

A FRESH LOOK AT THE STOREHOUSE

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DIVERTED FUNDS

Chapter 3

If you live in a prosperous conference, perhaps some of your tithe has been traded away for some other funds--this is called "tithe exchange." What is "tithe exchange?" Without delving into monetary formulas, tithe exchange is, briefly, a method by which a conference having a larger amount of tithe than it can use at a given time, which desires non-tithe funds to build buildings, or pave parking lots (or whatever else), can send an amount of tithe to the General Conference and receive in return "non-tithe" funds which will enable it to build buildings etc.

We first learned of this "quick-change" method almost fifty years ago when a young Seventh-day Adventist minister explained it to us. He stated that a certain large academy was then being built on "tithe-exchange" funds and he said he was personally opposed to such dealings. (The brother is at this present writing serving at the General Conference level.)

That tithe-exchange is a standard conference practice is shown by the following citation from the 1983 edition of General Conference policy regulations: "Tithe Exchange. -- The church's present policy makes provision only for conferences and unions to exchange tithe for non-tithe funds."

Sources of Non-tithe Funds

What are some of the sources of "non-tithe" funds that are available to be used to "swap" for tithing? They may be earnings from trusts, investments, Ingathering funds, Sabbath School or other mission funds. Exclusive of the trust funds and investments, these offerings have all been solicited, using the plea of needs in the mission fields. But if exchanged for tithe those very funds would never get to the mission field! They would remain in the homeland for material purposes, and the tithe for which they were exchanged would be sent to the missions.

Tithe used in the "tithe exchange" is still the sacred tithe and can be sent to the mission field as tithe for its proper use. But if offerings given for missions should be used in the exchange and they are then retained in the homeland to be used for building construction or other material uses, does that not constitute an improper diversion of funds from the channel of intended use to a channel not intended by the donors? To what extent Sabbath School or other mission funds are currently involved in the tithe-swapping we do not know.

What Saith Inspiration?

Having established that the General Conference (man-made) policy permits tithe to be exchanged for "non-tithe" funds, can we find support for this practice in the inspired writings? We believe the answer should be—No! If there are surplus tithes on hand in a prosperous conference, should they not share that surplus directly with needy mission fields, rather than in effect, using it for such material use as to build buildings etc.? Let us allow the Lord's servant to reply:

"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 that is not needed after settling with your ministers in a liberal manner, send the Lord's money to than destitute places. Special light on this point has been given." Ms 139, 1898, p. 26. ("An Appeal for Missions," October 21, 1898.) {1MR 183.3} MR No. 48 - Use of the Tithe

And if there is a surplus of means 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 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 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 to them. This I have been repeatedly shown is the way to do. MR 48a, 2&3. [1MR 190]

Could divine instructions be clearer? Surplus tithe should "not be used for any other purpose!"

Various administrators defend this tithe exchange method as proper. But many Lay persons who have given funds for missions, are not so sure of the propriety of the method. They feel that it is a misappropriation of funds. Certainly, as members have learned of the "tithe-exchange" scheme does it not tend to stifle giving in response to appeals for true mission needs? Whether this man-made scheme is one reason why mission giving has fallen from 65% to 6% of tithe levels we cannot say.

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Further Divine Counsel

"The Lord has not given orders to any man to divert money from the channel in which it should go. . . . Who has heard the voice of God directing that this means should be diverted into other channels? If this is the course our leading brethren are to pursue, what confidence can men have to follow out their convictions in making donations to the cause of God? Let the money that comes from those whom God has made His stewards be received and created as a sacred offering, and be applied where it was designed. This will tend to inspire confidence and encourage liberality in those whom God has made His stewards.

"But if men, with their finite judgment feel free to appropriate these gifts as they see fit, they will confuse that mind that in all sincerity was moved to bestow his goods on some branch of God's work. When our brethren undertake to work according to their own ideas, they will do great harm to souls, they will create doubt and questioning. Why should men want to interpose their own ways and ideas to defeat the purposes of God?" EGW 1888 Materials, 1236.

Nothing stifles liberality quicker than if donors find out (or even suspect) that the funds they gave for a certain specific purpose are not used for that purpose but are instead diverted to other uses. That is a fundamental principle in all fund-raising.

Other Hindrances to Benevolence

Years ago members understood that such fund raisings as birthday-thank offerings and investment projects went for special mission projects. We understand that this is no longer so, but that all such offerings are lumped into a general mission fund. Additionally, it is rarely ever made clear that the thirteenth Sabbath offering does not all go to the needy mission projects which for thirteen weeks are held up before the members. Some years ago we learned to our surprise that it is only a certain limited percentage of some kind of "over-flow" of the thirteenth Sabbath offering that goes for the specified projects. When members learn some of these facts, they may tend to wonder if it is worthwhile to give a large special offering when only a small part of it goes for the needy project for which it has been raised.

It is certain that this complicated formula for apportioning the thirteenth Sabbath funds does not tend to stimulate larger giving. Years ago the thirteenth Sabbath offering was a big feature in Sabbath Schools. Nowadays, at Least in some locales, one hardly ever hears about it. Could it be that decline in mission funds could be partially explained on the basis of some of the irregularities mentioned above?

Lord, send us some Nehemiahs to guide Thy people into proper tithe and mission giving and the proper use of the Lord's funds!

WHERE IS THE STOREHOUSE?

Chapter 4

In 1901 Sister White wrote a strong letter to an administrator concerning wrong methods of tithe disbursement in the conferences. Some who should have received tithes as remuneration for their services did not receive adequate support. This inadequacy concerned both white and black gospel workers in the South. She spoke of "prevarications" that had been practiced and also said that their "past course had been crooked." Strong Language! What is more, even after it was called to their attention the administrators had not confessed or repented of their misdeeds. In their failure to support some gospel laborers, she said: "Christ has been wronged in the person of His saints." (The above quotations are taken from MR 1200, SPALDING-MAGAN MANUSCRIPT COLLECTION, 178.)

Four years later the specific situations had not changed and in writing to a conference president who was expressing concern and even anxiety, because he had learned that Sister White and certain other sisters were by-passing the conference channels and sending their tithe directly to some of the neglected, active and retired ministers, in the southland. She explained to him the "whys" and "wherefores" of the whole issue. For years the Lord had told her to so disburse her own tithe.

We present herewith a full photo-copy of her letter to the Colorado Conference president as it appears in the SPALDING-MAGAN collection on pages 215 and 216:

Mountain View, Calif. Jan. 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 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 "meat."

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 publicity to this matter, lest many more shall follow their example.

(Signed) Ellen G. White.

It was always God's plan that the tithe should be equitably disbursed by administrators so as to properly support all those who give the gospel to the people of the world. We have been told that "If all would pay a faithful tithe, and devote to the Lord the first-fruits of their increase, there would be a full supply of funds for His work" (6T 385). Sometimes the disbursers of the tithe have been derelict in their duty to properly see to it that equity controlled their management. (* See footnote on page 17.)

Footnote for Page 14: Ellen White did not only supplement the pay of underpaid ministers, but also gave tithe to women who did gospel work without conference salary, such as minister's wives: "I will feel it 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 y Spalding-Magan Collection, 117.

Lessons From the Watson Letter

We learn from this letter that, in her tithe paying, Ellen White acted on instructions from the Lord, when she by-passed the regular channels—the local church and conference offices—and paid her tithing directly to white, colored, or aged retired ministers who had been neglected financially by the management of the conferences. Thus, she had for years appropriated her own tithe.

Furthermore, there were other women who did this same thing, and she commended them for so doing. If a person asked her to appropriate their tithe for them, she did so—in the same manner that she paid her own. She said that these women had lost confidence in the ability of the conference to properly appropriate their tithe. If Ellen White could not take their tithe, they, themselves, would appropriate it, giving it to the most needy ministers they could find. The Lord appointed herself and others to do this.

Elsewhere Ellen White has counseled that the "better" way would be if we could repose full confidence in the brethren who disburse tithe and work through the normal channels. (See page 17 for discussion.)

However, could it be possible that the Lord would instruct Ellen White and the other sisters to follow an exception to the usual plan that would be absolutely denied, under similar circumstances, for anyone else to ever do? We would ask, Might there be situations in our day when it would be proper for individuals to do as did the sisters in Ellen White's day? This is a question that we, ourselves, do not feel that we should answer and especially for others.

A Caution

There is a caution we need to heed from the Watson letter. Ellen White was not anxious to have this unusual practice of tithe paying promoted among the laity. She told Elder Watson to stop complaining about it, for she did not want notoriety given to this practice. "Let every man if he is wise, hold his peace," she said, "It is not best to make this matter public." —But it has now been made public in Manuscript Release #1200. We can be grateful that this valuable letter has been preserved until our day!

Evidently, Elder Watson was very upset and disturbed because some of the tithes were by-passing the conference offices. But she told him to keep cool and not get so stirred up! Should he continue to complain, many more might follow the practice in the disbursement of the tithe. This she did not advocate.

Where is the Storehouse?

There is yet another most important principle that we can glean from this letter. Ellen White made it clear that the tithe disbursed by herself and the ladies was not money that was withheld from the Lord's treasury—from His storehouse. Their tithe was used according to the purpose for which the tithe is designated, just as truly as if it had actually passed through the local churches and conference offices. Indeed, as it was being privately disbursed by themselves, they were verily placing it into the Lord's treasury! These sisters in effect became disbursers of storehouse funds. Obviously, special situations such as she described to Elder Watson should not be used as an excuse for handling tithe funds in an inappropriate or irresponsible manner.

Only One Address?

Back in 1901 some of the brethren believed that there was only one address for the storehouse, namely, Battle Creek. But when unfulfilled needs were great in the south, Sister White wrote to Elder Daniels:

“The Lord has greatly blessed the work that ____ 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 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 that the southern field has no better showing than it has today.” MR 1200, Spalding-Magan Collection pages 176, 177. (1901)

“The arrangement 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.” -TM 321..

Here Ellen White clarifies a principle: It is not necessary for monies to go through the appointed channel at Battle Creek, in order for them to be considered as having been invested in the Lord storehouse! Regarding administrative "voices" which were declaring that all funds should pass through Battle Creek, she bluntly declared that, "They shall not be heard!" The Lord's storehouse has more than one geographic address. It is the privilege of the members, she said, to give direct aid and assistance to various needs.

Since it was clearly stated by the Lord's servant in olden times that all funds need not pass through the coffers at Battle Creek, should we then assume that it is not imperative for all funds to pass through the coffers of Silver Spring, Maryland in our day? Or for that matter through any other single storehouse headquarters? The following advice is certainly clear:

“Do not worry lest some means shall go direct to those who are trying to do missionary work in the quiet and effective way. All the means is not to be handled by one agency or organization.” Spalding-Magan Collection, 421.

Some men are so imbued with the single storehouse concept that they will claim that if a brother member of conference A should give his tithe to conference B, then B should, or will, automatically forward it to conference A. That is largely fiction. We have knowledge of specific instances where that concept was pointedly ignored. For example: it was desired in mission B to hold evangelistic meetings but there was a lack of funds. They needed another thousand dollars. The evangelist asked a laymember in conference A if he could possibly send one thousand dollars of his personal tithe to the treasurer of Mission B to make the meetings possible. The brother sent the needed amount and this enabled the evangelistic meetings to be held.

Various conferences and over-seas divisions gladly accept donations (including tithes) from outside of their own districts from donors wishing to place their funds for specific mission work. The mission fields simply ignore this theoretical rule. And, if we follow the counsel laid down through the Spirit of Prophecy, that is as the Lord would have it.

A Better Way

The Watson letter was penned in 1905. By 1911 Ellen White was still handling people's tithe (by-passing the conference channel) and distributing it directly. But, at that time she added, "there is a better way:"

"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). Letter 96. 1911, p. 1. (To Mrs. J. J. Gravelle, December 29, 1911. MR 54, 2.

Obviously, if the financial management officers do not respond positively to the loving pleadings of the Laymen, as they encourage them to "bear their responsibilities" in the disbursement of the tithe "in the fear of God," the confidence of the people could only continue to be shaken! On their part, the storehouse administrators must realize that when the lay "people" who must "strain every nerve and muscle to lay by their tithes," see that there is mismanagement "their confidence and faith will be shaken. When you call for donations, there will be no response" (MR 62, 3 (1891).

Concerning Offerings

In contrast to the more limited scope for the placement of tithes, offerings can be more widely disbursed to various "addresses" of God's storehouse.

Some readers may be surprised to learn of this. Concerning her unusual disbursement of tithe, Ellen White was rather quiet. But as to offerings, she freely urged direct giving to needy workers and projects. She repeatedly expressed publicly, that often offerings should be given directly to alleviate the needs of God's servants who are promoting the giving of the gospel in various ways, and in diverse places. She even adds that unless we do give directly when there is a need, and when it is possible for us to do so, we could be called unjust stewards. Remember: "The Lord has not specified any regular channel through which means should pass" (Spalding-Magan Collection, 498).

As far as offerings are concerned (and under certain circumstances even tithe!) the storehouse can have many addresses; that is, wherever there is a need in the vineyard of the Lord, there is the Lord's "treasury!"

A SOLEMN RESPONSIBILITY

Chapter 5

There is counsel from the Lord's servant telling us that we have a solemn personal responsibility as to where we place funds, and that we should know how the funds we place into God's treasury are being used. While the use and placement of tithe is comparatively selective, offerings can be distributed more widely and have more diversified uses:

Individual Responsibility

"Some men or councils may say, that is just what we wish you to do. The Conference Committee will take your capital, and will appropriate it for this very object.

But the Lord has made us individually His stewards. We each hold a solemn responsibility to invest this means ourselves.

"A portion of it is right to place in the treasury to advance the general interests of the work; but the steward of means will not be guileless before God, unless, so far as he is able to do this, he shall use the means as circumstances shall reveal the necessity. We should be ready to help the suffering, and to set in operation plans to advance the truth in various ways. It is not in the province of the Conference or any other organization to relieve us of this stewardship. If you lack wisdom, go to God; ask Him for yourself, and then work with an eye single to His glory.

"By exercising your judgment, by giving where you see there is need in any line of the work, you are putting out your money to the exchangers. If you see in any locality that the truth is gaining a foothold, and there is no place of worship, then do something to meet the necessity. By your own course of action encourage others to act, in building a humble house for the worship of God. Have an interest in the work in all parts of the field.

"While it is not your own property that you are handling, yet you are made responsible for its wise investment, for its use or abuse. God does not lay upon you the burden of asking the Conference or any council of men whether you shall use your means as you see fit to advance the work of God in destitute towns and cities, and impoverished localities. If the right plan had been followed, so much means would not have been used in some localities, and so little in other places where the banner of truth has not been raised. We are not to merge our individuality of judgment into any institution in our world. We are to look to God for wisdom, as did Daniel.

". . . as God's hired servants we are not to bargain away our stewardship; but that before the heavenly universe we are to administer the truth committed to us by God. Our own hearts are to be sanctified, our hands are to have something to impart as occasion demands, of the income that God entrusts to us."

- Ellen White in SPECIAL TESTIMONIES TO MINISTERS AND WORKERS, Series A, page 185, Mimeographed Edition. Manuscript Release #1200. - See also ELLEN WHITE 1888 MATERIALS p. 1443, Letter 0-55-95 (to O.A. Olsen)

An Analysis of the Above

The message is, that we will not be judged guiltless unless we do all that we can to see to it that our means are given to the most needy places in God's storehouse. We are obligated to see that our funds are used to the glory of God. We cannot without guilt bargain away our stewardship to other men, such as, giving to administrators a lump sum and allowing them to apply it as they see fit. We are trustees of God's wealth and we must act like faithful stewards. We repeat: We are to know not only "where" in the Lord's treasury our funds are given, but also "how" they are used. Note the following:

"The churches must arouse. The members must awake out of sleep and begin to inquire, How is the money which we put into the treasury being used? The Lord desires that a close search be made. Are all satisfied with the history of the work for the past fifteen years? Where is the evidence of the co-working with God? Where has been heard throughout the churches the prayer for the help of the Holy Spirit? Dissatisfied and disheartened, we turn away from the scene." The Kress Collection, 120 (1900).

Please note that we are instructed to make a "close search" of how the funds we put into the treasury are being used.

A Portion to the Local Church

Keep in mind that Ellen White counseled that "a portion of it is right to place in the treasury [of the local church and conference] to advance the general interests of the work." Yes, God expects us to give a portion of our offerings through the local channel. Let us follow this counsel. But concerning the remainder of our benevolent funds, God has instructed us that the donor himself is under sacred obligation to God to decide to what address (section) of the Lord's storehouse (vineyard) he should direct the means entrusted to him. Indeed, God's storehouse has more than one address. We have observed that His treasury is anywhere there is a need in God's work--whether that be in the conference or elsewhere in His field.

More On Stewardship

"In the hands of faithful stewards it (means) shall be made to serve the purpose of God always. Then will the entrusted talents be so wisely employed as to gain for the steward a rich experience, directly and indirectly, and enable him to be rich in good works, blessing his fellow men. He is not required to part with his money in large sums and thus shift his responsibility upon other men. He is to acquire wisdom to stand as [a] faithful steward, dealing with his Lord's goods with wisdom and discrimination. .

"There must not be a moving by impulse. There should not be a pressure brought to bear upon those who have means that they will virtually shift their responsibility upon other men. Every man and woman who is under rule to God is to listen to His counsel. The workings of the arch-adversary of souls will be revealed in various ways. The deceitfulness of riches oft ensnares the soul.

"There is a positive necessity for the steward of God to pray much that he may not be deceived in anywise in handling the Lord's goods. He is a steward, a partner in the firm, and if he moves not by impulse but from a sense of conviction that he must invest his Lord's goods to advance the glory of God in the work of saving souls to Jesus Christ, then [he] himself will be benefited eternally, if he holds fast his confidence and faith and trust in God firmly unto the end." -manuscript Release #1222-3,4, 1896.

(part missing) to the right persons. Call their attention to the fact that the Lord's servant has counseled as follows:

"Those who give themselves to the ministry of the Word of God enter a most important work. The gospel ministry is a high and sacred calling. Properly done, the work of the gospel minister will add many souls to the fold. Many have made a mistake in receiving credentials. They will have to take up work to which they are better adapted than the preaching of the Word. They are being paid from the tithe, but their efforts are feeble, and they should not continue to be paid from the tithe. In many ways the ministry is losing its sacred character." MR 1289, 3 (1905).

"God's ministers must have the truth in their hearts in order to successfully present it to others. They must be sanctified by the truths they preach or they will be only stumbling blocks to sinners. Those who are called of God to minister in holy things are called to be pure in heart and holy in life. "Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord." 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." - 2 T 552.

“There are fearful woes for those who preach the truth, but are not sanctified by it, and also for those who consent to receive and maintain the unsanctified to minister to them in word and doctrine.” 1 T 261, 262.

“It would be poor policy to support from the treasury of God those who really mar and injure His work, and who are constantly lowering the standard of Christianity.” - 3 T 553.

After following the principle of protesting plainly and openly, concerning a minister whom we feel is not worthy to receive tithe, let us leave it with the Lord.

A Great Privilege

In closing we would ask, What is the responsibility of the believer?

“The churches must arouse. The members must awake out of sleep and begin to inquire, How is the money which we put into the treasury being used? The Lord desires that a close search be made.” The Kress Collection, 120.

As members of God's remnant church, and as earnest followers of Jesus, we should all esteem it a great privilege and a distinct honor to be allowed the personal responsibility to return to God our tithes and offerings; to have a share in giving the good news of salvation to the world. Even our little children, from their tenderest years, may share in the joy of these privileges and responsibilities.

A FRESH LOOK AT FUND RAISING

Chapter 5

The Lord's servant was very tactful in her fund-raising. Never did she resort to harangue to obtain funds for worthy projects. She recognized that the best recommendation for a worthy cause was its need, its nature, and its fruits; and that love must be the motive for giving. (Arbitrary rules should not even be made for tithe paying--see DESIRE OF AGES, 617.)

Freewill Offerings

“True Christian benevolence springs from the principle of grateful love. Love to Christ cannot exist without corresponding love to those whom he came into the world to redeem. Love to Christ must be the ruling, principle of the being, controlling all its emotions and directing all its energies. Redeeming love should awaken all that tender affection and self-sacrificing devotion that is possible to exist in the heart of man. When this in the case, no heart-stirring appeals will be needed to break through their selfishness and awaken their dormant sympathies, to call forth benevolent offerings for the precious cause of truth.” 1 RH 153.

“Systematic benevolence should not be made systematic compulsion. It is freewill offerings that are acceptable to God.” Ibid.

“The plan of Moses in the wilderness to raise means was highly successful. There was no compulsion necessary. Moses made no grand feast. He did not invite the people to scenes of gaiety, dancing, and general amusement. Neither did he institute lotteries or anything of this profane order to obtain means to erect the tabernacle of God in the wilderness. God commanded Moses to invite the children of Israel to bring the offerings. Moses was to accept gifts of every man that gave willingly from his heart.

These free-will offerings came in so great abundance that Moses proclaimed it was enough. They must cease their presents; for they had given abundantly, more than they could use." - 1 RH 153.

How Shall We Solicit Funds?

We well remember during the great depression years when the White Memorial Church pioneered the use of a Bible Correspondence course in Los Angeles—years before the large national correspondence courses were sponsored by the church. The brother who led out in this work gave a soul-stirring Sabbath sermon on the coming of Christ, and at the end he incidentally mentioned that the group needed \$300 so as to enable them to add a certain number of names to their student rolls. The congregation consisted not of wealthy people. Most were poor medical and nursing students and a few underpaid hospital employees. A collection was taken, and guess what?

One thousand dollars was raised right on the spot. No harangue, no pleading, no cajoling. A genuine and worthy need was presented in simplicity, God's people recognized the need, and under the Holy Spirit's promptings responded. How different from some of the campmeeting fund raising sermons sometimes heard today!

Appealing Directly to the People

In her search for funds with which to carry on a worthy work, Ellen White often bypassed the "regular" channels and appealed directly to the people. To Dr. Kellogg she wrote:

"Dr. Kellogg, I am perplexed to know what to do for means, but I do not ask you to take this burden upon you. God forbid that you should have any unnecessary burdens to bear. One thing I shall do: I shall make appeals to every church, irrespective of any persons in responsible positions. There is a work to be done in this country, and the people who have had the benefit of my husband's labor and my own in building up the work on the Pacific coast and in Battle Creek must understand how hard we have labored, and help us. I do not call on the conference. I come to the people and appeal to them for help. If we can once get established, we shall work without assistance, but we must have help now. We cannot do without it.--MR 1227, 4 (1899).

Independent Treasuries

When Sutherland and Magan launched their "independent" work at Madison early in this century, even though she was faced with opposition from church administrators, Ellen White clearly stated that these self-supporting workers should be allowed to solicit funds directly from church members.

Yet in another case, a year or two earlier, where an autonomous worker (also in the southland) decided that he should operate a treasury independent of the Union Conference, Sister White advised against the idea as she said, "I hope that he will never have such a treasury" (MR 1279; MS 123, 1902). Why would she approve some self-supporters to have a separate treasury and another not to have one? We found the answer near the end of the manuscript, she said, "I cannot give countenance to operating independently, because I know that he is not a close financier" (Ibid.).

There we have a good reason why in a specific situation there should not be an independent treasury. She did not in that passage say that there should never be an

independent treasury for self-supporting ministries. In the case at hand there was a specific reason.

AUTONOMOUS WORKERS

Chapter 9

Said Jesus, "Go work today in My vineyard" (Matt. 21:28). Concerning the Largeness and needs of the vineyard, Jesus elaborates:

The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.- Luke 10:2

23 But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come. - Matt. 10:23.

Individually we are all responsible to help answer this prayer.

When speaking of the "kingly power" that was being practiced in our church by some of the leadership during Ellen White's lifetime, she often directed her attention and comments to their "kingly" attitude toward autonomous workers. Today these workers are commonly referred to as "independent ministries." In her day they were considered to be working in "irregular lines" in contradistinction to the workers employed by the conference who were spoken of as working in the "regular lines."

"Regular" and "Irregular"

The term "regular" to most persons denotes something normal, proper and orderly. By way of contrast, the term "irregular" can be taken to mean something out of the ordinary patterns of things, something less than regular, or sometimes even flawed or off-color.

But as we shall find, men do not always use terms properly. During those early days, it appears that the term "irregular lines" was by some used pejoratively. In any event, Ellen White accepted the use of their terms, but surprised the brethren by speaking very highly and approvingly of many who worked in the "irregular" channels.

At about the turn of the century there seemed to be considerable agitation amongst some conference leaders toward some of the workers who, though not employed in the "regular lines," were receiving donated funds from church members to help defray their expenses in preaching the gospel. The Lord's servant was very much concerned over the efforts of these brethren to devalue, criticize and denigrate their labors and to stop the flow of funds to these humble self-sacrificing workers. She objected strenuously in pointed communications to various highly placed Leaders. In some of her communications, she pointed out that the Lord's vineyard is Large and there is room for all to work and efforts to denigrate the work of the autonomous workers ought to cease. We will shortly quote some surprising comments from her pen regarding the "regular" versus "irregular" workers.

Kingly Power and Autonomous Workers

A few quotations will establish the fact that the Spirit of Prophecy encourages autonomous workers:

"Now I want to say. God has not put any kingly power in our ranks to control this or that branch of the work. The work has been already restricted by the efforts to control

it in every line. Here is a vineyard presenting its barren places that have received no labor. And if one should start out to till these places in the name of the Lord, unless he should get the permission of the men in a little circle at authority he would receive no help. But God means that his workers shall have help. If a hundred should start out on a mission to these destitute fields, crying unto God, He would open the way before them. Let me tell you, if your heart is in the work, and you have faith in God, you need not depend upon the sanction of any minister or any people: if you go right to work in the name of the Lord. La. a humble way doing what you can to teach the truth. God will vindicate you." - GCB 1901, p. 26.

Also in 1901 Sister White wrote to Elder Daniells stating that at that time, "the 'regular lines' have not done the work which God desired to see accomplished." She added: "Divine wisdom must have abundant room in which to work. It is to advance without asking permission or support from those who have taken to themselves kingly power" (Spalding-Magan Collection, 174, 175).

A Letter to Brother Johnston

Apparently Brother Johnston had joined in criticizing Brother Shireman, an autonomous worker. On August 6, 1901, Ellen White wrote him as follows:

"God is displeased with the Spirit you have manifested. Your insinuations and criticisms are most unbecoming. . . . Do you know that you are criticizing the work of a man who has been visited by the angels of the Lord? Who has sent you to a field where a good work is in progress, to show your zeal by tearing it in pieces? If this is working in the "regular Lines," it is high time that we worked in "irregular lines.

"It is time that church members understood that everywhere there is a work to be done in the Lord's vineyard. No one is to wait for a regular process before they make any efforts. They should take up the work right where they are. There should be many at work in what are called "irregular lines." If one hundred laborers would step out of the "regular lines," and take up self-sacrificing work, such as Brother Shireman has done, souls would be won to the Lord. And the workers would understand by experience what it means to be laborers together with God." Spalding-Magan Collection, 194, 195.

In a previous passage, Ellen White had asserted that "if a hundred should start out on [self-sacrificing] missions," funds would be provided. In the above passage she adds, that if one hundred would step out of the "regular lines" and work in "irregular lines" "souls would be won to the Lord." Indeed she seems to suggest that it would be helpful (at Least in 1901) if many conference employees would step out of the organized work and join in the self-supporting work!

We shall note as we proceed that she also asserted that autonomous workers had every right to be financially supported in their soul-winning labors for the Lord, by such persons as wished to contribute to their sustenance. Indeed, they were permitted to even solicit funds from church members. Sister White was so impressed with the efficiency of these "irregulars" that she expressed the desire that it would be well if many of the "regulars" would become "irregulars."

Kingly Power and Finances

Kingly power applied to fellow workers in God's vineyard by the "regulars" did not limit itself to methods of gospel labor and territorial boundaries. Administrators were also trying to limit or restrain the financial resources available to volunteer workers in the

Lord's vineyard. The Lord owns not only the vineyard but the silver and gold and the cattle upon a thousand hills are all His and He is free to choose to whom among His witnesses He may desire to make material resources available to use in gospel outreach, and from which hands of stewards of means such support should come. Leaders must use great caution in trying to prescribe rules to govern their fellow men in such personal matters as raising funds for soul winning.

In that same letter written to Elder Daniells in 1901, regarding such matters Ellen White clearly set forth the following principles:

"The Macedonian cry is coming from every quarter. Shall men go to the "regular lines" to see whether they will be permitted to labor, or shall they go out and work as best they can, depending on their own abilities and on the help of the Lord, beginning in a humble way and creating an interest in the truth in places in which nothing has been done to give the warning message?...

"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..." - Spalding-Magan Collection, pp. 176-177.

Here she (the Lord's servant) asserted that all benevolent funds need not pass through the channels of the church. This is here stated as a principle, and surely that principle still applies today.

Speaking of funds raised from individual church members by "independent and self-supporting auxiliary enterprises," notwithstanding the fact that these funds did not pass through the regular church channels, Ellen White stated: "The money they receive is God's money." Spalding-Magan Collection, 451.

Individual Responsibility

Through the Spirit of Prophecy, counsel was also given to individual contributors of funds concerning giving both to the conference and autonomous workers:

Some men or councils may say, That is just what we wish you to do. The Conference Committee will take your capital, and will appropriate it for this very object. But the Lord has made us individually His stewards. We each hold a solemn responsibility to invest this means ourselves. A portion of it is right to place in the treasury to advance the general interests of the work; but the steward of means will not be guiltless before God, unless, so far as he is able to do this, he shall use that means as circumstances shall reveal the necessity. We should be ready to help the suffering, and to set in operation plans to advance the truth in various ways. It is not in the province of the Conference or any other organization to relieve us of this stewardship. If you lack wisdom, go to God; ask Him for yourself, and then work with an eye single to His glory. . . .

"While it is not your own property that you are handling, yet you are made responsible for its wise investment, for its use or abuse. God does not lay upon you the burden of asking the Conference or any council of men whether you shall use your means as you see fit to advance the work of God in destitute towns and cities, and impoverished localities." Special Testimonies to Ministers and Workers, Series A, 185 (Mimeographed edition).

Kingly Power and the Control of Means

We continue to quote from a letter Ellen White wrote to Elder Daniells:

"[Men] have taken to themselves a kingly power. In the past one set of men have tried to keep in their own hands the control of all the means coming from the churches, and have used this means in a most disproportionate manner, erecting expensive buildings where such large buildings were unnecessary and uncalled for, and leaving needy places without help or encouragement. They have taken upon themselves the grave responsibility of retarding the work where the work should have been advanced. . .

"For years the same routine, the same "regular way" of working has been followed, and God's work has been greatly hindered. . . .

"We look to see whether new fields have been worked whether the barren portions of the Lord's vineyard have received attention. We see that most of those who have sought to begin work in new regions, as Brother Shireman has done, have been discouraged by those at the heart of the work, for fear that they would need money from the treasury. Yet from that same treasury money has been used to erect imposing and unnecessarily expensive buildings. If men had received the wisdom of God, they would have exercised justice and equity in regard to the outlay of means. All parts of the Lord's vineyard would have received a just proportion of help." Spalding-Magan Collection, 174-176.

In this same letter she also advises:

"Let every yoke be broken. Let men awaken to the realization that they have an individual responsibility.

"The present showing [June 1901] is sufficient to prove to all who have the true missionary spirit that the "regular lines" may prove a failure and a snare. God helping His people, the circle of kings who dared to take such great responsibilities shall never again exercise their unsanctified power in the so-called "regular lines." Ibid, 175.

Self-Supporting Work

In 1907 and 1908 there was still a problem concerning kingly power and autonomous workers and finances, for in a series of letters, the servant of the Lord wrote concerning this. On April 10, 1907 she addressed Elder J. S. Washburn:

"You have been represented to me as holding yourself aloof from these brethren [autonomous workers, Sutherland and Magan]. Had you gone to them in the spirit of Christ, and studied with them the needs of the field, you would have said, These brethren need some of the means we are handling. Had you inquired into their needs, and advocated the dividing with them of the means given for the work in that field, considering that "All ye are brethren," you would have done a work well pleasing to the Lord....

"The words of Christ, "All ye are brethren," should ever be kept in mind." Spalding-Magan Collection, 410

Ellen White suggested to Elder Washburn that the conference might share some of their funds with the autonomous workers, rather than casting covetous eyes on the means raised by them for gospel work. The word of the Lord through His servant was that if conferences would actually vote to divide their means with needy and worthy autonomous brethren, this would be well pleasing to the Lord.

On May 14, 1907, Ellen White addressed P. T. Magan:

"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.

"The Lord Jesus will one day call to account those who would so tie your hands that it is almost impossible for you to move in harmony with the Lord's biddings. "The silver and the gold is mine, saith the Lord, and the cattle upon a thousand hills." Ibid. 411, 412.

She continued by instructing professors Sutherland and Magan not to feel troubled about accepting gifts and free-will offerings directly from the members. You are just as much entitled to ask for money for your worthy project "as are any other men" (Ibid.)

Let us note once again that money given by the members directly to a worthy project, even though it by-passes the regular church channels is referred to by the Lord's servant as "money that comes into the Lord's treasury."

SELF-SUPPORTING WORK

"The Lord has instructed me that from the first the work in Huntsville and Madison should have received adequate help. But instead of this help being rendered promptly there has been long delay. And in the matter of the Madison school, there has been a standing off from them because they were not under the ownership and control of some Conference. This is a question that should sometimes be considered, but it is not the Lord's plan that means should be withheld from Madison, because they are not bound to the conference. The attitude which some of our brethren have assumed toward this enterprise shows that it is not wise for every working agency to be under the dictation of conference officers. There are some enterprises under certain conditions, that will produce better results if standing alone. . . .

"There are among our church members faithful souls who feel a burden for those who know not the truth for this time. But one will say to such, The conference will not support you if you go here or there. To such souls I would say, Pray to God for guidance as to where you shall go; follow the directions of the Holy Spirit, and go, whether the conference will pay your expenses or not. "Go work today in My vineyard," Christ commands. When you have done your work in one place, go to another. Angels of God will go with you if you follow the leadings of the Spirit." -Letter 314-1907 (To Elders Daniels and Evan, September 23, 1907). Manuscript Release #571

The above letter clearly states that it is not always God's plan that an institution or a missionary enterprise should be controlled by a Conference. At this juncture we would urge that you turn to Appendix A at the back of this book wherein Ellen White expresses this principle in even stronger terms.

Soliciting Finances for Autonomous Work

Surely, the principles given above and in the following excerpt written on January 6, 1908, addressed to "Those Bearing Responsibilities in Washington and Other

Centers," would apply to other worthy self-supporting work as well as to Sutherland and Magan at Madison. In this letter Ellen White clearly enunciates the principle of fund-raising and autonomous workers so that it cannot be misunderstood. Note the heading under which MR #1445 was originally released by the White Estate:

Soliciting Finances Not to Be Restricted

"God has given me a message for those men who are carrying responsibilities in Washington and other centers of the work. . . .

"The Lord has directed Brethren Sutherland and Magan, men of sound principles, to establish the work at Madison. . . .

"It is the privilege of these brethren to receive gifts from any of our people whom the Spirit of the Lord impresses to help. They should have means—God's means—with which to do the Lord's work." -- MR 4 1445,1.

In this same Letter, she states that, "They should be allowed to go to the people to solicit help;" "Forbiddings are not to be exercised by the conference, or by others who feel that they have authority to do so." She adds that "The people are to be, not forbidden, but encouraged, to give of their means to this work" (Ibid).

Further, in this letter Ellen White enunciates the principle once again that all monies need not pass through the regular channel:

"Do not worry lest some means shall go to those who are trying to do missionary work in a quiet way. All the means is not to be handled by one organization or one party. The Lord works through various agencies. If there are those who desire to step into new fields and take up new lines of labor, forbid them not, but encourage them to do so." MR #1445,4.

We should note once again that "means" given directly to autonomous workers by the members of the church is "God's means" even though it does not pass through the coffers of the conference. Ellen White asserts that "All means is not to be handled by one organization."

Placing Restrictions Upon Autonomous Workers

Despite all the pointed counsel Ellen White had given to the brethren over and over again for many years, including the early part of 1908, yet in the General Conference Committee of 1908, the brethren passed resolutions and published them in the REVIEW placing "many restrictions" upon the autonomous workers. Is it any wonder that on May 26, 1908, Ellen White could not sleep past midnight, and so was up writing a letter "To the Officers of the General Conference:"

"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. . . .

"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. . . .

“A much greater work would have been done if men had not been so zealous to watch and hinder some who were seeking to obtain means from the people to carry forward the work of the Lord.” –Spalding-Magan Collection, 435

The Lord's messenger had continued to appeal to the brethren of the conference. Instead of placing "walls and bands around (these autonomous] workers of experience," she counseled, by making "man-made rules and restrictions" you--"the conference workers" should "strengthen and support and labor in harmony with" them. Ibid., 412.

“When God lays a work upon individuals, men are not to reject His sanction. God must not be impeded in the working out of His plans by man's interference, but this has been done again and again.” MR 1084, 8.

The Lord Will Honor Them

Christ's servants who are true and faithful may be unrecognized and unhonored by men who may be united with Seventh-day Adventists, but the Lord will honor them. They will not be forgotten by God. He will honor them by His presence because they have been found true and faithful.” MR 1228, 5.

Already we have noted in other passages that God will also honor such faithful servants with means, donated by His faithful lay-stewards.

Conclusion

From the extracts which we have quoted in this chapter one would doubt that Ellen White, if she were alive today, would tolerate the conferences if they should try to proscribe the activities of autonomous ministries who are, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, giving the truths of the Bible, including the messages of the three angels of Revelation 14, to the people.

We would also have to conclude that she would not be critical of those who exercise their God-given duty to decide for themselves where they should place means for the support of gospel work. Funds to support autonomous work, she says, can be given in addition "to the portion it is right to place in the [conference] treasury to advance the general interests of the work" of the "regular lines" (Series A, 185).

Are not the principles laid down through the Spirit of Prophecy at about the turn of the century (the early 900s) still valid principles for us in the later part of the century? Principles never change. They are eternal!

Appendix B page 3

Many years ago the following letter copy fall into our hands and we filed it and have inadvertently failed to include it in the Storehouse Collection, but we do now May, 1997 include it.

Loma Linda, Cal., May 14, 1907.

Prof. P. T. Magan,

Dear Brother Magan:-

I bear positive testimony that you and your fellow workers in Madison are doing the work that God has appointed to you. There was at first in your mind a question regarding this, but as you have advanced, you have been able to see the way of the Lord more clearly.

The attitude of opposition or indifference on the part of some of your brethren has created conditions that have made your work more difficult than it should have been. You have not received from some many words of encouragement, but the Lord is pleased that you have not been easily discouraged.

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.

The Lord Jesus will one day call to account those who would so tie your hands that it is almost impossible for you to move in harmony with the Lord's biddings. "The silver and the gold is mine, saith the Lord, and the cattle upon a thousand hills."

You and your associates are not novices in educational work; and when you are in stress for means with which to advance the work, you are just as much entitled to ask for that which you need as are other men to present the necessities of the work in which they are engaged.

You have in the past done much to bring means into circulation in the work of God. And you need not now feel troubled about accepting gifts and free-will offerings; for you will need them in the work of preparing young men and women to labor in the Lord's vineyard. As you carry on this work in harmony with the Lord's will, you are not to be kept on a constant strain to know how to secure the means you need in order to go forward. The Lord forbids the setting up of walls and bands around workers of experience who are faithfully acting their God-appointed part.

Much predacious time has been lost because man-made rules and restrictions have been sometimes placed above the plans and purposes of God. In the name of the Lord, I appeal to our conference workers to strengthen and support and labor in harmony with our brethren at Madison, who are carrying forward a work that God has appointed them.

(Signed) Ellen G. White

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