

Tithe:

All Ye are Brethren

Jeff Wehr

About Our Ministry

Wehr Publishing is a ministry dedicated to the work of furthering Christ's kingdom through the proclamation and publishing of present truth. We appreciate your prayers and support in preparing God's people for Christ's soon return. All rights reserved.

*Looking for that blessed hope,
and the glorious appearing of the great God
and our Savior, Jesus Christ."*

Titus 2:13

Copyright © 2007 Wehr Publishing

All Bible texts from King James Version,
World Bible Publishers, Inc.

Cover: Nathan Wehr

Text design: Alena Wehr

Additional copies are available from:

WEHR
publishing

P.O. Box 31

Rice, WA 99167

(509) 738-4905

www.WehrPublishing.com

Should members of a local church be able to hold elected church office who do not send their tithe through the local church? This question was posed to me when I was the associate pastor of a three church district. Strong opinions on both sides of the aisle forced me to study the subject thoroughly. Obviously, some felt that those who hold church office must send their entire tithe through the local church. Others felt that they could send their tithe directly to the mission field. However, all agreed that anyone who is elected to a church office should be paying an honest tithe.

In tackling this subject, I asked myself three questions:

- What is the intended use of tithe?
- Is it permissible according to the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy for an individual to give tithe directly to the mission field?
- Where is the storehouse to send tithe?

In seeking the answer to these three questions, I used the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy as my sources. We should let them speak; after all, they are our two sources of inspiration.

In my study, I discovered that tithe was designed by God to bring His people together, not to be a source of division. The cooperation that was to exist between the regular lines (the conference work) and the irregular lines (the self-supporting work) was to motive our people to give sacrificially. Tragically, the tithe issue has divided the regular and irregular lines of our work, resulting in less overall means for the work of the gospel.

My prayer is that we can look at tithe in such a way that it will unite us instead of divide us, inspire our people to give sacrificially, and provide a great impetus for the finishing of the work.

What is the tithe to be used for?

Let us begin our study with some well-known inspired statements on the use of tithe:

God has not changed; the tithe is still to be used for the support of the ministry. (9T 250)

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. There should be today in the field one hundred well-qualified laborers where now there is but one. (GW 226)

The tithe is “to be used for the support of the ministry.” Even if man chooses to spend tithe dollars on building projects and other objects, God Himself has not changed on the issue; the tithe is to be used to support the ministry. If tithe were not diverted to other objects, then there would be “one hundred well-qualified laborers where now there is but one.”

It [tithe] is to be especially devoted to the support of those who are bearing God’s message to the world; and it should not be diverted from this purpose. (CS 103)

He [God] intends that the ministry of the gospel shall be fully sustained. He claims the tithe as His own, and it should ever be regarded as a sacred reserve, to be placed in His treasury for the benefit of His cause, for the advancement of His work, for sending His messengers into “regions beyond,” even to the uttermost parts of the earth. (CS 71)

The tithe actually belongs to God and the treasury is God's treasury. These funds are to be used as God has designated, namely, for taking the gospel to "regions beyond, even to the uttermost parts of the earth."

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. (GW 225)

In summary, if individuals would not feel at liberty to use their tithe "according to their own judgment," such as in cases of "an emergency," building projects, or anything other object other than the support of the ministry, then there would be a hundred workers in the field where there is but one. Tragically, the tithe is being spent on other objects other than the support of the ministry.

The Misuse of "Excess Tithe" for Other Objects

Sister White wrote:

In some of the larger conferences the tithe may be more than sufficient to sustain the laborers now in the field. But this does not sanction its use for any other purpose. If the conferences were doing the work that God desires them to do, there would be many more laborers in the field, and the demand for funds would be greatly increased. The 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 where

the believers are new and the tithe limited. If you have means [“means” as in reference to tithe, not offerings] that is not needed after settling with your ministers in a liberal manner, send the Lord’s money to these destitute places. Special light on this point has been given. (MR 48, pages 2, 3)

Again, she wrote,

And if there is a surplus of means [“means” as in reference to tithe, not offerings] in the treasury, there are many places where it may be used strictly in the appointed lines. In many places the dearth of means is so great that the workers cannot be employed to do missionary work. Every dollar of the money put into the treasury is not needed in _____. Let the Lord’s money [tithe] be donated to support the ministers in foreign countries where they are working to lift the standard in new fields. This is God’s money, and He designs that it shall be used in sustaining the ministry, in educating a people to prepare to meet their God. . . . If you have more means [tithe] than you need to settle [with] your ministers in a fair, liberal, Christian manner, there are other places where you can help, where there are but few people and poor, and the tithe is limited. Send the Lord’s money [tithe] to them. This I have been repeatedly shown is the way to do. (MR 48a, 2, 3)

“Special light” was given to Sister White on excess tithe. Excess tithe is not to be used for any other purpose than to support these ministers in foreign fields. The needs are tremendous. Even as I am preparing this study, nearly one out

of every three pastors in some parts of the world may be cut from the payroll.

By following the Lord's plan, more gospel workers would be employed overseas. More baptisms would be occurring. These great missionary efforts would inspire our own people here in North America to give more liberally. The more liberally they give, the greater the Lord will bless them to give. I firmly believe this, and I pray for our beloved church to experience such a blessing.

However, our overseas missions lack considerably in funding. Why is this? First, not everybody in the SDA church even pays an honest tithe. Some statistics suggest that less than a third of our membership in North America return a regular and faithful tithe to the church. Second, some are utilizing their tithe for objects, not people. Third, not enough excess tithe is finding its way overseas.

The question then arises, if most of God's people do not pay an honest tithe, and excess tithe does not find its way to the foreign mission field, then will God impress certain individuals to help with these neglected fields of labor in the Lord's vineyard?

This question is directly answered by Sister White in her letter to Elder Watson. Elder Watson was a conference administrator in Colorado, who was upset that tithe was being sent directly to the work in the South. The letter reads as follows:

Mountain View, CA 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 discouraging field in the world, the more sensible you will be.

It had 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 properly to support their families. When 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 [“means” as in reference to tithe, not offering] that should come to the workers of that field. If there has 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, 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 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 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 their tithe in my hands, and said that if I did not take it they would themselves appropriate it to the families of the most needy minister they could find. I have taken the money, given 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 authority to this matter, lest many more shall follow their example.

Signed, Ellen G. White

What are the lessons from the Watson Letter?

1. We learn that Sister White was instructed of the Lord to bypass the regular channel of paying tithe through the local church, so that her tithe could go directly to needy workers in the southern mission field.

2. These southern workers had been “robbed” of tithe that could have come from the conferences.

3. These southern workers were “white and colored ministers who were neglected and did not receive sufficient properly to support their families.” These were not simply retirees. These workers were young and old, black and white. What they shared in common was their fervent dedication to be on the frontlines furthering Christ’s kingdom. They also shared in poverty. And by God’s grace their needs were met by members of the Seventh-day Adventist church.

4. For years Sister White had appropriated her tithe directly to the workers in the mission field.

5. Sister White even received the tithe dollars of others

to appropriate in the same manner as herself. These faithful Seventh-day Adventists did bypass the local church channels and gave their tithe to Sister White to give directly to the southern mission workers. In fact, she received their tithe dollars knowing that certain of these individuals had lost their confidence in the appropriation of funds by the church.

6. Sister White commended those who also gave directly to the mission field, saying, "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." So there were people who sent their tithe directly to the mission field and not through Sister White.

7. Sister White cautioned Elder Watson not to make such a big scene about this practice of tithe-paying. Why? Sister White knew that such a public awareness would only encourage more people to give directly to the mission field. Is this a contradiction in Sister White's council to Elder Watson? Certainly not! Sister White saw God's hand in supplying the needs of these southern missionaries by certain individuals. The church could have met these needs, but they failed. God saw fit to meet those needs through certain individuals. But by no means is God asking everyone to give directly to the mission field. In fact, Sister White does speak about a "better way." In a letter to Mrs. J. J. Gravelle, she wrote,

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 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 the God. 'Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity' [1 Timothy 4:12]. (Letter 96, 1911. MR 54, 2)

Before we return to the Watson Letter, I would like us to consider a few points about Sister White's letter to Mrs. Gravelle. First, we may infer that Mrs. Gravelle had lost her trust in the appropriation of tithe by the church. Second, it may be that Mrs. Gravelle's mistrust turned into a wrong attitude as well. Third, even though Mrs. White counseled Mrs. Gravelle that "it is better to put confidence in the ministers of the conference where you live," she did not refuse to receive Mrs. Gravelle's tithe for mission use. Fourth, Sister White did not insist on any church discipline towards Mrs. Gravelle's appropriation of tithe. In fact, Sister White commends those who send their tithe directly to the mission field when it meets the needs of neglected fields of labor. But never, in all the statements that I have read, does she advocate any church discipline.

The Watson Letter was written in 1905. The above letter to Mrs. Gravelle was penned in 1911. It is obvious that Sister White was still, in 1911, receiving tithe from others to give directly to the mission field.

8. There is one more important lesson that we can draw from the Watson Letter. Sister White made it abundantly clear that the tithe disbursed by her and others was not money that was withheld from the Lord's treasury—from the storehouse. Their tithe was used according to God's purposes for tithe; it was used as the Lord Himself had designated. These tithe dollars were used just as appropriately as if the conference itself had use them for the gospel work. Their tithe found it's way into the Lord's treasury, as Sister White wrote, "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."

Before leaving the subject of tithe to these needy mission fields, I would like us to consider a statement by Willie White, who was Sister White's special assistant. In a vision, God had told Sister White, "I have put My Spirit upon your son, W.C. White, that he may be your counselor. . . . I will be with your son, and will be his Counselor. He will have wisdom to defend the truth; for I will take charge of his mind, and will give him sound judgment in the councils that he attends in connection with the work" *The Later Elmshaven Years*, 102.

A committee had asked Willie White to whom should the tithe be paid. Here was his reply:

As to the proper use of the tithe: The outline of a statement upon this subject which was agreed upon was briefly this: To give extracts from Sister White's writings as to the tithe and its use; to show that her testimony and her own usual practice was in favor of paying the tithe into the regularly designated treasury, to be used under the counsel of the committees appointed for such purposes; to show further from her writings that when those who have charge of the expenditure of the tithe so far fail in the discharge of their duty that the regularly organized channels for the distribution of the tithe become hindrances to its proper use, then in order to carry out the divine plan that the tithe should be expended in the wisest manner for the furtherance of the work, individuals have the right to pay their tithes direct to needy fields; but that this involves a considerable degree of personal responsibility, which must be assumed by those who decide to follow this plan. It was thought that this matter could be handled in a way to show that the departure from the regular lines was authorized only when the regular plans failed to be carried out by those in positions of responsibility."

Memorandum of Plans Agreed Upon in Dealings with “The Blue Book.” (From the Ellen G. White Estate, File #213. This memorandum was written in 1907, during which time Sister White was still sending her tithe directly to the mission field.)

Another statement by Willie White makes plain that the workers of these neglected fields may go directly to the Adventist people for support:

Mother [Ellen White] makes one important exception to the above plan [sending funds through the conference]. She says that whenever the Lord has plainly spoken regarding an important work that is being neglected, as in the case of the work among the Southern people, and then the General Conference continues to neglect it, that the workers connected with the missionary enterprise are free to go to the churches anywhere and everywhere, and raise means for the prosecution of the work that has been plainly pointed out should be done. (Letter from W.C. White to Percy T. Magan, 1899, W.C. White Letters, 270)

In fact, in 1905 representatives of the Southern Missionary Society, which was a self-supporting ministry started by her son Edson White, came to the Colorado conference soliciting funds, including tithe, for their work in the South. This solicitation of funds, both tithes and offerings, is what led in part to Elder Watson’s letter to Sister White. As we have seen, she told Elder Watson that:

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 [tithe] that should come to the workers of that field. If there has 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. (SpM 215)

Sister White even encouraged her son Edson White to make appeals to the members directly for funds:

You ask me what you shall do in view of the fact that so little help is given to that department of the work in which you are working.

I would say, Trust it with the Lord. There is a way opened for you in regard to securing help for the Southern field. Appeal to the people. This is the only course you can pursue, under the circumstances.

Send no statement of the situation through our religious [denominational] papers; because it will not be honored. Send direct to the people. God's ways are not to be counterworked by man's ways. There are those who have means, and who will give large and small sums. Have this money come direct to your destitute portion of the vineyard. The Lord has not specified any regular channel through which means should pass. (SpM 498)

Sister White not only sent her tithe to these neglected and destitute mission fields, but she also received the tithe of others

to give directly to the mission field. She commended others who themselves sent their tithe to the mission field, and she even encouraged the very missionary societies engaged in these mission fields to solicit funds for their neglected fields of labor.

As would be expected, Sister White would also make this same appeal for funds to help Madison College, which was another self-supporting ministry:

Brethren Sutherland and Magan [the founders of Madison College] should be encouraged to solicit means for the support of their work. It is the privilege of these brethren to receive gifts from any of the people whom the Lord impresses to help. They should have means—God’s means with which to work. (An Appeal for the Madison School, March 25, 1908)

“God’s means” include tithes as well as offerings. Remember, the “tithe” is the Lord’s. According to the Lord’s servant, Madison College had permission to go directly to the people and “solicit means for the support of their work.” And as they appealed for funds there would be certain individuals whom the Lord would “impress to help.” In fact, Sister White states that Madison College is entitled to receive their portion from the Lord’s Treasury:

Some have entertained the idea that because the school at Madison is not owned by a conference organization, those who are in charge of the school should not be permitted to call upon our people for the means that is greatly needed to carry on their work. This idea needs to be corrected. In the distribution of the money that comes into the Lord’s treasury, you are entitled to a portion just as verily as are those connected with other needy enterprises that are carried forward

in harmony with the Lord's instruction. (Letter to Professor P. T. Morgan, May 14, 1907)

Here are some more statements about Sister White's tithing practices:

The Lord has shown me that the experience which your father and I have passed through in poverty and deprivation, in the early days of our work, has given me a keen appreciation and sympathy for others who are passing through similar experiences of want and suffering. And where I see workers in this cause that have been true and loyal to the work, who are left to suffer, it is my duty to speak in their behalf. If this does not move the brethren to help them, then I must help them, even if I am obliged to use a portion of my tithe in doing so. (The Early Elmshaven Years, Vol. 5, 1900–1905, 393)

I have seventy-five dollars from Brother _____, tithe money, and we thought that it would be best to send it along to the Southern field to help colored ministers. . . . I want it specially applied to the colored ministers to help them in their salaries. (MR, Vol.2, No. 109, pages 100, 101)

In summary, it is clear that Sister White and others sent their tithe directly to the mission field and bypassed the regular channels of the local church. They did so because of the great needs that existed. However, some have suggested that all such practices are an expression of rebellion towards the church. It is true that some have withheld their tithe to punish the church. But in the case of Sister White and many others it was for the expressed purpose that these neglected mission endeavors be

adequately supported by the tithe.

Where is the storehouse for us to send our tithe?

From the days of Adam to Abraham, God's people paid a faithful tithe. We find that Abraham gave his tithe to Melchizedek, king and priest of Salem. Hence, tithe was originally used to support those who served and taught the people about the true God of heaven and earth. Since the time of Moses, the tithes and offerings were brought to the Levites and later to the temple and placed in storerooms where you would find monies, fruits, and grains. These storerooms were referred to as "treasuries" (1 Chronicles 9:26, 28; 28:11, 12). In the most literal sense, the storehouse is simply the place where the tithes and offerings were stored.

In apostolic times, Paul counseled the believers to set aside their tithes and offerings until such a collection of them could be made. Once these tithes and offerings were collected they were to be used according to the designation of the Lord. What the Lord has designed is that the tithe be used for the support of the ministry to spread the gospel to the four corners of the earth. The Lord spoke in the book of Malachi saying, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house" Malachi 3:10. The tithe was deposited in a physical place, but it was to be used to feed God's people with spiritual food.

Before we consider a number of statements related to the storehouse, I would like to again make plain that Sister White uses the words "means" in reference to (1) tithe only as we saw in earlier quotations, and (2) to both tithes and offerings. Consider the following:

God has given special direction as to the use of the tithe. He does not design that His work shall be crippled for want of means. (GW 224, 225)

Should means flow into the treasury exactly according to God's plan,—a tenth of all the increase,—there would be abundance to carry forward His work. (Ev 252)

And in view of this the Lord commands us, 'Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house,' that is, a surplus of means in the treasury. (RH, vol. 2, 18)

If all of our people paid a faithful tithe, there would be more means in the treasury. (RH, vol. 4, 507)

With an increase of numbers would have come an increase of tithe, providing means to carry the message to other places." (Pamphlet No. 67, 9)

If all, both rich and poor, would bring their tithes into the storehouse, there would be a sufficient supply of means. (4T 475)

There are many more such statements by Sister White where she used the word "means" in reference to tithe. Now let us consider a number of statements about the tithe and the storehouse.

Sister White wrote:

God grant that the voices which have been so quickly raised to say that all the money invested in the work must go through the appointed channel at Battle Creek, shall not be heard. The people to whom God has given His means are amenable to Him alone. It is their privilege to give direct aid and assistance to

missions. . . . (Letter to Brother Daniells, June 28, 1901; MR 14, 207; also SpM 176, 177)

Sister White rejects the concept that “His means,” or the tithe, should go to only one address. As we have already seen, she has clearly supported the idea of sending tithe directly to the foreign field or to these neglected areas of the Lord’s vineyard.

Do not worry lest some means shall go direct to those who are trying to do missionary work in a quiet and effective way. All the means is not to be handled by one agency or organization. There is much business to be done conscientiously for the cause of God. Help is to be sought from every possible source. (SpM 421, 422, January 6, 1908)

While most of the “means” goes to the conferences, yet “all the means is not to be handled by one agency or organization.” There are more gospel workers than the church is able to employ, and opportunities too numerous to be handled by one organization. Hence, there will be those who will be supported by tithe who are doing a conscientious work “for the cause of God,” who are not directly employed by the church.

Let us consider the following quote again:

You ask me what you shall do in view of the fact that so little help is given to that department of the work in which you are working.

I would say, Trust it with the Lord. There is a way opened for you in regard to securing help for the Southern field. Appeal to the people. This is the only course you can pursue, under the circumstances.

Send no statement of the situation through our religious [denominational] papers; because it will not

be honored. Send direct to the people. God's ways are not to be counterworked by man's ways. There are those who have means, and who will give large and small sums. Have this money come direct to your destitute portion of the vineyard. The Lord has not specified any regular channel through which means should pass. (SpM 498, emphasis original)

Clearly the Lord has not designated one institution to receive all the "means." As stated, the vast majority of the tithe is received by the conferences to carry on a worldwide work. However, there are special ministries that are filling a necessary void that the church cannot fill or has neglected to fill. As we have studied, these needy and/or neglected fields of missionary work can be supported by tithe.

There are no kings in our work, no man who will put out his hand and say to God's workmen, 'You cannot go there; we will not support you if you go there.' . . . The money comes from the people, and God has instructed me to tell those who are working in destitute fields to go to the people and tell them their necessity. They are to draw from the people means to build up the work in the field where they are. (Ellen G. White, 1888 Materials, 1736)

The Lord has blessed the work that J.E. White has tried to do in the South. God grant that the voices which have been so quickly raised to say that all the money invested in the work must go through the appointed channel at Battle Creek, shall not be heard. The people to whom God has given His means are amenable to Him alone. It is their privilege to give direct aid and assistance to missions. It is because of

the misappropriation of means [at the conference level] that the Southern field has no better showing than it has today. (SpM 176)

The arrangements that all moneys must go through Battle Creek and under the control of the few men in that place is a wrong way of managing. There are altogether too many weighty responsibilities given to a few men, and some do not make God their counselor. What do these men know of the necessities of the work in foreign countries? (TM, 321)

When I read the resolutions published in the Review, placing so many restrictions upon those who may be sent out to gather funds for the building up of institutions in needy and destitute fields, I was sorry for the many restrictions. I can but feel sad, for unless the converting grace of God comes into the conferences, a course will be taken that will bring the displeasure of God upon them. We have had enough of the spirit of forbidding.

This morning I could not sleep after midnight. I awoke bearing this message to our leading men, Break every yoke that would hinder or limit the power of the Third Angel's message. The calls that have been made for large liberality, which have been responded to so nobly by our people, should lead to feelings of confidence and gratitude, rather than to the placing of yokes upon the necks of God's servants. Let your requirements ever be dictated by the Holy Spirit of God. When the officers of the General Conference allow such restrictions to be made, they give evidence that they need clearer spiritual eyesight, that the heavenly anointing is not upon them. (SpM 435)

It had 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 properly to support their families. . . . 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 [tithe] that should come to the workers of that field. If there has 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. (SpM 215)

When God impresses certain individuals to give their tithe to the mission field, they are not, according to Sister White, withholding money from the Lord's treasury. When the tithe is being used appropriately the monies are in reality in the Lord's treasury.

Some have entertained the idea that because the school at Madison is not owned by a conference organization, those who are in charge of the school should not be permitted to call upon our people for the means that is greatly needed to carry on their work. This idea needs to be corrected. In the distribution of the money that comes into the Lord's treasury, you are entitled to a portion just as verily as are those connected with other needy enterprises that are carried forward

in harmony with the Lord's instruction. (Letter to Professor P. T. Morgan, May 14, 1907)

Monies that come into the "Lord's treasury" are to also find there way to these self-supporting enterprises.

Brethren Sutherland and Magan [the founders of Madison College] should be encouraged to solicit means for the support of their work. It is the privilege of these brethren to receive gifts from any of the people whom the Lord impresses to help. They should have means—God's means with which to work. (An Appeal for the Madison School, March 25, 1908)

Sister White was on the board of Madison College and was thus very familiar with their work. "God's means" were to support this school. The representatives of Madison College were given permission, not by the church, but by the Lord's prophetess, "to solicit means for the support of their work." In turn, the Lord would "impress" certain individuals to support that work.

When the conference brethren forbade Sutherland and Magan to solicit means to support Madison College, Sister White wrote, "You are doing double what they are. Take all the donations you can get. The money belongs to the Lord and not to these men. The position they take is not of God. The Southern Union Conference is not to own or control you. You cannot turn things over to them." Magan Diary, May 7, 1907, Paradise Valley.

Again from the Magan Diary we find this journal entry:

May 14, 1907—Loma Linda. Took Wellesley and Shaen to see Sr. White . . . I talked to her about the General Conference position that concerns non-

conference owned institutions should have no money. She answered— “Fiddlesticks, a pack of fools ought to know better than that. Daniells and those with him have taken a position on this matter that is not of God.”

According to the Lord’s servant, the issue is not whether individuals are denominationally employed, but whether they are doing the work of the Lord.

The tithe should go to those who labor in word and doctrine, be they men or women. (Ev 492)

The tithe . . . is to be especially devoted to the support of those who are bearing God’s message to the world. (WM 277)

Sister White sometimes sent her tithe to the wives of minister’s who were involved in doing extensive Bible work. She wrote:

There are minister’s wives, . . . giving Bible readings and praying with families, helping along by personal efforts just as successfully as their husbands. These women give their whole time, and are told that they receive nothing for their labors because their husbands receive their wages. I tell them to go forward and all such decisions shall be reversed. The Word says, ‘The laborer is worthy of his hire’ [Luke 10:7]. When any such decision as this is made, I will in the name of the Lord, protest. I will feel it in my duty to create a fund from my tithe money, to pay these women who are accomplishing just as essential work as the ministers are doing, and this tithe I will reserve for work in the

same line as that of the ministers, hunting for souls, fishing for souls. (SpM 117)

From the above quote we learn the principle of personal accountability. Sister White saw the tithe as belonging to God, yet clearly understood the principle of accountability by calling it “my tithe money.” She felt that it was her “duty to create a fund” from her tithe money to send directly to those “hunting for souls,” including the ministers’ wives.

God has always had faithful self-supporting ministers who have been supported by the tithe. As we come closer and ever closer to the end of time, God will raise up even more gospel workers who will be “fishing for souls.”

Let me tell you that the Lord will work in this last work in a manner very much out of the common order of things, and in a way that will be contrary to any human planning. (TM 300)

The Lord will raise up men who will give the people the message for this time. (TM 107)

He will call men from the plow and from other occupations to give the last note of warning to perishing souls. (9T 170)

Most startling messages will be borne by men of God’s appointment. (9T 137)

Thus the message of the third angel will be proclaimed. As the time comes for it to be given with greatest power, the Lord will work through humble instruments, leading the minds of those who consecrate themselves to His service. The laborers will

be qualified rather by the unction of His Spirit than by the training of literary institutions. Men of faith and prayer will be constrained to go forth with holy zeal, declaring the words which God gives them. The sins of Babylon will be laid open. (GC 606)

Under the showers of the latter rain the inventions of man, the human machinery, will at times be swept away, the boundary of man's authority will be as broken reeds, and the Holy Spirit will speak through the living, human agent, with convincing power. (2SM 58, 59)

Closing Thoughts

In closing, I would like to list a number of obvious points from our study.

First, it is a matter of history that God led Sister White and others to give tithe directly to the mission field. Some will argue that only Sister White was given permission to give outside the regular lines. From our simple study we can see that that is not true. Others sent their tithe directly to the irregular lines themselves and Sister White commended them for their tithe giving.

Second, Sister White encouraged these struggling missionary societies to go before our people and solicit funds. She clearly saw that the irregular lines had equal opportunity to the Lord's treasury for the saving of souls.

Third, Sister White did not advocate any disciplinary action against members sending their tithe directly to the irregular lines of our work. Instead, she commended them.

Fourth, Sister White was unhappy with the restrictions the church had placed on these irregular lines of the Lord's work. She saw that we needed to better understand Jesus' words, "All

ye are brethren.” (Matthew 23:8)

Fifth, it is not possible for any person to say, “There are no such neglected fields today.” The world is growing at a faster pace than we are as a church. There are so many areas of the world that we have virtually no real influence: the Muslim world, secular college campuses, and many inner cities around the world. It is by necessity that God calls men and women from the plow for the work of saving souls.

Sixth, no one knows God so well that they can say, “God is not currently impressing individuals to support some needy minister in some neglected field of labor.” I once asked a pastor about the Holy Spirit impressing church members to send their tithe directly to the mission field. His answer was shocking. He said, “The Holy Spirit would not impress any one like that today because the Church Manual doesn’t allow Him to do so.”

Seventh, God is big enough to support both the “regular” and the “irregular” lines of our work. In fact, He wants to. Our responsibility will always be to utilize the tithe as God has designated.

Eighth, God would want us to work together in cooperation, whereby, the “regular” and the “irregular” lines would come together and lay out their plans for reaching precious souls. Both would understand the financial needs of the other, and with that understanding they should go before our people and ask for their support to finish the Lord’s work.

Based on the above observations, I can see that there is a Plan A and a Plan B for tithe-giving. Plan A is to give it directly to the local church. From there it is dispersed throughout the regular church channels. Then there is Plan B, whereby God impresses certain church members to give their tithe directly to the work of saving souls through the irregular lines. Clearly Sister White practiced both Plan A and Plan B. She commended people who practiced Plan A and Plan B.

It is interesting to note that the church practices Plan A and Plan B within the regular lines. For example, I know many people who send their tithe to some other local conference or division in the world field. What do these church leaders do with the tithe sent to them from outside their locality? Some, if not all, receive it. Well, that isn't Plan A. That is another form of Plan B. Plan A is simply sending your tithe through your local church to be then distributing throughout the world field. Anything outside of this is a form of Plan B. Therefore, the church shouldn't discipline church members for practicing Plan B, when the church itself practices Plan B.

I would encourage God's people to press together in paying a faithful tithe. Let us all be led of the Lord in our support of the workers in the field of the Lord's vineyard. We do have needs at home and some are fully dedicated to paying their faithful tithe through the local church channels. Others, equally dedicated to the Lord and to this remnant church, will continue to support these seriously neglected fields of labor. It would be best for us all to press together and not establish some restriction for holding church office on this point. Let us all pay a faithful tithe and prepare to receive the rich blessings of the Lord.

Abbreviations

(All of the following authored by Ellen G. White)

- 2SM Selected Messages, book 2
- 4T Testimonies to the Church, volume 4
- 9T Testimonies to the Church, volume 9
- CS Counsels on Stewardship
- Ev Evangelism
- GC Great Controversy
- GW Gospel Workers
- MR Manuscript Release
- RH Review and Herald
- SpM Spalding and Magan Collection
- TM Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers