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Tithe

the Watson Letter and A Better Way

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Foreword

Several years ago my wife and I began receiving various newsletters regarding church leaders, the Don Davenport fiasco, Desmond Ford, Walter Rea, and of course, the 1940 compromise on the nature of Christ involving Martin and Barnhouse. Personal church trials and disappointments resulted in our becoming very disillusioned with the church. We concluded that our tithe ought not to support such corruption. We felt we were held personally responsible to God and endeavored to place the tithe where it would be better appropriated.

We have studied the subject of tithe for over ten years and have received many booklets and tracts on the subject and have corresponded with many conference treasurers on all levels in order to understand the subject thoroughly and objectively.

We have found that in most cases, withdrawing tithe from the church has been preceded, perhaps imperceptively, by withdrawing our affections from the church. We have then witnessed a strong inclination to separate from the church. Criticism and discouragement become widespread among all of God's children. The witness to the world is marred and the work of God retarded.

We have no argument with any man. We have dear friends on both sides of the issue and we do not question the sincerity of any. But through the years we have seen deep principles emerge which are not always realized by a casual or random study. While this is in no case complete, we present this small work for your study, prayer, and consideration.

God would have His faithful ones to stand firm amid apostasy in these last days, while emanating the love of Christ in a practical way to those within and outside the church. May the Holy Spirit guide you as you consider the points contained within these pages, and give you courage and honesty of heart as you study this subject and follow Jesus, is our prayer...

In His Peace,

Allen & Amy Reich

--Who Is Worthy?--

The tithe is to be especially set aside for the *living* minister, Bible worker, Bible teacher, Evangelist, etc. "The light which the Lord has given me on this subject, is that the means in the treasury for the support of the ministers in the different fields is not to be used for any other purpose." *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 1, 182. "I have had special instruction from the Lord that the tithe is for a special purpose, consecrated to God to sustain those who minister in the sacred work, as the Lord's chosen to do His work not only in sermonizing, but in ministering." *Ibid.*, 187.

In view of these statements and others it is clear who is to receive the tithe. Though there are many good and worthy projects that the Lord would have us establish and forward, we are told, "a great mistake is made when the tithe is drawn from the object for which it is to be used--the support of the ministers." *Testimonies* 9, 249. It was because of this shortage of tithe funds that more laborers were not able to be employed. *Ibid.*

--Who Is Responsible?--

There is always the question raised regarding our personal responsibility to see that the tithe is rightly used. One such statement is found in *Testimonies* 2, 552: "If God pronounces a woe upon those who are called to preach the truth and refuse to obey, a heavier woe rests upon those who take upon them this sacred work without clean hands and pure hearts. As there are woes for those who preach the truth while they are unsanctified in heart and life, so there are woes for those who receive and maintain the unsanctified in the position which they cannot fill." At first reading, it would appear that those who pay tithe to the church are responsible and woes are liable to fall on them. But when this statement is read in its entire context and compared with other statements, it is found to be referring to the one distributing the tithe, not the one submitting the tithe. Let us ask the question: Who is responsible in an organization for choosing men for the ministry and overseeing these ministers? The members? No. Those persons making up the Conference Executive Committee and the

Personnel Committee shoulder these responsibilities. (These committees are made up of persons in denominational employ, as well as laity elected to the position.) The unqualified ministers have a woe pronounced against them. In addition, there will be woes for those leaders who "receive and maintain" such ministers. The statement does not say that the members themselves will be judged. The counsel in *Testimonies* 2, 552 is written to a local pastor. Who is responsible for hiring a pastor? Again, it is the Conference committee.

--Speaking Out--

It is not a sin to pay our tithe to the church. In fact, we can find no clear counsel that we ought to establish a separate treasury from that of the organized church. But we must speak out against any abuse realized in regard to the tithe, afterward leaving the matter with the Lord. Ellen White again said, "The tithes and offerings are not the property of any man, but are to be used in doing a certain work for God. Unworthy ministers may receive some of the means thus raised, but dare anyone, because of this, withhold from the treasury, and brave the curse of God?" *Series A*, No. 1, 27-28. Notice also that the treasury is the source of support for some of these unworthy ministers, which of course would be the church treasury.

We are counseled against withdrawing or withholding tithes and offerings. But again, we are obligated to make our complaint known to the brethren, and ask that matters be adjusted.

The responsibility of our conference brethren in this matter is to carefully appropriate the money to worthy ministers. They alone are responsible to the Lord for this and must give answer in that Great Day for any mismanagement. Our personal responsibility is this: to pay a faithful tithe to the Lord's treasury--His church-- and when convinced that things are not managed correctly, "make your complaint, plainly and openly, *in the right spirit, to the proper ones.*" *Testimonies* 9, 249.

This counsel is often set aside or neglected, although a few may not be aware of it. If this were followed those who were making the complaint would have to be certain of any claims made, which negates the use of any rumors or mere suspicions.

If our complaints are made in the right spirit, this may be the means of saving those in leadership positions from making mistakes, and may possibly be the means of saving their souls as well. This responsibility cannot easily be set aside. "If wrongs are apparent among His people, and if the servants of God pass on indifferent to them, they virtually sustain and justify the sinner, and are alike guilty and will just as surely receive the displeasure of God; for they will be made responsible for the sins of the guilty." *Testimonies* 5, 676. How much could be done if all would follow this counsel?

—Whipping Or Wooing?—

Oftentimes we picture those in leadership as enemies, but many may be reasoned with, and their hearts touched, if approached in the proper spirit. Many times God has used one man, or but a few, to turn events and to establish righteousness. We do not work alone. There are powerful agencies at work as we co-operate with God.

By withdrawing our tithe in order to compel leaders to make reforms creates reform for the wrong reasons, if indeed it helps at all. This also creates financial difficulties in which the innocent suffer as well as the guilty. We are told that "The love of Christ, manifested in unselfish ministry, will be more effective in reforming the evildoer than will the sword or the court of justice. These are necessary to strike terror to the lawbreaker, but the loving missionary can do more than this. Often the heart will harden under reproof; but it will melt under the love of Christ." *Desire of Ages*, 350-351

We must be careful how we move, lest we leave the impression that we are using the tithe as a "whip" in the cause of reform. The better method has already been given: make our complaint in the *right spirit* and to the *proper ones*. (9T, 249)

Even though reforms may not come as quickly as we or others would like, when this counsel is followed the Lord blesses. Though we may feel that our words are not heeded, we are not to become discouraged. Let us follow the counsels by taking our complaints or concerns of mismanagement or misappropriation to the proper ones

in the work (This would be our local and union treasurers). Though our words may appear to have no effect this is not so. We must be patient and let the Lord lead the honest in heart.

Recently in the *Pacific Union Recorder*, March 6, 1989, a letter to the editor complained, "Why do you seldom print pictures of Blacks? I get the *Recorder* and I seldom see a picture of a Black." Page seven held a full page photo of two black literature evangelists. Though it may seem a petty complaint, it received attention. Complaints of a much more serious order do indeed receive notice as well.

Though it is too lengthy to reprint within these pages, it would do well to look at the March 2, 1989 issue of *Adventist Review*. Page thirty-five carries evidence that those who have faithfully followed the counsel of making a proper complaint have been heard: "There is some misinformation regarding the allocation of funds [tithe funds] in the General Conference that has resulted in negative feelings, as many do not understand the complexity of the world work of the church...." We must not become disheartened by the alleged lack of understanding, but praise God that those in the General Conference are becoming aware of the concerns. President Wilson stated that the church faced many challenges and demands. A major item among these "is the use of church finances...." *Ibid*.

How important it is now for us to not become weary in applying this counsel personally and doing what we can individually in making known our concerns and asking that things "be adjusted and set in order."

—Corrupt Ministry—An Old Story—

In 1 Samuel 2:22-36 we find that Eli, though High Priest, neglected to discipline and restrain Hophni and Phinehas, his priest-sons. While knowing of his sons' wicked practices, Eli neglected his duty to God and to the nation, and the Lord pronounced a curse upon him as well as his wicked sons. "For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not." 1 Samuel 3:13. Notice that it was Eli that

was held accountable, and not those who brought offerings and one-tenth of their increase to the temple.

Corruption within the ministry of God's church unfortunately is nothing new. But as we meditate upon God's Word we see a deeper principle coming to light. In 1 Samuel chapter 1, we are told of a man who loved the Lord, Elkanah by name. It was Elkanah's custom to travel to the city of Shiloh there to worship and offer sacrifices to the Lord. We are told Elkanah went "yearly" or "from year to year" to Shiloh. (See verses three, and seven as well as chapter 2:19.)

Shiloh was the city in which Eli's wicked sons ministered as priests. This did not prevent faithful Elkanah from coming to worship and offer sacrifice, though the priests were generally known as sons of wickedness (2:12, 17).

The sins of which Hophni and Phinehas were guilty are hardly unknown to us today. And we may question why the Lord did not choose to divorce Himself from such a corrupt work or at least raise up a new Priesthood to minister to His people. Could not God have notified the people to appropriate their tithes and offerings elsewhere until the priesthood was cleansed? But God did none of these things. Instead He chose to raise up a faithful priest within the system who would set His house in order.

1 Samuel 2:35, "I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind: and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before mine anointed for ever." Even while wicked priests were daily at work, God was in control and fulfilling His plans through little-noticed means.

Though well-aware of the wickedness and greed present within his office, Samuel performed his duties with carefulness and quietly awaited the day which God would appoint for reform. Though a mere child, Samuel loved God fervently and with a child's trust faithfully waited on God. When the time was right, God moved Samuel into position and called for the accounts of wicked men to be settled. The best of human machinations will ever realize defeat when raised against God's purposes.

We must allow God to work in His own appointed means and not confuse His work by running ahead of Him. In spite of present wickedness God has His faithful ones in ready position and will activate them for the reform and strengthening of His church in His own good time. There are faithful priests even today who in quiet activity await God's signal to move forward. Let us not frustrate God's plan by devising human methods for reforming error. We must trust God wholly, and obey Him individually.

In *Series A*, No. One, 27-28, we are told, "If the Conference business is not managed according to the order of the Lord, that is the sin of the erring ones. The Lord will not hold you responsible for it, if you do what you can to correct the evil." This would agree with the counsel found in *Testimonies* 9, 249: "Make your complaint, plainly and openly, in the right spirit, to the proper ones. Send in your petitions for things to be adjusted and set in order;..."

In *Testimonies* 2, 519, we find these encouraging words of counsel: "The eye of God takes cognizance of every farthing devoted to His cause, and of the willingness or reluctance of the giver. The motive in giving is also chronicled. Those self-sacrificing, consecrated ones who render back to God the things that are His, as He requires of them, will be rewarded according to their works. Even though the means thus consecrated be misapplied, so that it does not accomplish the object which the donor had in view,--the glory of God and the salvation of souls,--those who made the sacrifice in sincerity of soul, with an eye single to the glory of God, will not lose their reward."

---The Southern Missionary Society---
--A Denominational Enterprise--

J.N. Loughborough was president of the Illinois Conference at the time Elder Edson White came into his office heavily burdened for the colored people of the southern states. Edson requested the privilege of laboring for the colored people in the city. His request was granted and Edson immediately went to work praying and planning. With his own money Edson built the Morning Star steamboat. This steamer was soon launched on January 10, 1895 to be used in labor in the South. Edson along with a few associates began work in the South with this humble means.

The work pioneered in the South by this small crew organized under the name, The Southern Missionary Society. It was the only society of its kind at that time. From the *SDA Encyclopedia*, 1238, we read: "Southern Missionary Society: An organization that operated for more than two decades and promoted mission schools and evangelism among the Negro people in the Southern states.... The founders (J. Edson White and recruits) of the Southern Missionary Society reached Vicksburg, Mississippi, in January, 1895, under the instruction of, and bearing the credentials of, the General Conference."

"When at the General Conference in April, 1901, nine Southern states, known then as the General Conference District No. 2, were organized into the Southern Union Conference, the Southern Missionary Society was accepted as a branch of the new union." *Ibid.*, 1239

There were only three conferences in the Southern Union when it was organized in 1901. Cumberland (450 members); Tennessee River (400 members); Florida (230 members); and "An unorganized mission field including six states." *Ibid.*, 1245

At the General Conference of April 9, 1903 Edson White gave a report of the work and progress in the South: "Our Society has built up and is now operating five schools in Mississippi.... These schools are located at Vicksburg, Yazoo City, Columbus, and Jackson.... Our laborers have also carried forward efforts in Nashville, Memphis, and Edgefield Junction, in Tennessee and in Louisville and Bowling Green, in Kentucky.

"At the present time there are twenty-seven workers in different departments of the Society. Five ordained ministers have been developed in the work of the Southern Missionary Society.... Thirteen school teachers have in different ways been fitted for their work.... Some good Bible workers have been developed."

Edson also explained the source of most of the funding for the development of the work: "The question may be raised, 'Where did you get this money? The Lord gave it to us. Some little books were brought out. First the 'Gospel Primer'.... Mother [Ellen White] helped us with the book 'Christ our Saviour' which had the sale of three or four hundred thousand. Two or three hundred

thousand copies of 'Best Stories' have been sold. It is estimated that a sufficient number of 'Coming King' have been circulated to make a column four miles high." J. N. Loughborough, *The Great Second Advent Movement*, 1909 ed., 436-437

The hand of God opened another way by which means could be obtained for the work in the South. On September 20, 1904, Ellen White said, "As I have considered the poverty and needs of the Southern field I have been greatly distressed. I have earnestly desired that some method might be devised by which the work for the colored people could be sustained. One night as I was praying for this needy field, a scene was presented to me, which I will describe.

"I saw a company of men working, and asked what they were doing. One of them replied, 'We are making little boxes to be placed in the home of every family that is willing to practice self-denial, and to send of their means to help the work among the colored people of the South....'" *Atlantic Union Gleaner*, October 5, 1904

This entire article was placed in the *Atlantic Union Gleaner* by the Southern Missionary Society. All the funds raised were channeled through the Society to be appropriated for the work in the South.

The Southern Missionary Society was a recognized agency of the denomination for the support and carrying forward of a broad and extensive work among the colored people of the Southern states. (See the 1904 Yearbook, 24, 25) Ellen White, speaking of his work of establishing institutions, counseled son Edson in May of 1902, "The work was not to be carried forward as a private business, but as a conference enterprise." *Unpublished MSS. Testimonies*, 216

---Events Leading to the Watson Letter---

W.C. White tells us that which Edson had already mentioned:

"The greater part of the work of the Society was the maintenance of the mission schools, but it was also carrying forward other lines of evangelistic work and was supporting

several ordained ministers.” (*Ellen G. White And The Tithe*, W.C. White statement, DF 113b)

The Society was badly in need of funds for the destitute fields, and would send out agents to the churches to solicit donations for the work. One such agent for the Southern Missionary Society visited the Colorado church and asked its members for a donation. Of this W.C. White writes:

“...they manifested a willingness to give, and some of them said that they were paying a large tithe, and some were not wholly pleased with the way in which it was used. Compared with the population of the state the conference was strong and it had a good income. Therefore, some said, ‘Let us send some of our tithe to be used in the good work for the neglected colored people in the Southern states.’

“Then the officers of the church and the agent of the Society did in an irregular way what has since become very popular as a wise and unselfish policy when done in an orderly and regular way. They transferred a portion of the tithe of a well-to-do conference to a very destitute and needy mission field....

“The money was placed in the treasury of the Southern Missionary Society and was paid out in a regular and economical way to approved laborers who were engaged in regular denominational work. But the action was irregular on the part of the agent who received the money, and the church that paid it to him. By the officers of the Colorado conference this action was considered to be not only irregular, but wrong and censurable. They thought that they needed the money for home use, and they felt that the action of the officers of the Southern Missionary Society was worthy of public condemnation and censure and that the money should be returned.

“The officers of the Society were in trouble. They had used the money quickly in paying the wages of preachers, and their income was greatly below their needs. Moreover they felt that a public denouncement would tend to diminish the small income that they were then receiving. Their trouble became known to Sister White, and from Mountain View she wrote a letter to Elder G.F. Watson dated January 22, 1905.” DF 113b, *W.C. White letter*, Elmshaven, St. Helena, CA.

Information on the background of the Watson letter is from the W.C. White statement, DF113b, taken from the small pamphlet *Ellen G. White And The Tithe*, available from the White Estates, and also found in *The Early Elmshaven Years*, Arthur White, 388-397. We have reprinted the Watson letter at the end of this work for those who do not have it. It can also be found in *Unpublished MSS Testimonies*, 215-216.

Many points become clear in the letter that Ellen White wrote to Elder Watson when we understand the setting in which it was written. Let us take a look at a few points in the letter:

The letter advised Brother Watson to “keep cool”, revealing his wrought-up feelings regarding the tithe money being sent out of his conference. She reminded him that this “money is not withheld from the Lord’s treasury.” The money was still kept inside the organized structure, but was simply directed to, and dispersed by, a different branch of the conference (the Southern Missionary Society) for the Southern work where the money was badly needed.

She told him that she as well as others had been instructed to do the same with her tithe, though she did not wish it to be publicized. “...it is not a matter that should be commented upon; for it will necessitate my making known these matters, which I do not desire to do, because it is not best.... I do not care to give publicity to this work which the Lord has appointed me to do, and others to do.”

At the end of the letter she stated, “I write this to you so that you shall keep cool and not become stirred up and give publicity to this matter, lest many more shall follow their example.”

Though she and a few others were appropriating some of their tithe through the Southern Missionary Society, it was Ellen White’s desire to keep the matter quiet. If too many were to send their tithe to the Southern work the home conferences would suffer and there would be no organized way in which to appropriate funds to ministers in the home fields.

W.C. White in his letter said, “The officers of the Southern Missionary Society did not use this money to pay their own wages. They did not use it in any way for their own personal benefit.

Neither did they pay it to the support of men whom the conferences in the South thought to be unfitted or unworthy. Neither was it paid to men who were carrying on an unauthorized work of their own devising." *W.C. White statement DF113b*

Let us note the following points:

1. The work in the South was approved of God. "From the light given me, I know that the Lord used Edson White and W.O. Palmer to do missionary work in the South." *Unpublished MSS Testimonies*, 216, (May, 1902)
2. The work was not a private business, but a conference enterprise. *Ibid.*
3. Both Edson and Willie White testified that the ministers were ordained and worked for the Southern Missionary Society which was an authorized branch of the denomination. J.N. Loughborough, *The Great Second Advent Movement*, 1909 ed., 436; *W.C. White statement*, DF113b
4. The tithe was channeled through a recognized branch of the organized work. *W.C. White statement*, DF113b
5. Ellen White was not trying to encourage others to follow her example. *Watson letter*
6. The irregularity was sending tithe out of a home conference to another branch of the organized work. *W.C. White statement*, DF113b

—The Shoe That Doesn't Fit—

It is difficult to find substantiation in the Watson letter for the practice of independent ministries of today soliciting or receiving tithe, unless these ministries are recognized as a branch of the denominational work and are authorized by the church to carry on this financial responsibility. Though there are some that are recognized as a branch of the denomination, very few, if any are authorized to receive tithe funds as was the Southern Missionary Society. To endeavor then to place Independent Ministries in the same category as the Southern Missionary Society is comparable to trying to wear a misfitting shoe. It may appear to fit, but it renders lame service for the church.

Ellen White was not opening the door for any enterprise that claimed to be a ministry to take tithe. She was also guarding

against breaking down the organized structure by trying to keep the situation quiet.

—Changes in Policy—

W.C. White mentioned that the irregular way in which the officers of the Southern Missionary Society went about soliciting funds and the way in which the Colorado church gave funds were corrected. At a later time it became more common for a well-to-do conference to transfer a portion of tithe to a destitute and needy mission field. This action may be due to the special light given through the Spirit of Prophecy a short time after the Watson letter appeared.

"In some of the larger conferences the tithe may be more than sufficient to sustain the laborers now in the field... These conferences should feel a burden for the regions beyond their own borders. There are missions to be sustained in fields where there are no churches and no tithes, and also the believers are few, and the tithe limited...." Special Testimony by Ellen White, quoted by T.E. Bowen, *Review and Herald*, April 11, 1907

The newly adopted policy on tithe dispersion caused concern among some of the leading brethren. Would it cause confusion if the tithe from more wealthy conferences were shared with poorer mission fields? "...it will be plainly seen that the plan of sharing our surplus tithe with the mission fields is a heaven-born one, and that God's rich blessing will rest upon all those who manifest in this manner a practical interest in the work of God in the darker portions of his vineyard. But in doing it, it should be ever kept in mind that there is a right and a wrong way of rendering this assistance. It is not left with individuals to withhold their tithe from their own church treasury, sending it directly to some mission field, or even to the General Conference itself. This is disorganization. But the tithe having been paid over to the home treasury, when the conference officers, or delegates representing these home conference churches, vote a surplus to the general treasury, this is in harmony with every principle of thorough organization, and with such use of the tithe God is pleased, and will command his blessing to rest upon all who do it." T.E. Bowen, "*Use of the Tithe*," *Review and Herald*, April 11, 1907

In that same year Ellen White wrote, "The portion that God has reserved for Himself is not to be diverted to any other purpose than that which He has specified. Let none feel at liberty to retain their tithe, to use according to their own judgment. They are not to use it for themselves in an emergency, nor to apply it as they see fit, even in what they may regard as the Lord's work." *Testimonies* 9, 247

—A Better Way—

In 1911 Ellen White wrote to Mrs. J.J. Gravelle:

"You ask if I will accept tithe from you and use it in the cause of God where most needed. In reply, I will say that I shall not refuse to do this, but at the same time I will tell you that there is a better way.

"It is better to put confidence in the ministers of the conference where you live, and in the officers of the church where you worship. Draw nigh to your brethren. Love them with a true heart fervently, and encourage them to bear their responsibilities in the fear of God. 'Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.' (1 Timothy 4:12)" *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 1, 196 (December 29, 1911)

There must have been a reason why the person did not wish to give the tithe to the local church. Yet Ellen White replied that this was best to do. We notice several principles involved:

"...put confidence in the ministers..." Ellen White was suggesting that placing tithe with the local church would be casting a vote of confidence and would be expressing the belief that this church is God's church.

"Draw nigh to your brethren." This was counsel to try to work together, and to let our influence be felt as we come close to our brothers and sisters and endeavor to nurture and strengthen them in Christ.

Do we believe that this church is God's church? Are we expressing confidence in His church? Is God in control of His church? Is God able to see His church through? Are we drawing nigh to our brethren? Are we allowing the influence of our lives to be felt in the church?

"The Spirit of Christ never leads those of the same faith to separate into distinct, independent parties. When such a separation takes place, an impression exactly opposite from that for which Christ prayed is given to the world." *The Kress Collection*, 111

"The unity of God's chosen people has been terribly shaken. God presents a remedy. This remedy is not one influence among many influences, and on the same level with them: it is an influence above all influences upon the face of the earth, corrective, uplifting and ennobling." *Ibid.*, 103

The "remedy" is to "draw nigh" to the brethren without compromising principle, yet willing to make concessions that do not involve principle. Counseled to "love them fervently," we are to reflect the love that Christ has for each of us.

The last counsel given was to "encourage them to bear their responsibilities." And so we are to encourage those in positions of trust to carry out Christ's divine blue print; stand by their side to encourage them to choose the right way and support them as they endeavor to do this.

We often find it easier to draw apart from the brethren. But we must learn to stand firm for the truth while possessing the love of Christ. We must seek ways in which to try to resolve problems in the church, instead of simply walking away in disgust. We must exemplify Christ's life by our words and actions with all people in all ways. When our attitudes are such that we sincerely love God's church, it only follows that our love will cause us to support it financially.

"Things will go wrong because of unconsecrated workers. You may shed tears over the result of this; but don't worry. The blessed Master has all his work from end to end under his masterly supervision. All he asks is that the workers shall come to him for their orders, and obey his directions. Everything,--our churches, our missions, our Sabbath-schools, our institutions,--is carried upon his divine heart. Why worry?...'" *Review and Herald*, November 14, 1893

We must remember that God will adjust matters with the church. The most important question is, What of us? Are we

following the light and reflecting its rays to others? Are we as Nehemiah, building up the waste places? Or are we tearing down and scattering abroad, as Jehu?

“God’s people have battles to fight, close and severe, but not against their brethren. All dissension, all desire to hurt or weaken or destroy the influence or work of one of God’s weakest workers, will be registered in the books of heaven as done unto Jesus.”
Review and Herald, October 6, 1896

—Appropriation Pile-up—

In appropriating the Lord’s tithe to places other than the church treasury there arise problems which we must consider. Let us consider that a person, or an organization which is accepting our tithe, is also accepting tithe from others--perhaps from thirty or forty others. With an estimated wage of \$2,000/month per household, this would amount to between \$6,000 and \$8,000 each month which an enterprise would receive. In addition to the tithe there is a much smaller amount received in offerings each month.

There is no guarantee that the tithe sent in good faith is being properly appropriated even through an independent or reform organization. Though many claim to be “reformers” and may speak “straight truth,” there is no guarantee that they are living the truth in the privacy of their lives.

Tens of thousands of tithe dollars are even now sustaining corrupt men who ride the wake of popularity as an Independent Ministry. And while there are those who are sincerely endeavoring to do a work for God, and are honest in heart, their work is made most difficult by the rebel “Independent” ministries. The good is judged by the bad.

Is God in control? Absolutely. And He will provide for those ministries which faithfully serve Him and His church. He has provided a way in which they will be sustained.

—Points of Consideration—

In most cases Independent Ministries are supported and maintained through the dissatisfaction of members of the church. If there were no grievances, the support of the unapproved ministries would drastically decline. Knowing this, many ministries are then conscious of the fact that they must keep before their supporters those topics which nurture dissatisfaction, else the ministry’s monetary support will suffer.

A professional singer soon realizes that he or she may influence the amount in gifts and offerings by singing songs which appeal to the emotions and the sentimentalism of the listening audience. Many singing groups touring the country today work upon this principle for soliciting funds. In just such a way a speaker soon realizes that he or she may influence the amount of contributions by speaking words which the audience present would wish to hear. Unfortunately, this is done by very many speakers, whether secular, or religious. And many times words of severe censure are spoken more as a means of gaining approval and support than because of the abhorrence of the sin.

There are primary principles upon which those advocating separation work: Separation from the church emotionally: this is done by, again, calling up “dirty laundry” within our church; causing indignation and resentment. Then comes a physical separation: resolving to worship only among those undefiled; leaving the church family generally. Some have gone so far as to require their followers to write out a “bill of divorcement” and turn it into the local pastor with a request that their membership be dropped. Once these steps have been taken, it is an easy matter to instruct the new followers as to where they ought to place their tithes and offerings.

We personally know many independent ministries which are in no way involved in this movement of separation. They love the church and desire to see it purified and ready to meet Jesus. But unknowingly they may be encouraging separationist sentiments by receiving the Lord’s tithe. Even though there is no solicitation for tithe, the willing acceptance of these funds may actually be a

promotion of disorganization and contempt for the church we all love.

**--God's Means of Support for Those
Without Conference Support--**

There is no doubt that the Lord is well able to order and care for His work in all its varied branches. And we must ask ourselves, if self-supporting enterprises are not to receive tithe, how may they establish the work upon a firm basis?

The people of God were often called upon to give of their substance in addition to the tithe in order to forward the work of God. The Jewish nation is the most vivid example we have today of the system of tithes and offerings. "The contributions required of the Hebrews for religious and charitable purposes amounted to fully one fourth of their income. So heavy a tax upon the resources of the people might be expected to reduce them to poverty; but, on the contrary, the faithful observance of these regulations was one of the conditions of their prosperity." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 527

"In the days of Israel the tithe and freewill offerings were needed to maintain the ordinances of divine service. Should the people of God give less in this age?" *Ibid.*, 528

The Advent Message began and was promulgated by the unselfish sacrifice of many Christians. Not only those whom we are most familiar with, but many unknown and unnoticed ones gave willingly and sacrificially out of the abundance of their heart to bring the light of truth to others.

For those who have been raised with the tithing system, or have practiced it for years it is no sacrifice as we realize that we are but returning that which is not our own. The real test then comes in voluntarily giving an amount beyond that of the tithe. While God's people anciently gave ten percent to the support of the Levites, as much as another fifteen percent in offerings was given to support other areas of the Lord's work.

The first tithe should be given to the church. The second tithe and additional offerings may then be sent to sustain the enterprise which we desire to see progressed. We would be giving no more than Israel did anciently, and if this were practiced all branches of the Lord's work could be nurtured.

But the love of many has waxed cold through the years. Churches resort to fund-raising luncheons, socials, bazaars, picnics and sales in order to raise funds which should come from hearts warm with the love of Christ and a burning desire to see others in the truth.

"If His people were liberally to sustain His cause by their voluntary gifts, instead of resorting to unchristian and unhallowed methods to fill the treasury, God would be honored, and many more souls would be won to Christ." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 529

Today we have the same selfish spirit that pervaded our churches in the past. It is not unusual to see that much of the burden of the work lies upon relatively few shoulders, while the majority neglect the duty God places before them. Though this is sad, we should not be discouraged by it.

God has provided us with an opportunity which not only gives us an active part in His work, but establishes within us Divine characteristics of unselfishness and benevolence. The neglect of others gives each of us a greater opportunity to be workers together with God, and show what great things can be done through seemingly insignificant channels.

"The more we invest in the cause of God to aid in the salvation of souls, the closer to our hearts will they be brought. Were our numbers half as large, and all of these devoted workers, we should have a power that would make the world tremble." *Testimonies* 3, 405

What a precious promise. We need not concern ourselves with how few in number we may be. We must concern ourselves with how we may become more devoted to the cause of God. The people who wish to see this work forwarded will consecrate themselves as coworkers with God in lifting the financial burdens involved in such undertakings. This is no casual responsibility.

“We are not doing a twentieth part of what we might do if we were awake. The work is retarded by love of ease and a lack of the self-denying spirit of which our Saviour has given us an example in His life.” *Testimonies* 3, 407

As the work of God was begun in sacrifice, and maintained by sacrifice, so it will be finished by sacrifice.

“Every church member should cherish a spirit of sacrifice. In every home there should be taught lessons of self-denial.” *Testimonies* 9, 130

“The money which we refuse to invest in the work of the Lord, will perish.” *Ibid.*, 131

How may the work of God be established upon a firm basis? Through personal, individual, consistent sacrifice and self-denial. We would be amazed at the amount which could be given to the work of the Lord if, instead of spending money for that which is trivial and unnecessary, we were to put it in God’s work.

An example of this was realized more than twelve years ago, when one family chose to cut out snacks and occasional trips to a salad bar. In a matter of less than one month they had \$40 to give to God’s work.

There are many ways in which we can sacrifice. The root of all giving is self-denial,--denying ourselves of that which is not necessary. Self-denial is not something which we consider occasionally, but daily. The Lord will bless and prosper those who love Him enough to make a covenant by sacrifice, and we will find one day that heaven was indeed, “cheap enough.” *Early Writings*, 17

As you are faithful in returning the Lord’s tithe to His treasury for the support of His ministers, He will bless your faithfulness. And as you make a covenant with Him by sacrifice in the support of the other branches of the vineyard you will be blest with a deeper commitment to His work, a deeper love for souls, and greater enjoyment in witnessing the progress of His work. May God grant you grace and wisdom as you contemplate what you may do in this work.

---References for the Subject of Tithes and Offerings---

Required by God. 3T, 394; 6T 384, 387
 All are to be left free to say how much it is. 5T, 149
 Prosperity dependent upon faithfulness in. PP, 525
 Test of obedience. 6T, 386
 Acknowledgment of God’s claim by creation and redemption. 6T, 479
 Complainers among withholders of. 6T, 389, 390; GW, 225-227
 Some withhold like Ananias and Sapphira. 4T, 469, 470
 Opposition to withholding. TM, 53, 60.
 Lack of keeps many from ministry. 9T, 52, 249, 250
 Robbing God in. 2T, 197-199, 259, 281, 653, 661; 3T, 269, 394, 409, 510, 546
 Robbing God of, cause of absence of family blessing. 3T, 404
 In force as long as Truth is progressive. 4T, 469
 Not to pay part-time workers from. 2T, 649
 Not to be used in paying debts. 6T, 391
 Not to be used to build churches, canvassers, schools. GW, 226; 9T, 248-249
 Purpose and use of second tithe. PP, 530; Ed. 44

Offerings

personally dispense. 7T, 178
 Bring to God’s treasury. CS, 88
 Bring to God’s storehouse. CS, 65, 67
 used to:
 send truth to people. MYP, 308
 spread gospel. COL, 300
 spread printed truth. 4T, 472
 support foreign missions. ChS, 221
 support gospel workers. 2 SM, 156
 support home missions. ChS, 221
 support the ministry. 4T, 472
 sustain worship of God. PP, 525
 for institutional debts. 9T, 71
 for institutional properties. 9T, 272
 helping poor and suffering. WW, 274
 pay church debts. 6T, 102-103

--The Watson Letter--

Mountain View, California
January 22, 1905

“Elder Watson:

“My brother, I wish to say to you, be careful how you move. You are not moving wisely. The least you have to speak about the tithe that has been appropriated to the most needy and the most discouraged field, the more sensible you will be.

“It has been presented to me for years that my tithe was to be appropriated by myself to aid the white and colored ministers who were neglected, and did not receive sufficient to properly support their families. While my attention was called to aged ministers, white or black, it was my special duty to investigate into their necessities and supply their needs. This was to be my special work, and I have done this in a number of cases. No man should give notoriety to the fact that in special cases the tithe is used in that way.

“In regard to the colored work in the South, that field has been, and is still being robbed of the means that should come to the workers in that field. If there have been cases where our sisters have appropriated their tithe to the support of the ministers working for the colored people in the South, let every man, if he is wise, hold his peace.

“I have myself appropriated my tithe to the most needy cases brought to my notice. I have been instructed to do this, and as the money is not withheld from the Lord’s treasury, it is not a matter that should be commented upon, for it will necessitate my making known these matters, which I do not desire to do, because it is not best.

“Some cases have been kept before me for years, and I have supplied their needs from the tithe, as God has instructed me to do, and if any person shall say to me, ‘Sister White, will you appropriate my tithe where you know it is most needed?’ I shall say, ‘Yes,’ and I will; and I have done so. I commend those sisters

who have placed their tithe where it is most needed to help to do a work that is being left undone; and if this matter is given publicity, it will create a knowledge which would better be left as it is. I do not care to give publicity to this work, which the Lord has appointed me to do and others to do.

“I send this matter to you so that you shall not make a mistake. Circumstances alter cases. I would not advise that any should make a practice of gathering up the tithe money. But for years there have now and then been persons who have lost confidence in the appropriation of the tithe who have placed the tithe in my hands and said if I did not take it they would themselves appropriate it to the family of the most needy minister they could find. I have taken the money, given them a receipt for it and told them how it was appropriated.

“I write this to you so that you shall keep cool and not become stirred up and give publicity to this matter, lest many more shall follow their example.

(signed)
Ellen G. White”