside Puritan New England was less stringent.⁸ In the southern colonies the Church of England became the established church, except for a few traces of other denominations. The aristocrats of the southern colonies were colored by Tory attitudes and maintained a very close relationship with the ideals, customs, and fashions of England.⁹ News from England concerning women's fashions was eagerly awaited by these southern colonists.

In the middle colonies there existed more of a mixture of religions, rather than one predominant sect. The Dutch settlers in this area could be classified as being more clannish, practical, and without definite cultural ideals.¹⁰ In Maryland, religious groups such as the Dissenters and Roman Catholics were the main constituents of the population. Bushnell-Hart, quoting Dankers and Sluyter, claimed that the religious life in these middle colonies was stagnant; people were "godless and profane."¹¹ Congregationalism was a sect that also appeared frequently in the middle colonies. The Quakers, or Society of Friends, played an important role in Pennsylvania, especially in the control of the city government of Philadelphia.

A different atmosphere existed in the northern colonies, and this

⁸Ibid., p. 45.

⁹Frank Alvah Parsons, The Psychology of Dress (New York: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1920), p. 265.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 266.

¹¹Bushnell-Hart, op. cit., p. 46.

feeling was described by Parsons:

The northern, or New England colonist, was made of sterner stuff. He, the left wing of English life was a radical from the bourgeoisie and the trade classes mostly, his was the legacy of Puritanism. Determined in his ideals of government, simple and austere in his social customs, he braved the rigours of climate and isolation of the new world, that the principles of individualism, freedom, modesty, and humility might blossom and come into full fruition undisturbed.¹²

Although the Puritan settlers in the Massachusetts Bay Colony adhered to the idea of a State Church, they disliked the dogma of the Anglican Church of England. These Puritans were greatly influenced by political happenings, and they were considered to be members of the middle class and political group known as the "Roundheads." This group in England was in opposition to the "Cavaliers," or members of the aristocratic political group, who flaunted extravagance and frivolities. Thus, the dissenting Puritans who came to America naturally continued their protest against immodest dress that reminded them of their opponents, the Cavaliers of England. Baldwin claimed that the Puritans attacked the extravagant dress on religious and moral grounds--"as offensive to God and as causing man to sin."¹³

In those days the sermon was the main form of communication between the citizen and the church. Religious magazines prevalent today were rare and books were expensive. Another form of expression for the established church was through legislation. Sumptuary laws, a remnant of the

¹²Parsons, op. cit., p. 266.

¹³Frances Elizabeth Baldwin, Sumptuary Legislation and Personal Regulation in England (Vol. XLIV of The Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science. 80+ vols.; Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1926), p. 195.

English restrictions which were causes of dissent from the Puritans, continued to play an important part in the religious influences on the colonial people. The laws were naturally molded from the English patterns, since colonists were familiar with these. Oddly enough, the Puritans of the New England colonies adopted this form of legislation to a greater extent than did their southern aristocratic contemporaries.

Sumptuary laws of the early colonies, according to McClellan, were established mainly for preservation of morals and maintenance of class distinctions.¹⁴ The predominant religious atmosphere of the New England colonies, plus the dislike for the excesses observed in the aristocratic Cavalier dress, resulted in sumptuary legislation gaining great importance in the Puritan colonies. Because religion played a more minor role in the colony of Virginia than it did in New England and because this southern colony was settled by aristocrats with Tory attitudes, sumptuary laws were of little significance there.¹⁵ The interest that fashion created in the dress of women was quite pronounced in the southern colonies.

The Blue Laws of the General Court of the New Haven Colony were the first recorded laws of the colonies. These laws were sumptuary in nature and prohibited excesses in apparel. Reference to the Scripture in sumptuary regulations became a common occurrence in the early colonies.

¹⁴Elisabeth McClellan, Historic Dress in America 1607-1800 (Philadelphia: George W. Jacobs and Company, 1904).

¹⁵Phillips, op. cit., p. 41.

Sumptuary Legislation Concerning Modesty and
Extravagance in Dress

The campaign against excesses in women's dress appeared in the 1634 edict of the General Court of Massachusetts which declared:

That no person either man or woman shall hereafter make or buy any apparel, either woollen or silk or linen with any lace on it, silver, gold, or thread, under the penalty of forfeiture of said clothes. Also that no person either man or woman shall make or buy any slashed clothes other than one slash in each sleeve and another in the back; also all cut-works, embroideries, or needlework caps, bands, and rails are forbidden hereafter to be made and worn under the aforesaid penalty; also all gold or silver girdles, hatbands, belts, ruffs, and beaverhats are prohibited to be bought and worn hereafter.¹⁶

The law was compromised so that the planters, who had great quantities of this apparel specified in the edict, were allowed to "wear out such apparel as they are now provided of except the immoderate great sleeves, slashed apparel, immoderate great rails and long wings."¹⁷

The Church of Virginia also disapproved of the extravagance in women's dress of the seventeenth century. To curb this condition, the Church assessed every married man in accordance with both his and his wife's apparel.¹⁸

This campaign against extravagance continued as was witnessed in the Connecticut law of 1676 which related:

Whereas excess in apparell amongst us is unbecoming a wilderness condition and profession of the gospell . . . which practices are testified against in God's holy word . . . what persons soever shall wear gold or silver lace, or gold or silver buttons, silk ribbons or other superfluous

¹⁶ Earle, op. cit., p. 316.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ McClellan, op. cit., p. 48.

trimmings, or any bone lace above three shillings per yard, or silk scarfes, shall be assessed at one hundred and fifty pound estate.¹⁹

The Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of Friends of 1695 repeated this plea for more modest dress in a suggestion to its members to "keep to Plainness in Apparel as becomes the Truth."²⁰

New Englanders expressed a concern with immodest apparel being a threat to both the women who wore the dress and the men who viewed it. Women in this section of the country and period of time were considered instruments of evil since they were descendants of the temptress Eve. Regulations that would correct any "naked" condition of the female sex were attempted. In 1650 a law was enacted that prohibited "short sleeves, whereby the nakedness of the arm may be discovered."²¹

Sumptuary Legislation Concerning Maintenance of Class Distinctions

The church made attempts to promote the wearing of apparel that would be not only modest and becoming to the eye of God and in agreement with the teachings of the Holy Scripture, but that would also classify or rank people according to their appropriate station by prohibiting certain garments to those of low status. In 1639 the General Court of Massachusetts forbade people of low estate "immodest great breeches, knots of ribban [sic] broad shoulder bands and rayles, silk roses, double ruffles and capes."²² Laws of this time limited the wearing of

¹⁹William B. Weeden, Economic and Social History of New England 1620-1789 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1891), p. 288.

²⁰Earle, op. cit., p. 608.

²¹Gaer, op. cit., p. 87.

²²Earle, op. cit., p. 622.

rich dress only to those of appropriate rank or to "gentlefolk and folk of wealth or some distinction by being in some sort of office."²³

The attempt to keep persons within their station continued in the order of 1651 from the General Court of Massachusetts which claimed:

. . . utter detestation and dislike that men or women of meane condition, education and calling should take upon them the garbe of gentlemen by the wearinge of gold or silver lace or buttons or poynts at their knees, to walke in great boots, or women of the same rank to wear silke or tiffany hoodes or scarfes.²⁴

Thus, the purpose of sumptuary laws was twofold--to promote modest clothing and to classify the colonists according to rank.

Result of Legislation and Decrees

While the magistrates were complaining about women's dress actual voice from the pulpit was rather quiet. A few religious leaders of the time did refer to Isaiah and the haughty daughters of Zion in their preaching, but the interpretation of the Scripture differed. There was a dispute over the passage that declared, "a woman ought to have a power on her head because of the angels."²⁵ Archbishop Latimer took this statement to mean a French hood; Roger Williams, a veil; while John Cotton found ample evidence in the Scripture to prove that Salem women should not wear veils.²⁶ As a result, the Puritan woman chose to wear what she desired and though the churches preached simplicity of dress, the Puritan woman did not yield her vanities and obsessions with fashion

²³Ibid., p. 17.

²⁴Ibid., p. 317.

²⁵Ibid., p. 67.

²⁶Ibid.

without a struggle.²⁷ Even at this early date, fashion dictates featured prominently in women's choice of dress.

How closely the Puritans adhered to these warnings from the church and sumptuary legislation was greatly questioned. Parsons claimed that clothes played a great part in the early colonists' lives and extravagance was common among the rich folk.²⁸ Because of women's readiness to follow fashion and to participate in personal display, the religious exhortations had little effect on these early colonists. The ministers at the time noticed with regret the abundant interest in fashion in the New England colonies; "a love of dress which neither the ban of religion, philosophy, nor law could expel; what Reverend Solomon Stoddard called, in 1675, 'intolerable pride in clothes and hair.'"²⁹

Although the Puritans preached simplicity in dress, great diversity in costume existed among those who considered themselves Puritans. In many cases, the dress of the Puritans was extravagant, more closely resembling that of the aristocratic Cavaliers than the more somber Roundheads. Sumptuary legislation seemed not to have been entirely effective in curbing extravagance in dress due to the importance attached to fashion dictates. A decline in such legislation appeared around 1700.

III. EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

A brief explanation of the religious emphasis from the colonial

²⁷Ibid., p. 315.

²⁸Parsons, op. cit., p. 267.

²⁹Earle, op. cit., pp. 317-318.

times up to the twentieth century was presented to help the reader comprehend the happenings of the twentieth century. To categorize religious emphases of certain periods in United States history was impossible; therefore, only mention of some of the more significant happenings and influences was included.

The Puritan atmosphere relaxed somewhat during the latter part of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, but then an evangelical movement appeared in approximately 1734 which was known as the "Great Awakening." The re-emphasis on religion was characterized by the emotional fervor of the revivalists. This revival pleased the clergy but could not restore religion to its original severity.³⁰

The interest in dress as a means of display and a flaunt to the church's authority was illustrated in the eighteenth century custom of the newly married couple appearing in church with the express purpose of displaying all their new bridal finery.³¹ A pew was reserved for them so that members of the congregation did not have to crane their necks to see the couple, for they knew exactly where the objects of interest were located. The couple would arrive late to make an appropriate entrance and then proceed to their pew. Upon reaching the pew, they would turn around to display their garments to the rest of the congregation.

³⁰Ralph Volney Harlow, The Growth of the United States (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1943), p. 47.

³¹Parsons, op. cit., p. 274.

IV. NINETEENTH CENTURY

The nineteenth century presented various religious atmospheres that influenced the attitude of the twentieth century. After 1800, protracted or prolonged meetings and religious revivals with conversions to the faith were the features of the American scene. As a result, disputes within churches arose, countermovements appeared, and undenominational or anti-denominational churches were formed. This renewed interest in religion in the first part of the nineteenth century was encouraged by three organizations--The American Bible Society, The American Sunday School Union, and The American Tract Society.³² The latter organization in 1826 circulated messages "to diffuse the knowledge of our Lord . . . and to promote the interests of vital goodness and sound morality."³³ One of these messages was entitled, "To Christian Female on Simplicity in Dress."³⁴

The period 1830-1860 has been referred to by some authorities as the "hot air period in American history," or the "intellectual and moral renaissance."³⁵ This period was the time of the transcendentalists who believed in the dignity of man in all his relations, especially those with God. Men such as Thoreau, Emerson, Bryant, Hawthorne, Whittier, and Lowell believed that the human mind could perceive right from wrong, and that God's truth could be revealed to man directly.³⁶ This new

³²Harlow, op. cit., p. 408.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid., p. 177.

³⁶Ibid.

belief in the worth of man was to prove significant in the era to come.

The claim that fashion was a force superior to any increase in religious attitude of the time was emphasized in an editorial in 1838 by a Mrs. Hale, editor of Godey's Lady Book, a popular fashion magazine of the time. Hall, quoting Mrs. Hale, related:

Men may grow more austere religious . . . but we doubt whether the human species in general will ever be too good or too wise to offer sacrifices to this fantastic deity-- a broad-brimmed hat and a Quaker bonnet are 'fashionable' in the society of Friends; and those persons who are remarkable for plainness of their apparel, are often scrupulously exact in conforming with some standard which they conceive to be most expressive of decorum and good taste.³⁷

Social conditions of the United States underwent a rapid change in the period 1865-1900. The country was still considered to be traditionally religious, but signs of revolt against orthodoxy (the practice of conforming to usual beliefs or established doctrines) appeared. Darwin, continuing the studies of his predecessors, interjected a theory, which according to Harlow had more profound influence on scientific and religious thought than any other document. This was Darwin's theory of evolution.³⁸ Conservative opposition culminated in 1859 with the publication of the Origin of Species, which had a grave effect on religious thought that continued into the twentieth century. Thus, the stage was set for the twentieth century.

³⁷Carrie A. Hall, From Hoopskirts to Nudity (Idaho: Caxton Printers Ltd., 1938), p. 66.

³⁸Ralph Volney Harlow, The Growth of the United States 1865-1943 (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1943), II, 160.

CHAPTER IV

BEGINNING OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

I. THE DECADE 1900-1910

Political and Social Conditions

The years between the Civil War and the First World War have been called the "Early Industrial Age in America"¹ and the "Gilded Age."² The beginning of the twentieth century was an age of new social theories and attitudes; the spirit, one of change, was influenced by the work of Darwin and his predecessors. Social evolution became the mode of thought.³ Darwin had claimed in his biological theory that change was cumulative in character, and that rather than being disruptive, change merely modified or added to existing conditions.⁴

"Social Darwinism" transferred these ideas from biology to the social sciences and human relations. Thought of the time favored change and development of existing social conditions to create better circumstances for all people.

Darwin's theory of survival of the fittest was literally interpreted by the business world in the concept of competition among

¹Richard W. Leopold and Arthur S. Link, Problems in American History (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1952), p. 507.

²Monarch Review Notes in American History from 1865 (New York: Monarch Press, Inc., 1962), p. 32.

³Leopold and Link, op. cit., p. 509.

⁴Ibid.

individuals. Money making became the main preoccupation in this era, and with new wealth, an increase in spending was the rule.⁵

A theory of pragmatism arose, and its adherents believed that old ideas should not be stringently followed. An idea was beneficial only if it could be used successfully.⁶ Practicality became the criterion for improving existing conditions in the first decade of the twentieth century.

With this new feeling for change a group of reformers known as the progressives attempted to curb some of the faults they saw inherent in American democracy. Concern over big businesses, child labor, low wages for women, unequal distribution of wealth, and industrial accidents led to attempts to improve these conditions.⁷ The mode of thought was continued in the next decade's attempts at reform through women's suffrage and prohibition movements.

Politically the decade, 1900-1910, was characterized by the personality of Theodore Roosevelt. Previously the United States had followed a policy of isolation, now it pursued a course of expansion in a drive toward imperialism.⁸ The United States had joined the mood of the time for expansion and acquisition of land overseas. Roosevelt's motto, "speak softly and carry a big stick," was followed in his foreign policy. A Supreme Court decision of 1901 allowed a territory to be subjected to American jurisdiction without being incorporated constitutionally into the United States.

⁵Monarch Review Notes, loc. cit.

⁷Ibid., p. 43.

⁶Ibid., p. 33.

⁸Ibid., p. 34.

Women's Dress of 1900-1910

"Exquisite detail and feminine softness" characterized women's dress of the decade, 1900-1910.⁹ Work of fine quality was performed on rich, elegant fabrics. The result was a costume that symbolized femininity of the time. The impression created by this fashion became the vogue not only in women's dress but also in their behavior and manners.

The silhouette of the first decade of the twentieth century featured a high, straight front corset so that the waist was pinched in to be as small as possible, creating the characteristic Gibson Girl graceful S curve. After 1907, the curve was not so pronounced for the waist was given some relief from its former tight corset. The skirt fitted closely over the hips and back and then flared at the bottom over petticoats. Usually the dress was floor length and faced with dust ruffles to protect the gown from dirt and water as it dragged on the ground while the wearer walked. However, the skirt was shortened for hygienic reasons, and in some cases reached shoe-top length. This skirt was referred to as a "rainy day skirt" and could only "properly" be worn on rainy days.¹⁰ The Gibson Girl silhouette would not be complete without a large hat with rolled brim and plumes. These hats, a necessity with the high pompadour hairdress, were fastened with long hat pins.¹¹

⁹Ermina Stimson, Sixty Years of Fashion (New York: Fairchild Publications, Inc., 1950), p. 1.

¹⁰R. Turner Wilcox, Five Centuries of American Costume (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963), p. 158.

¹¹Fairfax Proudfit Walkup, Dressing the Part (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1950), p. 342.

The neckline of the dresses varied and included a high boned collar or a lower décolletage. Around 1900 the evening bodice was cut low across the bosom and held up by very narrow shoulder straps.¹² About 1903 the shirtwaist dress with a high, boned neck and long sleeves became the vogue, and in 1907 the shirtwaist underwent cut work or open work design to yield the "peekaboo waist."¹³

The skirt was modified and an innovation of the straighter skirt appeared. The "hobble skirt," with a knee-high slit to make locomotion possible appeared in the latter part of the decade.¹⁴

Although the high-buttoned and laced shoe remained in fashion throughout the decade, a new shoe femininely styled from a man's evening pump and sporting a black grosgrain ribbon appeared about 1904. At the time the new shoe was considered to be startlingly low cut for day or street wear.¹⁵

Popularity of horseback riding influenced the costume of the period. Clothing especially designed for the automobile also came into fashion at this time. Bathing suits, made of dark blue or black flannel were relatively non-revealing. These suits consisted of bloomers, black stockings, and a bodice that completely covered the wearer. However, later the high collar was eliminated and sleeves were shortened to the elbow.¹⁶

¹²Ibid., p. 338.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Wilcox, loc. cit.

¹⁵Walkup, op. cit., p. 159.

¹⁶Ibid.

Church Comments on Dress, 1900-1910

Women at this time were viewed in the traditional feminine role. Their fashions in dress copied those of Paris, and little deviation from the existing modes of the time was practiced. A few new innovations, such as the rainy day skirt, were made which were considered proper, based on the standards of the time, only if worn under certain conditions.

The character of women's costume with its relative lack of exposure of parts of the body still raised the question of modesty in women's dress. Standards of modesty concerning the dress of women did exist at the time, but this study did not discover evidence that the church expressed concern with the matter.

Instead, church comments concerning women's dress were based on the healthful aspects of clothing. Great interest was shown in the properties of clothes that would yield comfort to the wearer.¹⁷ The discomfort caused by corsets was of concern, and in religious periodicals of the time, medical doctors were consulted to elicit their attitudes on women's dress. One chief health concern was the use of long skirts that trailed on the ground and picked up dirt and germs.¹⁸ The initiation of the "rainy day skirt" was probably related to advice from physicians. These concerns of the church were in accordance with the spirit of the times for investigation and change, and they continued into the next decade.

¹⁷"The Physiology of Clothing," The Literary Digest, XXII (March 2, 1901), 254.

¹⁸"Can Clothing Carry Disease?" The Literary Digest, XXIII (July 20, 1901), 72.

II. THE DECADE 1911-1920

Political and Social Conditions

The original program for social reform, proposed in the first decade was actually realized in the second decade of the twentieth century. Although the Democratic Party assumed political leadership under Woodrow Wilson, the government continued to pursue the earlier mood for social reform.

The Wilson administration pervaded the whole economic situation through regulation and control.¹⁹ Reform acts called for investigation of large corporations in an attempt to prevent their occurrence. Corporate practices were more closely supervised and welfare legislation was enacted to include such things as workmen's compensation laws; child labor laws concerning the minimum age for entrance into the labor field; minimum wage laws for women; health and safety codes; old-age pension laws; maximum hours of employment for men, women, and children.²⁰ The concern for women's place in the labor force and the progress that had been made in women's suffrage in various state elections throughout the decade led to the proclamation in 1920 of the Nineteenth Amendment, which granted the franchise to women in national elections. Thus, the traditional concept of women had been altered somewhat from a domestic to a public role.

¹⁹Louis M. Hacker, The Shaping of the American Tradition (New York: Columbia University Press, 1947), p. 902.

²⁰Ibid., p. 899.

Other reform measures of Wilson included assistance to agriculture, reduction of tariffs, assistance to labor, and allotment of money for the construction of highways.²¹ The latter showed the increasing importance of the automobile in American life. However, these reforms of Wilson's were slowed down with the more demanding situation of the war in Europe. In April, 1917, war was declared with Germany by the United States. The policy of isolation had been abandoned and all efforts, both at home and abroad, were devoted to preparation for the war overseas. Until the next decade when peace terms were accepted by the Americans, the United States citizens' main concerns were with the world war.

Women's Dress of 1911-1920

Change from the soft, feminine silhouette to a more sophisticated and a straighter garment for women occurred in the decade 1911-1920. The war called women into service and a more active life than in the past. The factories, the streetcars and railways, and the automobile also increased the participation of women in public activities. As a result a demand for simplification of dress took place. A return to the natural figure with the adoption of the simple unadorned costume for day and an all-black costume relieved by jewelry for evening became typical of this decade.²²

The decade was characterized by the skirt and its various shapes.

²¹Monarch Review Notes, op. cit., p. 49.

²²Wilcox, op. cit., p. 160.

Most of the skirts showed straight lines and some had a draping or crossing effect in the front to yield a peg-top silhouette. The harem skirt with a slit up the front and the lampshade skirt enjoyed some popularity.²³

Sleeves were no longer all wrist-length, and three-quarter length sleeves were shown, although the longer sleeves did predominate. In 1918 and 1919, the chemise day frock, a sleeveless dress just below the knee in length and featuring a low round neck, was popular in France.²⁴ According to Stimson, the French dressmakers were not successful in getting the more conservative Americans to adopt this shorter skirt.²⁵ However, the skirt had been shortened a little and instead of being floor length, it was now fashionable to wear dresses of ankle length.

After 1914 bobbed hair appeared to compete with the pompadour style of the previous decade.²⁶ Irene Castle, a popular ballroom dancer of the time, promoted this shorter hair-do, and the fashion was quickly adopted by some women. The influence from fashion leaders once again played a dominant role in determining the dress of women after the war. With shorter hair a smaller hat became the popular vogue.

Church Comments on Dress, 1911-1920

The spirit of reform prevalent in both social practices and politics in the first part of this decade was reiterated in the periodical literature that was surveyed for the period. A continuation of interest

²³Walkup, op. cit., p. 347.

²⁴Wilcox, loc. cit.

²⁵Stimson, loc. cit.

²⁶Walkup, op. cit., p. 350.

in the healthful aspects of women's clothing was observed. In an article appearing in 1912 in The Literary Digest, an undenominational magazine that expressed religious viewpoints, a medical doctor presented a new angle to the healthful characteristics of clothes.²⁷ Although he believed that clothes were necessary for adornment and for protection against cold and the "modern standards of decency," he considered excess clothing a handicap. The physician claimed clothes were a burden for they tended to bind the wearer and cut off circulation of air over the body. A proposal to solve this malady according to the doctor was to give the skin an air as well as a water bath.²⁸

Increased emphasis on the healthful aspect of clothes was repeated in other articles at the time. One of these articles dealt with the scientific principles of convection, conduction, and evaporation to explain the phenomena of heat and cold in clothes.²⁹ Another physician claimed in a publication that insufficient clothing about the necks and throats of women was causing an increase in the occurrence of goiter.³⁰

Throughout United States history one generation usually declared another to be participating in improper behavior detrimental to the moral fiber of the time. A scrutiny of religious periodicals and church policies of the time did not indicate that immodesty as observed in the

²⁷"The Burden of Clothes," The Literary Digest, XLV (November 2, 1912), 781.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹"What Makes Clothes Warm and Cold," The Literary Digest, XLVI (May 31, 1913), 1222.

³⁰"The Bare-Neck Evil," The Literary Digest, LXV (April 3, 1920), 116.

dress of women was of great concern to the church during the second decade of the twentieth century.

An article in Harper's Weekly at the time claimed that "from the citadels of conservatism--the pulpit and the school--alarm cries are being sent out against this tendency," namely immodest dress of women.³¹ The writer continued to say that "a general degeneracy of modern life is prophesized, if women continue to reduce their clothing."³² The magazine related that churches were making pronouncements against what they considered to be an impropriety in women's clothing. However, specific articles expressing this viewpoint were not revealed by the study.

Likewise there was a reaction by the public to church comment on dress, and the importance that an individual attached to it was discussed. McCabe claimed that people were prone to disregard other people's comments and to do what by experience they had found to be best, "if the doing of it does not infringe upon the rights of others. For women to wear little or no clothing certainly does not infringe on the rights of others."³³

World War I had a pronounced effect on the country, and subsequently, on women's dress. Domestic consumption had to be curtailed to provide textiles, apparel, and medical supplies for war purposes. As a result, in the latter part of the second decade, the emphasis on clothing was for war purposes and fashion did not play a significant role. The

³¹Frances R. McCabe, "Modesty in Women's Clothes," Harper's Weekly, LVII (August 30, 1913), 10.

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid.

church was no exception and reference to the topic of dress was in relation to conservation of clothing by the general public to provide supplies for the men in battle. Religious comments concerning modesty of the dress of women were not discovered in publications at this time. Any skimping of clothing by women seemed to be considered a patriotic gesture for the good of the country.

III. THE DECADE 1921-1930

Political and Social Conditions

After World War I most Americans wanted to return to "the good old days," but the war had changed society to such a great extent, that return was impossible.³⁴ Conditions in United States society had altered due to the war so that "the good old days" no longer existed. The United States now occupied a place of economic supremacy because relatively speaking, the United States had suffered less than her European counterparts.³⁵ Many changes had occurred and some of the major effects of the war included business standardization, with increased efficiency; higher standards of living for individuals; increase in farm production; population mobility from rural to urban areas; and a growing intolerance toward foreigners and members of some different religions and races.³⁶

Anyone who was considered to be un-American in origin, including Germans, Catholics, Jews, and Negroes, felt the effects of the increasing

³⁴Monarch Review Notes, op. cit., p. 55.

³⁵J. A. Richard and Albert Hyma, Ancient, Medieval and Modern History (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1961), p. 243.

³⁶Monarch Review Notes, loc. cit.

intolerant attitude. Measures specifically designed to oppose these minorities were enacted. Laws limited the number of immigrants from Southern Europe to the United States; a new Ku Klux Klan, which had been revived in 1915, supposedly attempted to protect the Anglo-Saxon race from Catholics, Negroes, and Jews; distrust for members of different political affiliations was observed in the famous Sacco and Vanzetti trial, which convicted two men of bank robbery, but which was considered by many people to be a trial of political sentiments.³⁷

This spirit of distrust of foreigners and individuals of other political beliefs coupled with the emotional effects of the war, led the American public to desire pursuit of a policy of isolation. Many individuals wished to disregard all international affairs. In 1930 higher tariffs were placed on imported goods in an attempt to protect the American markets from cheaper foreign goods.³⁸ However, the period was one of only "partial isolation"; the United States did not withdraw completely from world happenings as witnessed by the United States' signing of the Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928, which proposed a renunciation of war.³⁹

In addition to the growing intolerance against foreigners during the decade, a crusade against science by those individuals who believed in a literal interpretation of The Bible appeared.⁴⁰ The concern was

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Crane Brinton, J. B. Christopher, and R. L. Wolff, A History of Civilization (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1960), II, 518.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Monarch Review Notes, loc. cit.

partially over the teaching of Darwin's theory of evolution in the public schools, and many states passed laws to prohibit the inclusion of his theory in the schools' curricula.

President Harding followed Wilson as the political leader for the first part of the decade, but with his death in 1923, Calvin Coolidge assumed leadership. The Coolidge era, 1923-1929, has been called the "years of frantic prosperity; nearly everybody played the stock market . . . the years of prohibition . . . also the years of the speakeasy and the bootlegger."⁴¹ The time was characterized by industrial progress and productive capabilities, but not without feelings of futility. Popular authors such as Dreiser, Hemingway, Lewis, and Fitzgerald, emphasized this spirit of "the lost generation."⁴² Individuals were outwardly gay and productive, but inwardly bitter. The importance of industry and success was emphasized. The mood was supposedly carefree, but in reality was one of uncertainty and frenzy. The memorable stock market crash of 1929 proved that these desperate and frantic feelings had been justified.

Women's Dress of 1921-1930

Whereas the preceding decade had been the decade of the skirt, the years 1921-1930 were known as the decade of the dress.⁴³ The dress had gained supremacy over the skirt, and a more casual costume, following the carefree spirit of the time, became the mode. The new freedoms

⁴¹Brinton, Christopher and Wolff, op. cit., p. 519.

⁴²Monarch Review Notes, op. cit., p. 60.

⁴³Walkup, op. cit., p. 352.

advanced to women caused a change in costume and a break from the older ideas of propriety. Variations in costume were numerous during this decade. The rounded or square neckline was popular in the earlier dresses of the decade, but later, the V-neck with a turnover collar followed by a low, draped blouse became the vogue.⁴⁴

Skirt length had been greatly shortened and by 1925 the hemline had climbed to the knees.⁴⁵ The climb in skirt height was accompanied by a drop in the waistline. Older silhouettes were forgotten, and the new "flapper," as women who dressed in the characteristic mode of the jazz age were called, became the predominant silhouette of the period. Emphasis was on youth with the little-boy look being the desired result. Wilcox described the "flapper" and her costume:

There was no bosom, no waistline and practically no crowning glory under her skull-shaped felt cloche hat. Wearing her knee-length sheath she was happy in the thought that she looked like a boy.⁴⁶

Sleeve length varied, but the sleeveless dress was very common. Skirt length also varied from a shocking above-the-knee-length to a longer dress seen later in the decade.

With the carefree dress that displayed more of the wearer's limbs and with the bobbed or shingled hair and small cloche hats, the use of cosmetics gained in importance. The desire to paint and beautify themselves through the use of cosmetics became the trend of the time. Standards of propriety had altered so that a woman "repairing" herself

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Wilcox, op. cit., p. 162.

through the use of cosmetics in public was a familiar sight.⁴⁷

Church Comments on Dress, 1921-1930

Numerous references were made during the decade 1921-1930 to the church's stand on modesty in women's dress. These attitudes were not necessarily consistent within one particular denomination, nor among denominations. Thus, not all comments written at the time condemned women's dress on the grounds of immodesty.

The Literary Digest ran a series of articles dealing with the problem of modesty as observed in women's dress of the decade of the "flapper." In these articles answers to the question posed in 1921 by an eastern college paper, "Do modern modes in dressing, dancing, and social intercourse really mean that the present generation is less moral than the preceding one?" were discussed.⁴⁸ The responses obtained were fairly evenly divided, but there was more agreement among the religious editors than among the college editors that the younger generation was in peril.⁴⁹ One of these factors that contributed to the peril was immodesty as observed in the dress of women. However, some of these religious editors thought no problem existed. These comments from editors of the religious periodicals were significant for they were the comments that reached the homes, and consequently, the women of the decade.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 163.

⁴⁸"Is the Younger Generation in Peril?" The Literary Digest, LXIX (May 14, 1921), 9.

⁴⁹"The Religious Press on Youthful Morals," The Literary Digest, LXIX (May 21, 1921), 27.

When questioned, many of the religious editors favored reform measures for what they considered to be a scarcity in the dress of women; but The Literary Digest claimed that many of the more important church weeklies, which were published in the larger eastern cities and represented the more educated and untraditional churchgoers, did not devote much space in their publications to the problem of immodest dress.⁵⁰

Direct questioning of the religious editors by the eastern college paper in 1921 elicited these dormant comments. Many of these editors felt that the new mode of dress was scandalous and a hazard to the younger generation. The founder and president of the Christian Endeavor Society was of this mind and he answered the college paper's question as follows:

. . . that many girls who call themselves respectable so dress or undress themselves to be more acceptable to the amorous embraces of the men. If this does not call for reprobation and reform, I do not know what does.⁵¹

Another Protestant viewpoint accepted the newer "flapper" trends in fashion as being exceptions to the rule. A Protestant bishop with an attitude of condonation, rather than condemnation, represented the more lenient view when he said:

If there have been, and of course, there have been, extremes in dress and deportment to be noticed in the young females of our species, it is reasonable to suppose that these are exceptional.⁵²

Catholic response to the question posed by the eastern college

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 28.

⁵² Ibid., p. 27.

paper generally supported the other notion that the trend toward a growing condition of immodesty in women's dress should be of great concern to not only the churches, but to all individuals. Titles of articles expressing the Catholic Church's viewpoint on the dress situation appeared in the Catholic Daily American Tribune and included "Protest Against Dress Indecency" and "Immodest Dress Bar to Sacrament."⁵³

The authoritative Catholic view on the subject was observed in an encyclical letter from Pope Benedict. In this letter the Pope condemned the growing trends of immodesty. The letter referred to the attempts being made by improperly clad women to enter a holy place of worship. Pope Benedict related in the letter to the bishops of other dioceses in the early part of the decade:

In these clothes that a short time ago even they would have rejected with horror as unbecoming to Christian modesty, they not only present themselves in public, but are not even ashamed to enter the churches.⁵⁴

In Philadelphia at this same time a Dress-Reform Committee was established in an attempt to improve women's dress. Questionnaires were sent to clergymen of all denominations, but replies revealed that the verdict was not unanimous as to whether the modern styles were harmful to either the morals of the wearers or those of the masculine observers.⁵⁵ This committee submitted a design for what it called a "moral gown," but the group was of divided opinion and could not reach agreement on the degree of conservatism that should be incorporated into such a dress.⁵⁶

⁵³Ibid., p. 28.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 52.

⁵⁵"Is the Younger Generation . . .," op. cit., p. 10.

⁵⁶Ibid.

Other attempts were made to adopt a more modest dress for women, rather than merely condemning the old. The Converted Roman Catholic and Protestant Missionary Magazine of Toledo, Ohio, at the same time described the dress it advocated to correct the faults of immodesty in existent dress. According to these standards, women's dress should be "a plain Bible Pilgrim's dress with a collar, long sleeves, a good plainly made, full skirt reaching to her ankles at least."⁵⁷

In 1922 a follow up study was undertaken one year after the original question had been posed by the eastern college paper. Again The Literary Digest reviewed the comments received from the editors of the religious weeklies. A year's time still showed that opinions were divided in the responses concerning the question of modesty and women's dress. On one side were adherents claiming that conditions had not improved in the year's time, if anything they had gotten worse. Another argument asserted that the younger generation was no worse than its predecessors.

Typical of the comments claiming that women's dress was immodest and getting worse each day was the response of the editor of The Christian Sun. This editor related:

It's easy enough for the public to say that only the evil mind criticizes the manner of dress today. But this will not do. . . . Too many of our young women are improperly clad, and just so long as these conditions prevail, the average masculine mind will have less and less respect for the feminine.⁵⁸

⁵⁷"The Religious Press . . .," op. cit., p. 54.

⁵⁸"The Case Against the Younger Generation," The Literary Digest, LXXIII (June 17, 1922), 38.

Relatively favorable comments on the other hand from the church concerning the status of modesty as observed in the dress of women were also apparent. Some religious editors tended to condone the younger generation on the grounds that the past was not as good as many people liked to imagine.⁵⁹ In fact, the "good old days" were only a myth created by the older generation. According to the General Secretary of the Ohio Christian Endeavor Union:

It is the unusual that attracts attention and we soon become accustomed to anything. This is especially true of young people and in no way can I bring myself to believe that the average young person has any moral disturbance because of current style.⁶⁰

The idea that preceding generations were not more proper than the "flapper" era was echoed by a Protestant bishop in 1924. In his comparison of the decade, 1921-1930, to the "good old days," he claimed that the "flapper's" costume actually was preferable to earlier styles.⁶¹ The bishop continued to say:

We criticize their hair, their skin, their stockings, their shoes, their skirts, their cosmetics, and their manners. I suppose when you middle-aged people were young, to hear some of you talk, one would think you were gentle little angels sitting around on sofas with your hands folded on your laps.⁶²

Pope Pius XI, the new leader of the Catholic Church, assumed a

⁵⁹"In Favor of the Young Folks," The Literary Digest, LXXIII (June 24, 1922), 36.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹"The 'Good Old Days' and Now," The Literary Digest, LXXXIII (November 22, 1924), 35.

⁶²Ibid.

definite stand on the problem of women's dress. The Pope forbade women who were improperly dressed from participation in pilgrimages, and he also denied audience to thirty-two women and girls because they were not properly clothed.⁶³ As a result of the Pope's action, spirited campaigns to reform women's dress in the United States were observed in the middle part of the decade. The National Council of Catholic Women in Washington attempted to follow the Pope's admonishments and circulated pledges to their 700,000 members.⁶⁴ These pledges required that the signer "observe in private and public life the standards of Catholic teaching, particularly with regard to dress. . . ."⁶⁵

The Catholic Church was not the only one that reaffirmed its position on women's dress and modesty. In 1925 the Hebrew Union of Orthodox Congregations passed a resolution condemning scanty clothing conditions of women. This resolution appeared in The World and was reprinted in The Literary Digest as follows:

Whereas, modesty and propriety of conduct are enjoined by Jews by their religious codes, be it resolved that this convention looks with disfavor upon the laxity of conduct so greatly prevalent at present, and particularly on the manner of attire at present customary among the female sex, which can not be considered decent and modest; and we urge the daughters of Israel to clothe themselves with proper modesty, and in particular the ladies attending services, so as not to conflict with the holiness of the places of worship.⁶⁶

⁶³"Church Decrees on Women's Dress," The Literary Digest, LXXXVII (November 21, 1925), 32.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Ibid.

In 1927 The Literary Digest prompted by the action of Pope Pius again questioned religious journal editors to elicit their opinions on the subject of modesty and women's dress. Again answers were not unanimous; the Digest concluded that whether women's dress at this time was immodest or modest remained a question to be disputed by church leaders.⁶⁷

Questions as to what constituted modest dress for women at the time were relevant to this study. Pope Pius XI through the Sacred Congregation of Religions actually set standards for modest dress in a talk addressed in 1928 to an educational institution for girls in Rome.⁶⁸ Although the talk was addressed to Italian girls, it seemed to express the pontiff's concern with the problem of modesty and dress and was meant to be helpful to the individual Catholic priests and bishops throughout the world in establishing their standards and programs for reform in their own dioceses.⁶⁹ The following translation of this address established the standards of what the Catholic Church in 1928 considered to be modest dress:

. . . that a dress cannot be called decent which is cut deeper than two fingers breadth under the pit of the throat, which does not cover the arms at least to the elbow, and scarce reaches a bit below the knee. Furthermore, dresses made of transparent material are improper, as are also flesh-colored stockings which suggest the legs being bare.⁷⁰

⁶⁷"The Pope's Appeal to Men to Reform Women's Dress," The Literary Digest, XCII (January 29, 1927), 27.

⁶⁸"Immodest Women's Dress," Homiletic and Pastoral Review, XXX (November, 1929), 171.

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰Ibid.

At the close of the decade, Pope Pius XI continued his campaign against immodest women's dress at all functions of the Church. He made a series of twelve proposals in regard to the problem. He urged his bishops to adopt these proposals as regulations for their own dioceses. Whether or not the bishops or priests incorporated the proposals into their own programs was an individual prerogative. Some of these proposals made by the Instructions of the Sacred Congregation of the Council on January 12, 1930, were directly related to the problem of immodesty as observed in women's dress. The instructions required that every three years the local ordinances had to inform the Sacred Congregation of the Council on the measures that had been taken to counteract the evil of immodest dress.⁷¹ The following instructions related specifically to immodesty in women's dress:

Pastors and preachers shall urge Catholic women to wear modest dresses, and insist that the mothers stop their daughters from wearing unbecoming apparel.

In reference to gymnastic exercises for daughters, parents should see that they wear clothes that are absolutely modest.

The heads of schools and the teachers shall not admit to their schools girls who wear unbecoming dress, or whose parents wear them; if those already admitted do not heed the warning, they shall be discharged from those schools.

Pious associations of women should be formed and fostered whose purpose shall be to counteract by example and practical efforts the abuses of the unchristian fashions and to promote purity or morals and decency in dress.

Girls and women who wear immodest dress shall be denied Holy Communion, and shall not be admitted as sponsors at

⁷¹Acta Ap. Sedis XXII (English translation), Homiletic and Pastoral Review, XXX (April, 1930), 751, 759.

Baptism and Confirmation, and if needs be, shall be stopped from entering any church.⁷²

The positions taken by the Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish religions on the question of modesty and immodesty in women's dress of the decade varied. Crusades against what was considered to be immodest dress of women raised an important question even in that decade as to the effectiveness of church attempts to change women's dress. Many people doubted that the effect would outweigh the influence from the fashion creators in Paris. Typical of these doubts was the inquiry that appeared in 1925, "will any decree except from the fashion autocrats in Paris accomplish the needed reform?"⁷³ Thus, fashion was a dominant influence that competed with the churches' attempts to regulate women's dress.

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³"Church Decrees . . .," op. cit., p. 32.

CHAPTER V

DEPRESSION ERA TO PRESENT DAY

I. THE DECADE 1931-1940

Political and Social Conditions

Primarily two factors influenced the activities in the United States during the decade, 1931-1940. These factors included the after-effects of the war and the stock market crash of 1929. Failure of many European countries to repay their war debts caused United States citizens to prefer to maintain a position of neutrality in the future.¹ The desire for neutrality, especially directed against involvement in another war, contributed to the attitude of the decade, but was not the most predominant concern. The stock market crash and its effects on the economy caused extreme apprehension in the citizens of the United States.

This apprehension was justified, for in the early 1930's, approximately one third of the labor force was unemployed.² The entire state of the economy was in a turmoil, and reform measures were desperately needed.

Franklin D. Roosevelt assumed the position of President of the United States in 1933, and he immediately began attempts to correct the

¹Monarch Review Notes in American History from 1865 (New York: Monarch Press, Inc., 1962), p. 66.

²Crane Brinton, J. B. Christopher, and R. L. Wolff, A History of Civilization (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1960), p. 520.

existing economic problems. Because of unstable conditions bank depositors were frightened and were making runs on the banks to remove their money. A major and effective move by Roosevelt was the proclamation of a bank holiday to halt the run on banks and to decrease the panic. Other programs were enacted to establish a more sound fiscal and economic policy than had existed previously.

Roosevelt was in office from 1933-1945, the longest period of time for any man to remain chief executive in the White House. His supporters were numerous, otherwise his career would not have been so lengthy. However, opponents of Roosevelt also existed, and the merits and faults of the "New Deal," as his program for reform was called, have been debated for many years. Regardless of political opinions concerning the "New Deal," Roosevelt's terms of office can be characterized as a series of various reforms to assist the nation in recovery following the stock market crash. These acts created federal bureaus which were usually referred to by their initials only, so that Washington came to be known as "the home of the 'alphabet soup.'"³

Some of these federal agencies that were established included the agencies concerned with improvements for financial security. The unemployed were aided directly through the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) and indirectly through such programs as the Public Works Administration (FWA) and the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) both of which created new job opportunities.

³Monarch Review Notes, op. cit., p. 61.

⁴Ibid., pp. 62, 63.

A "Second New Deal" appeared following Roosevelt's re-election in 1934. Similar programs such as the Social Security Act and the Revenue Act were initiated. The latter raised taxes on high incomes and corporations in an effort to equalize the uneven distribution of wealth.

In 1937 a recession occurred which affected the popularity of Roosevelt. The recession was attributed to three factors--the withdrawal of government spending in an attempt to curb the condition of a rising budget, continued unemployment, and high taxes which were levied on the rich and inhibited their spending in United States markets.⁵ To correct this period of recession, Roosevelt passed new programs to modify some of his earlier policies.

Concern with social problems was typical of the decade, 1931-1940. The increase in government control has been considered "socialistic" by some opponents of Roosevelt's "New Deal," but proponents considered this time a temporary period of the "welfare state."⁶ Although government regulation had increased, private enterprise still played an important role in the economy of the nation.

Prohibition had not been successful and speakeasies and bootleggers were numerous during the decade. This disregard for the law contributed to the infeasibility of government enforcement of prohibition. In a public referendum citizens voted to add a new amendment to

⁵Ibid., p. 65.

⁶Brinton, Christopher, and Wolff, op. cit., p. 521.

the constitution that abolished prohibition. Thus, while new programs were being created by the government, the public voted to revoke an old policy.

The mood in the first part of the decade leaned toward a neutralist position in world affairs. However, international conflicts existed at this time and the attitude of neutrality became more difficult to follow. Toward the end of this decade, government policies indicated a change from the isolationist policy to more world interaction. These policies continued until the United States actually entered the Second World War.

Women's Dress of 1931-1940

The decade 1931-1940 was characterized by a variety of costumes, each designed for a specific occasion. Costumes for day and street wear, for evening wear, for travel, and for sports, either as a spectator or a participator, existed. Specialized clothing for a particular event was a trend that continued to the present time.

After 1930 a return to the natural figure was observed and waistlines gradually conformed to the normal position.⁷ Women's desire in dress was to portray a feminine, curvaceous silhouette. In an attempt to achieve this silhouette, women wore slightly boned corsets, which rose high under the bosom, and bust forms were used to create a pleasing contour.

⁷Fairfax Proudfit Walkup, Dressing the Part (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1950), p. 342.

Increased exposure of the female body was seen in both day and evening dress of the period. The halter neck, originally designed for bathing costume, made its appearance in day and evening wear. This dress completely revealed the wearer's back from her neck to her belt. Later in the decade the "bare midriff" style, also based on beach wear, was seen in evening dresses.⁸ In an attempt to remain fashionable, yet not overexposed, modest women filled in the bare space with a flesh-colored chiffon.⁹ The chiffon was a compromise between the fashion of the time and the wearer's feelings of modesty. Thus, fashion continued to be a force that conceded little to women's feelings of modesty.

A small waist, which was easier to achieve through the development of lastex for foundation garments became the vogue. Skirts became narrow with a flare or pleat at the bottom, and in 1930 the skirt length was dropped to about ten inches from the ground.¹⁰

Women were quite conscious of fashion and responded to the numerous changes in costume that at one time would emphasize an anatomical feature, while a little later, would stress another part of the body. The increase in popularity of sports presented a tremendous influence in 1936.¹¹ Women adopted appropriate fashions for sports activities. "Slacks, shorts, and sunsuits were part of the abbreviated wardrobe."¹²

⁸R. Turner Wilcox, Five Centuries of American Costume (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963), p. 357.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Walkup, loc. cit.

¹¹Ibid., p. 359.

¹²Ibid.

The bobbed hairstyle that had appeared in previous decades now became the predominant fashion. Although a few women retained the longer form of coiffure, most women had succumbed to fashion's influence and had changed to the short, waved style. Over this shorter hair were worn hats of all sizes, but "hatlessness" also became a prevalent trend.¹³

Church Comments on Women's Dress, 1931-1940

Church comments expressing a concern for immodest dress of women continued in the decade 1931-1940. However, comments on the subject of dress were fewer and not so extensive as they had been in the previous decade. The Federal Council of Churches, representing thirty-one denominations, in 1932 adopted a revised Social Creed of the Churches.¹⁴ This creed, which included codes dealing with social ideals, was significant in the absence of reference to women's dress. The Council had not proposed a code that specifically mentioned women's dress.

A new policy of adjustment to social trends of the time was also observed among individual denominations. One Protestant group, while not relaxing its standards of faith, allowed its members more freedom in their choice of costume. Frills on garments could now be worn provided the wearers would "still preserve the spirit of simplicity which had always characterized their mode of living."¹⁵ The book of discipline

¹³Wilcox, op. cit., p. 166.

¹⁴Graham Taylor, "The Church Keeps Up with Social Trends," The Survey, XLIX (February, 1933), 565.

¹⁵"Frills for Quaker," The Literary Digest, CLX (May 2, 1931), 24.

for this faith continued to stress that its members should "endeavor so to keep our minds free from the burden of fashions, and our souls steadfast in a changing world."¹⁶ The mention of fashion in a church's book of discipline seemed to indicate that fashion edicts of the period were considered influential. Church members were being warned to guard against succumbing to these powerful influences of fashion that would be incompatible with their profession of faith. Thus, this denomination appeared to consider fashion to be an opposing force to its authority in the realm of women's dress.

The Catholic Church continued to stress the modesty factor in women's dress. Concern with what constituted the Catholic Church's official position on this topic appeared. The Instructions of the Sacred Congregation of the Council of 1930, referred to previously in this thesis, were considered to be the official position of the Church on the subject of immodesty in women's dress.¹⁷ However, officials of the Catholic Church realized the difficulty involved in establishing a standard costume that would be considered proper for all women. The official position from Rome had to be adapted to fit the culture, manners, and customs of the country involved.¹⁸ Priests and bishops were advised:

. . . not to insist to the letter on the points of instruction or letter of the Sacred Congregation of the

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Reverend Cannon E. J. Mahoney, ADD, "Immodest Dress," The Clergy Review, XV (December, 1938), 546; "Immodesty in Women's Dress," The Ecclesiastical Review, XCIV (January, 1936), 73.

¹⁸Stanislaus Woywod, OFM, "Modesty in Dress," Homiletic and Pastoral Review, XXXI (July, 1931), 1099.

Council, because, while it shows the mind of the Holy See, it is not a law.¹⁹

A solution to the problem of immodest dress seemed to exist not in the efforts of individual Catholic priests and bishops, but in a united effort. Fashion influence was considered more important than any isolated appeals from the Church, so that authorities in the Church recommended a joint effort as an effective means to overcome the evil.²⁰ The importance of fashion's dictates at the time appeared in the comment relating that "the disregard for womanly modesty is brought about by the fashions, and we are quite sure that the dictators of fashion are not Christians."²¹ Joint effort on the part of Catholic ladies against immodest dress of women, in addition to that exerted by the priests and bishops, was another suggestion proposed to support the cause for modest dress.²²

This suggestion was adopted by the Toledo Council of Catholic Women which protested against immodest dress prevalent in women's fashions in 1932. The vicar related the group's protest as he received it:

A protest of no uncertain tone has reached us concerning the indecencies that are flaunted by scanty and suggestive dress at public and semi-public places for water sports and recreation . . . that one of the great evils that beset the youth today is the indecent dress of women and girls who frequent public bathing beaches and club swimming pools.²³

¹⁹Ibid., p. 1100.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid.

²³Mary Hall, "Dress Reform," Commonweal, XVI (October 19, 1932), 592.

The fact that the complaint originated from the Catholic women of the time and was merely substantiated by the vicar, was a significant indication that concern with immodest dress of women of the decade, 1931-1940, did exist.

II. THE DECADE 1941-1950

Political and Social Conditions

The fall of France in 1940 contributed to the increasing opinion that the United States could no longer ignore the world war situation. By 1941 the neutralist position had altered so that a large portion of United States citizens supported intervention against the Axis powers.²⁴ War was declared against Japan following a deliberate Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. The isolationist policy had been forfeited in this proclamation of war.

All efforts at home were devoted to preparation for the war, and other problems at the time were considered secondary. This decade became a period of administrations and programs established by the government to control production of goods. Two commodities that were considered crucial were petroleum and rubber; consequently, a Petroleum Administration and an Office of Rubber Director were established.²⁵ Another agency, the War Production Board, was initiated to divide the

²⁴Monarch Review Notes, op. cit., p. 69.

²⁵Thomas G. Manning and David M. Potter, Government and the American Economy, 1870-Present (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1950), p. 391.

limited supply of vital materials among the various groups and industries.

During World War I, controls had been established on the industrial use of goods, but in World War II these controls showed more government regulation and were extended to include the consumer as well in the rationing programs.²⁶ The uneven distribution of wealth, which existed during the Second World War was one of the causes for the rationing program. This program attempted to subdivide the available supplies to all individuals so that no one segment of the economy would accumulate goods while the other segment was forced to resort to illegal measures to obtain the necessary supplies.²⁷

Prices of commodities were also controlled through the work of the Office of Price Administration (OPA). When the war ended in August, 1945, the rationing program was discontinued shortly thereafter, but the price control program remained in effect for almost another year. In July, 1946, President Truman revised the price control bill to remove the controls from the American economy except for sugar, rice, and rents.²⁸

A new interest in United States leadership in the world was the predominant attitude that emerged after the war. The United States realized that to protect her position of supremacy in the atomic world, she had to shelter the smaller nations from communism.²⁹ Many individuals

²⁶Ibid., pp. 391, 407.

²⁷Ibid., p. 408.

²⁸Ibid., p. 425.

²⁹Monarch Review Notes, op. cit., p. 73.

believed that the extent of Russia's power had to be curbed, and that the influence of the United States had to be re-exerted. In 1945 the United States entered the United Nations (UN); and in 1949, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Membership in these organizations symbolized significant steps towards increased participation by the United States in world affairs.

By 1949-1950 the Cold War was underway. The discovery of an English spy, who was forwarding atomic secrets of the United States to the Russians, caused officials to launch a search for other informers.³⁰ Protection of United States' secrets and maintenance of her position of supremacy in world affairs were dominant concerns in this period.

Women's Dress of 1941-1950

Women were playing a significant role in the working force of the decade, 1941-1950. As a result, until the middle of the period, the shirtwaist dress was a popular addition to the working girls' wardrobe.³¹ Suits of all types were also popular costumes during the wartime years.³² In addition, women were active in defense jobs and for this type of work functional clothing, such as jeans, coveralls, and slacks were worn.

New developments in textiles increased the variety of available fabrics that could be used by the fashion designer. A wide range of

³⁰Ibid., p. 77.

³¹Ermina Stimson, Sixty Years of Fashion (New York: Fairchild Publications, Inc., 1950), p. 3.

³²Walkup, op. cit., p. 377.

fabrics was observed in women's dress until the declaration of the Second World War. To provide fabrics for military use, government authorities restricted the civilian consumption of these commodities. Suits were restricted in their lines, in the materials used, and in the application of trim.³³ The war became the most compelling interest, and was ranked over any personal interest in fashionable clothing. Women deprived themselves of fashion items in order to be of assistance in the national emergency.

In 1947 after the war Christian Dior revived an earlier style when he created his "New Look" in Paris.³⁴ The war was over and women emerged from their stiff working uniform to return to the feminine stylish small waist, rounded bosom, and full skirt. The curved hip was emphasized and skirts became longer than those permitted in the wartime era. Women desired to remain in style and to follow fashion trends. To achieve the longer skirt lengths that were popular at this time women added flounces and ruffles to the hemlines of their older skirts.³⁵ The emphasis on fashion trends once more became a dominant factor in women's dress after the war.

The war had decreased the accessibility of fashion imports from France to America. During this time, 1940-1945, American designers were urged to produce their own fashion creations; consequently, an increase in the number of American designers was observed. As a result, American women now became even more conscious of fashion for they were exposed to

³³Ibid.

³⁴Stimson, loc. cit.

³⁵Walkup, loc. cit.

the designs of both American and foreign creators.

The style of bathing suits in 1947 and 1948 allowed increased exposure of the wearer.³⁶ Receiving its inspiration from the styles of the French Riviera, the "bikini" bathing suit was observed in the United States. The brief style did not last and might have created a trend for a more covered-up look.³⁷ The last few years of the decade showed the use of long, tight sleeves and low backs in swimsuits. Other outfits including wrap-around skirts for more cover-up also appeared.

Church Comments on Women's Dress, 1941-1950

Relatively few church comments concerning modesty in the dress of women were observed in this decade, 1941-1950. Whether the decline was related to the world war was difficult to ascertain. However, Hart, a sociologist writing at the time, claimed that a decline in the total religious interest existed. His supporting evidence for the decline was the decrease in number of articles on religious topics indexed in the Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature in the years since 1934.³⁸ The small supply of articles indexed accounted for the scarcity of church comments found in this investigation that related to women's dress and modesty.

The war had exerted an influence on the standards of propriety in women's dress. During the war the appearance of the female knee was

³⁶Wilcox, op. cit., p. 170.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Hornell Hart, "Religion," American Journal of Sociology, XLVII (May, 1942), 888.

accepted by almost everyone as a result of the material-saving measures imposed by the War Productions Board.³⁹ However, in 1943, the National Catholic Women's Union held an annual meeting in which they indicated displeasure with the current scarcity in the dress of women. This Union claimed that even the good Catholic women "had fallen prey to the prevailing mode of dress, apparently unaware that the V-neck actually stood for "Voluptuousness rather than victory."⁴⁰ The Catholic Church no longer accepted the war as being responsible for what the Church considered to be a state of nudity in women. In 1944 the Catholic Church launched a Purity Crusade of Mary Immaculate which grew in importance later.⁴¹

The Catholic Church attributed this increased exposure in women's dress to the dictates of fashion. Proclamations were made by the Church reminding the women of the violations of the Commandments and Scriptures that were wrought by wearing this skimpy attire. In May, 1941, Pope Pius XII warned four thousand Catholic Action Girls against adopting what he called "daring styles."⁴² Pius urged the girls to avoid following blindly what fashion dictated. He claimed that certain dresses might be more comfortable and hygienic, "but if they prove dangerous for the soul they must be unfailingly rejected."⁴³ In another admonition

³⁹"V for Voluptuousness," Newsweek, XXII (September 6, 1943), 90.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹"Fatima Blueprint for Modesty," Our Lady's Digest, XL (October-November, 1960), 158.

⁴²"V for Voluptuousness," loc. cit.

⁴³Ibid.

Pope Pius XII asserted that fashion was the cause of immodest dress and that pleasing, yet modest, dress for women was still attainable. The Pope continued: "The unfortunate mania for fashion causes even honorable women to forget every sentiment of dignity and modesty. . . . It is possible to dress with ladylike decorum without imitating monastic severity."⁴⁴

What was considered modest dress during this decade still was a concern of the public. The Catholic Church continued to realize the relative nature of the concept of modesty. Authorities claimed the Church was not attempting to establish explicit rules for modesty in women's dress, but was instead emphasizing the general principle that "bodily exposure is wrong when it is excessive and unusual and contrary to the customs and conventions of a given place."⁴⁵

The official Jewish viewpoint on modesty in clothing had remained consistent over the years. A summary of the Hebrew policy on clothing was observed in an article in The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia of 1941 which related: "Nowadays, the Orthodox tend to observe the Bible laws as to clothing and the more liberal Jews ignore them; otherwise, there are no regulations whatsoever."⁴⁶ The Biblical laws consisted of prohibitions against the wearing of "sha'atnez," a wool and linen mixture,

⁴⁴"Modesty and Clothing," The Sign, XXIV (January, 1945), 324.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶"Regulations Concerning Clothing," The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia (New York: The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, Inc., 1941), CCCXI, 225.

and the donning of a garment that had been worn by a member of another sex in an attempt to assume the other's role.⁴⁷ The Talmud, which constitutes the Jewish civil and religious law, commanded members of the faith "to dress respectably and neatly."⁴⁸ Comments in publications indicating a Jewish protest against immodest dress of women at this time were not observed.

III. THE DECADE 1951-1960

Political and Social Conditions

The program of the United States to maintain international leadership continued to be a significant feature of the political scene in this decade, 1951-1960. Economic aid to undeveloped countries and active participation in international organizations such as NATO and the UN were examples of such policy. The Korean War was an expression of the United States' attitude toward communist interference. The war illustrated that the United States was willing to fight, if necessary, to halt communist aggression.⁴⁹

In addition to the increase in international action, the country was experiencing a period of rapid growth in her economy. Despite two mild recessions of 1953 and 1958, the general economic trend continued upward.⁵⁰ Citizens of the United States were greatly affected by the

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 224.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Monarch Review Notes, op. cit., p. 79.

⁵⁰Brinton, Christopher and Wolff, op. cit., p. 594.

increase in the standards of living and purchases of commodities soared. This prosperous capitalistic society had become a threat to divergent economic theories such as Marxism that claimed capitalism would cause its own destruction.

Leadership in adventures into space was another measure of the country's achievement. In 1957 when Russia was successful in orbiting a satellite around the earth, complacency of the United States was jolted.⁵¹ Self criticism of our lax society and its extremely permissive school systems, in comparison to those of the Russians, was heard. The race in the Cold War could now be partially measured by a nation's success or failure in space conquests.

On the domestic scene, Americans were experiencing a drive toward obtaining the equality of all men. The Supreme Court decision of 1954, which supported desegregation of the schools, was a product of this mood, but progress in eliminating prejudice was slow.

In addition to racial equality a tendency to eliminate class boundaries was observed. No longer were class lines in America as distinct as they had been in the past. On the contrary, most individuals now considered themselves to be members of that expanding group, the "middle class."⁵² This middle class was characterized by the suburban home owner, the commuter to the cities, and the American consumer. Sociologists considered these individuals to be strongly interested in conforming to popular appeal. Americans were becoming what Bell termed a

⁵¹Ibid., p. 596.

⁵²Ibid., p. 595.

"crowd culture" in which all individual identity was being forfeited to the influence of the masses.⁵³ American consumers were influenced by advertising for it informed them of the consumption habits of their peers. The fashion was to be "in fashion." Thus, a trend to conform to the buying habits of contemporaries was typical of the American character.

Women's Dress of 1951-1960

A continuation of the influence from both American and foreign designers was observed in the decade, 1951-1960. Women of the United States were intensely interested in fashion trends, and an urge to follow fashions of the time was apparent. These fashions could be national or regional, but the desire to "be in style" was widespread. No longer was fashion viewed in the usual five-year cycles of the past, for now the pace was accelerated to yearly changes.⁵⁴

Ann Fogarty, an American designer, promoted her "Baby Doll" look with "the bouffant crinoline petticoat under shorter full skirts, with cinched belts and prim little shirt tops."⁵⁵ The rapidity of fashion change in this decade was observed by the numerous styles initiated. Balenciaga's semi-fitted dress, which was straight and fitted in the front, but full of ease in back, appeared in 1954.⁵⁶ Chanel returned after a long absence with her straight short jacket and simple skirt

⁵³Bernard Iddings Bell, Crowd Culture (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1952).

⁵⁴Stimson, op. cit., p. 4.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Ibid.

combination during this same year.⁵⁷ Balenciaga's sack, the unbelted loose dress of 1957, had swept the United States market by 1958, but it died shortly thereafter, due to an overabundance of copies.⁵⁸ In 1958, Yves Saint-Laurent, protege of Dior, initiated the "Trapeze" dress, which was fitted at the bosom and then flared out to the hem.⁵⁹

The increase in sports clothing and apparel for leisure activities continued. The United States was experiencing a new period of casual living, and fashion items stressed comfort, utility, and informality. Specific clothes were designed for all occasions, but more freedom of selection in clothes for formal and informal wear existed than had in the past. Due to the increase in leisure time, women's dress included many sports items and informal outfits. Casual life was emphasized in United States society and was reflected in the public's choice of clothing.

Church Comments on Women's Dress, 1951-60

The Catholic Church continued to maintain its position against the immodest dress of women. In 1954 Pope Pius XII urged the tailors of Rome not to design clothing for material benefits, but for the spiritual ends.⁶⁰ In his claim that fashions of 1954 very often were influenced by materialistic interests, the Pope continued in his urge to the tailors:

Far from maintaining the already too strong inclinations toward immodesty, always be careful to respect the norms

⁵⁷Wilcox, op. cit., pp. 174-175.

⁵⁸Stimson, op. cit., p. 5.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰"Ideals for the Master Tailor," The Pope Speaks, I (Autumn, 1954), 249.

of decency and good taste, of an elegance sanely understood and perfectly honest . . . instead of following materialistic current which is leading so many people astray today. . . .⁶¹

In 1956 Pope Pius XII reaffirmed the Pope's authority, rather than that of individual theologians. He claimed that standards of modesty established by the Holy See were binding upon everyone, regardless of any opinion to the contrary.⁶²

The Catholic Purity Crusade of Mary Immaculate which originated in 1944 was continued in this decade. The crusade adopted standards of modesty in women's dress which were called the "Marylike Standards." The following eight standards were those adopted by the crusade and applied to bridal gowns, formals, party dresses, street dresses, blouses, skirts, gym suits, and uniforms:

1. "Marylike" is modest without compromise, "like Mary," Christ's Mother.
2. "Marylike" dresses are cut no deeper than two inches below the neckline or back; and provide FULL COVERAGE for the arms (as indicated in Number 5), front, shoulders, back, chest, and midriff.
3. "Marylike" dress avoid the improper use of flesh-colored materials.
4. "Marylike" dresses which use transparent laces, nets, nylons, etc., require additional backing underneath to meet the FULL COVERAGE requirement.
5. "Marylike" dresses have sleeves extending at least to the elbows. (Note: Because present styles have become so pagan that dresses with sleeves are a rarity, quarter-length sleeves temporarily are tolerated with ecclesiastical approval, until Christian women and girls can be educated to accept fully the Pope's decision on modesty.)

⁶¹Ibid., p. 251.

⁶²"The Marylike Standards for Modesty in Dress," Our Lady's Digest, XL (October-November, 1960), 164.

6. "Marylike" dresses conceal, rather than reveal the figure of the wearer; they do not emphasize, unduly, parts of the body.

7. "Marylike" dresses have skirts extending below the knees.

8. "Marylike" dresses provide FULL COVERAGE (as in Number 2) even after jacket, cape or stole are removed.⁶³

Followers of the crusade attempted to improve the supply of dresses available to the female customer. Tags were distributed for the retailers to place on merchandise as an indication that the dress had met the modesty standards imposed by the Catholic women's groups.⁶⁴ These labels became the object of considerable discussion. Although the intent to improve women's dress was considered admirable, some members of the general public questioned the value of tags. Such doubt as to the effectiveness of the labels was related in the anonymous comment, "'a mother and a daughter who believe in modesty do not have to read a tag on a dress to tell if it is modest.'"⁶⁵ However, a survey in 1955 showed that sixteen stores in the New York area were displaying the "Marylike" tags.⁶⁶

Some priests and bishops did not concur with the "Marylike" standards in dress. The reason for individual theologians not accepting the standards was believed to be because these were primarily based on specific mathematical criteria for modest costume.⁶⁷ Not all Catholic

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴"Puritanical Dresses," The Sign, XXXIV (September, 1955), 62.

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶"Morality and Good Taste in Apparel," America, XCIII (July 2, 1955), 34.

⁶⁷"Modesty in Dress," Theological Studies, XIX (June, 1958), 183.

Church officials agreed that specifications for proper coverage of the body were the only standards necessary to achieve modesty.

Question was also made concerning the authenticity of the official stand of the Catholic Church on the matter. Woywod claimed that the letter of Pope Pius XI in 1928 to the Sacred Congregation of Religion, previously cited, was not acceptable, for this letter was addressed to a group of teaching sisters in Rome.⁶⁸ Therefore, the standards were not applicable to the average female.

Pope Pius XII reiterated his plea to the designing industry in 1957 to create modest styles. Pius asserted that "moral principles should always be the guide for the designers of women's clothes and for the arbiters of fashions."⁶⁹ This plea appeared at a time when fashion forecasts were predicting a successful "naked" season. Inez Robb, a New York columnist, doubted the effectiveness of the Pope's words in combating the influence of the fashion trends. She wrote that:

His words we may be regretfully sure, will not be heeded by the hucksters who, in planning their successful and blatantly pagan "naked season," will be providing Peeping Toms with plenty of temptation. But the Catholic women of America, it is hoped, will heed the words of the Vicar of Christ.⁷⁰

Thus, whether church decrees were more influential than those of fashion was questioned at this time.

Regional campaigns against immodest dress appeared in several

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 186.

⁶⁹"The Pope on Fashion," America, XLVII (July 27, 1957), 435.

⁷⁰Ibid.

cities in the United States during the decade. In 1952, groups of Catholic girls in Cleveland, Chicago, Washington, and Rochester adopted the slogan "Supply the demand--demand the supply."⁷¹ The girls made it clear to the department stores in their area that they wanted dresses to conform to their specific requirements for modesty.

IV. THE PERIOD 1961-1964

Political and Social Conditions

The rapid economic growth of the United States continued in this period, 1961-1964. The United States was characterized as an "affluent society."⁷² Incomes were high and increased spending was observed. Many people traveled more extensively than they had in the past. Accumulated wealth could be measured by material possessions, and a tendency toward "conspicuous consumption" was noticed.⁷³ Material possessions now expanded to include ownership of two, and in some cases, three cars; purchases of recreational equipment, such as boats, color television, radios, hi-fi equipment, and a second home; expenditures on art and music; outlays for education and medical care.⁷⁴

Despite this apparent affluency, conditions deserving extreme

⁷¹"Modesty Demanded," The Catholic Mind, I (July, 1952), 438.

⁷²"1964--The Affluent Year?" United States News and World Report, LVI (January 13, 1964), 38.

⁷³Vance Packard, The Status Seekers (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1959).

⁷⁴"1964--The Affluent Year?" op. cit., p. 40.

concern still existed in domestic and international affairs. On the domestic scene the Civil Rights Act of 1964 attempted to correct a situation of racial inequality through the enforcement of policies advocated by the Supreme Court decision of 1954. Opposition still existed in many parts of the country, and the violence that erupted was an indication of the problems involved in enforcing the act. Labor strikes were indicative of additional domestic problems. Crime and violence in the cities threatened their inhabitants. Another controversy was the political debates concerning the issues of the 1964 election. Lyndon B. Johnson had assumed the role of President of the United States following the assassination of President Kennedy in 1963. In the 1964 election, Johnson was elected to the office of President by an overwhelming majority.

International problems became increasingly acute after 1961. Unfavorable conditions existed in Cuba, Laos, the Belgian Congo, Vietnam, and Latin America. American troops were mobilized and sent to many of these areas to maintain the status quo and to protect the countries against communist aggression. The battle for supremacy between the free countries and the communist-dominated countries continued. Thus, the period was characterized by affluence on the one hand and by grave concern with international and domestic problems on the other.

Women's Dress of 1961-1964

Women's dress continued to alter from year to year, and in some cases, from season to season. At one time the emphasis in fashion magazines would be on bright, bold colors, while in the next season, pale

pastels would be the vogue. The proximity in time of this writing made a discussion of women's fashions from 1961 to 1964 difficult.

Costume of women of the period was chiefly characterized by two silhouettes--loose-fitting dresses that skimmed over the body and blousons, the two-piece skirt and blouse outfits which featured a loose-fitting over-blouse. An emphasis on ease and comfortable fit in clothes was apparent. The graceful, sculptured look was observed in the lines used in women's costume. Jackets and coats shown in 1964 were close-fitting at the shoulders, small across the back, and narrow through the midriff in the front.⁷⁵ In accordance with this sculptured effect, the slim look was popular, and width was apparent only at the hem line.

An immense variety of fibers was available and women's dress featured a great number of different fabrics and weaves. Textured fabrics and an assortment of colors were promoted in fashion magazines.⁷⁶ A tendency to display sleek, elegant, and sumptuous fabrics was also noticed.

Increased exposure was observed to the extent that the skin almost became a part of women's costume. Skirts were shorter in length than they had been in the previous decade, and an emphasis on the leg was observed in fancy hosiery. Necklines were varied in shape and any neckline that revealed a long, slender neck was popular.⁷⁷ The return

⁷⁵"American Style," Vogue, CXLIV (September 1, 1964), 146.

⁷⁶"Skinny Juniors," Women's Wear Daily, CVIII (Monday, July 6, 1964), 20.

⁷⁷"The Great Fashion Ideas That Tip Vogue's Paris Choices," Vogue, CXLII (September 15, 1963), 111.

of the décolletage appeared as necklines plunged. Following this trend toward a "bare look" the bikini style of bathing suit became more popular on American beaches.⁷⁸ Bathing suits that were more brief than those of the previous decade were in fashion. The top-less bathing suit, introduced by an American designer, Rudi Gernreich, became the object of much controversy by the press, fashion writers, and the general public.

Another trend related to the "bare look" was also observed in the emphasis on the feminine look. The use of ruffles and lace was an attempt to achieve this feminine effect. Ruffles appeared in deep-flounced lounge dress, ruffled décolletages, and the Tom Jones shirt.⁷⁹ The short discotheque dresses of black lace were typical feminine costumes for evening wear in 1964.

Church Comments on Dress, 1961-1964

The Marylike Crusade for modesty observed in the previous decade continued in the period, 1961-1964. A crusade was initiated by a group established previous to this time in Bartelso, Illinois. The crusade consisted of a campaign for proper and modest church attire. The stress given in the campaign to church attire seemed to express the Catholic Church's acceptance of the relative nature of the concept of modesty. Modesty had to be considered in terms of the time, place, and custom of the country. The formation of the Illinois group had received the

⁷⁸Article in Women's Wear Daily, CVIII (Monday, July 6, 1964), 5.

⁷⁹"Here's Spring in Fashion," Women's Wear Daily, CVIII (Thursday, January 2, 1964), 12.

approval of a Catholic bishop and the blessing of Pope Pius XII in 1956.⁸⁰

The campaign initiated by the group in 1962 provided the priests with a code, entitled "Marylike Code of Attire for Church and Other Sacred Places," and consisted of the following nine points:

While I am determined always to dress with Marylike modesty, both at home and in public, I intend to be specially careful to do so when visiting any place dedicated to God. This includes besides churches and chapels, also outdoor shrines, rectories, seminaries, monasteries, convents, retreat houses, hospitals, and other Catholic institutions.

Above all else, I want to show the greatest possible reverence when in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament especially during Holy Mass. Therefore, I will never come to church unless I am wearing clothes that give me full and reverent coverage and that in every way befit the most sacred place on earth. I know it is in this spirit that Canon Law directs that in church "women should be modestly dressed, especially when they approach the Holy Table." (Canon 1262:2.)

In making decisions about proper church attire, I will always consider God and his honor first, not myself. Accordingly, I will never use comfort as an excuse for improper church wear, nor will I follow the bad example of others. To show that I am not an unthinking slave of pagan fashion, I will always insist on truly Christian fashions which do not even approach the improper but keep a good distance from it.

I know that God is offended, often very grievously, by women and girls who show so little dignity as to come to church, even to Holy Mass and Communion, while wearing clothes that over-expose and over-emphasize the figure, especially the bosom: low-cut and revealing, transparent and sleeveless, too short and tight-fitting and suggestive garments.

It is my firm conviction that reverent decorum and Christian good taste forbid women and girls to come to church, or to any place dedicated to God, while wearing such unbecoming attire as pedal pushers and slacks, and especially shorts, or any other clothing that is not in keeping with the holiness and dignity of the place.

I readily understand why the church has instructed that "girls and women who are immodestly dressed are to be refused Holy Communion and excluded from the office of sponsor in

⁸⁰Martin Stepanich, OFM, "Marylike Church Attire," The Priest, XVIII (June, 1962), 542.

the sacraments of baptism and confirmation; and in proper cases are even to be excluded from the church." (By order of Pope Pius XI.)

I agree that the principles of proper clothing apply, as the case may require also to men and boys.

If I find that I have provoked this just anger of God by improper attire, whether in church or elsewhere, I will humbly acknowledge and confess these sins, amend my ways, and make reparation to the offended Divine Majesty.

Out of love for God and our Immaculate Lady, I will insist on proper clothing, especially for church, of all who are subject to me knowing that I must face the wrath of God for any indifference or negligence or hostility on my part.⁸¹

Although codes such as the "Marylike Code of Attire for Church and Other Sacred Places" were apparent in the decade, a professor of philosophy in 1963 questioned the value of a code in regulating an individual's life. He claimed that a code is beneficial to the individual in helping to "illuminate" decisions, but not in making them.⁸² However, codes of behavior were used during this period, and in 1962 civic and religious authorities of St. Louis, Missouri, adopted a "Code for Parents of Teenagers."⁸³ The code contained sections on dating, recreation, drinking, driving, and dress. The section on dress consisted of general principles that were further supported by practical rules that expounded on the proper dress of teenagers. Modesty was a concern in the general principles which follow:

Clothing among human beings is intended by nature to serve three purposes . . . protection, modesty, and adornment.

On all occasions and in all circumstances human beings are bound to practice modesty in dress.

⁸¹Ibid., pp. 542-544.

⁸²Robert O. Johann, "The Moral Response," America, CVIII (May 25, 1963), 767.

⁸³Donald F. Miller, CSSR, "Code for Teenagers on Modesty," The Liquorian, L (March, 1962), 43.

The virtue of modesty leaves ample room for the use of different types of clothing for different places, activities, and purposes . . . but there is a minimum dictated by modesty beyond which someone should not go.

Parents have a special obligation to instruct their children, and this from early years, on the principles that govern modesty of dress.⁸⁴

Codes for modesty did exist in the years 1961-1964, but they appeared to be specified according to the occasion or the group to be regulated. This tendency was observed in the code for modest church attire and the code for teenagers' proper dress. Few comments were observed that expressed concern with modesty in women's everyday clothing habits. One of the periodicals claimed that magazine articles condoned the daring fashions by indicating that a decline in modesty of the dress of women existed.⁸⁵ Thus, it became fashionable to follow the decline in modesty and to adopt the daring styles. Fashion continued to threaten the effect of the attempts of the church to promulgate modest dress in women. Women were greatly swayed by fashion movements, and an earlier statement by Pope Pius XI continued to be true. The previous pope had declared, concerning the problem of fashion and the increasing immodesty of the dress of women, "all too frequently the individual is helpless. The personal apostolate is no longer enough, if indeed, it ever was enough."⁸⁶

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 44.

⁸⁵"Female or Feminine," America, CIX (August 3, 1963), 107.

⁸⁶Ibid.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this investigation was to survey written church comments as they appeared in publications from 1900-1964 to determine the extent of religious concern with immodesty of the dress of women. Religious comments were considered to be a reflection of the social conditions of the time; therefore, the political and social conditions of each decade of the twentieth century were reviewed. Since the comments were related to modesty in women's dress, the general characteristics of women's dress in each decade were also discussed.

The investigation was performed in an attempt to support the hypothesis that at various periods in the history of the United States the churches have expounded through written comments on the topic of modesty in women's dress. The second hypothesis was that although churches may have attempted to correct what they considered to be immodest dress of women, their effect was outweighed by the influence of fashion dictates.

The study was devoted primarily to an investigation of conditions of the twentieth century, but historical background factors that affected later happenings were presented. The procedure consisted of research in historical books and studies for the preliminary chapter on historical background. Periodical literature was the chief source of information for the investigation in the twentieth century. A limitation was

established by the availability of articles in certain periods of the twentieth century. For example, references from the first decade of the twentieth century were scarce. The decade, 1941-1950, revealed a decline in the total number of articles written on the topic of religion. One authority attributed this decline to the general disinterest in religion at this time.

The religious comments surveyed were classified merely as Catholic, Jewish, and Protestant. Comments originating from the Catholic Church were more numerous than those from the Jewish and Protestant sectors. The abundance could be due to the numerous Catholic periodicals accessible, but perhaps the weight placed on Catholic comment in this investigation could be an indication of a different position held by the Catholic Church concerning its role in regulating the dress of women. Protestant comment was chiefly concentrated in the decade, 1921-1930. Jewish position on the subject was explained as recently as 1941. The Catholic stand on the topic of modesty in women's dress was observed in papal decrees and regional campaigns initiated by the Catholic Church throughout the period of investigation in the twentieth century.

The results of this study indicated that the two hypotheses were plausible. Church comments on immodesty in the dress of women were not consistent in all decades of the twentieth century. The highest concentration of church response appeared in the decade, 1921-1930. Many religious leaders expressed concern with immodest dress; however, not all church expressions in this decade condemned women's dress on the grounds of immodesty. Some religious leaders related that no reason for

concern over women's dress was necessary.

Few church comments on the subject were observed in the first two decades, 1900-1920. The first part of the century revealed a concern primarily with the healthful aspects of women's clothing. During World War I, little reference was found on the subject. Many other problems existed during war periods so that during both world wars little concern with immodest dress was expressed by the churches.

The decade, 1930-1940, marked a new trend that was to continue through 1964. This tendency to adjust church policy to the mode of the time was observed in the importance relegated to the relative concept of modesty. The churches established standards for what they considered to be modest dress by considering the customs, culture, and manners of the group to be regulated. Campaigns attempting to correct conditions of what was considered immodest dress existed as late as 1962. Thus, the Puritan influence that operated in the prohibition of certain attire through colonial sumptuary legislation was continued in varying degrees throughout the first sixty-two years of the twentieth century.

The second hypothesis that fashion trends were more influential than the comments of the churches in attempting to correct the immodest dress of women was somewhat substantiated. Even in colonial times, the church questioned its effectiveness in regulating the dress of women. An editor in the nineteenth century referred to fashion as a "fantastic deity," which influenced even the most austere religious. The influence of fashion was reiterated throughout the twentieth century. In the decade, 1900-1910, the "Gibson Girl" silhouette was the accepted mode of

appearance from which fashionable women seldom departed. Fashion dictated not only the dress, but also the manners, of the women. The influence on fashion by celebrities was observed in the bobbed hairstyle promoted by Irene Castle in 1914. The bobbed hairstyle was adopted to such a great extent that by the decade, 1931-1940, this coiffure predominated and "hatlessness" became a trend. Women attempted to follow these new styles despite the fact that they might be considered immodest by other authorities.

An example of fashion dominating women's dress was related in the incident of the wearing of the piece of chiffon to cover a bare midriff which was a dress fashion in the decade 1931-1940. The chiffon was used as a compromise to satisfy the individual's feelings of modesty.

World War II had a pronounced effect on women's fashions. During the war fabric restrictions limited the use of materials in civilian dress to provide for wartime needs. Therefore, fashion was considerably de-emphasized and any skimping of apparel was considered patriotic. The war also decreased the accessibility of fashion creations from Paris and the American fashion designer rose to importance.

The Catholic Church realized the power of fashion and recommended that a joint effort by all priests and bishops be undertaken to combat the evil of immodest dress. The comment that fashion dictators were not Christians was another indication of the concern with the influence of fashion. Inez Robb, a columnist, reiterated the importance of fashion in influencing women's dress. She claimed that the exhortations of Pope Pius XII would have little power in combatting the fashion predictions

in 1957 for a "blatantly pagan 'naked season.'"

Fashion appeared to be a threat to religious authority in regulating women's dress. This religious concern with the influence from fashion edicts was observed in the mention of fashion in a Protestant book of discipline. The words of the supreme authority of the Catholic Church also substantiated the hypothesis that women's conformity to style trends was a menace to the church's attempts to effectively establish modesty in women's dress. Pope Pius XI in regard to fashion and immodesty in women's dress related that the individual was often helpless in combatting the decrees of fashion that promoted immodest dress. The accepted fashion trends influenced women to such a degree that modest dress was no longer achievable by the individual's pursuit of faith alone.

These comments seemed to indicate that although churches were interested in promoting modest dress of women, the opposing force of fashion had brought about the realization of the futility of their endeavors. Most of the Protestant and Jewish comments had ceased prior to the decade, 1951-1960. Catholic comments and campaigns continuing to urge women to dress modestly despite the powerful influence of fashion were observed as recently as 1962.

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