

ELLEN G. WHITE ESTATE

The background of the cover features a close-up photograph of a bundle of golden wheat stalks. The stalks are tied together and rest on a surface of weathered, horizontal wooden planks. The lighting is warm, highlighting the texture of the wheat and the grain of the wood.

ELLEN G. WHITE AND THE TITHE

ARTHUR L. WHITE

Ellen G. White and the Tithe

Ellen G. White

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Overview

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About the Author

Ellen G. White (1827-1915) is considered the most widely translated American author, her works having been published in more than 160 languages. She wrote more than 100,000 pages on a wide variety of spiritual and practical topics. Guided by the Holy Spirit, she exalted Jesus and pointed to the Scriptures as the basis of one's faith.

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by Arthur L. White

Contents

Information about this Book	i
Introduction	v
Chapter 1—Mrs. White and the Payment of the Tithe	viii
Chapter 2—The Special Work of Ellen G. White	x
Chapter 3—The E. G. White Letter Concerning the Tithe	xiii
Chapter 4—The Tithe That Was Entrusted to Mrs. White ...	xviii
Responsibility Concerning the Tithe Confused With	
Personal Responsibility in the Matter of Freewill	
Offerings	xix
Chapter 5—Another Case of Gross Distortion	xxiv

This paper constitutes a brief historical review of the unique position of Mrs. White in regard to certain special situations relating to the tithe.

Introduction

Before Sabbathkeeping Adventists had organized churches and conferences, and before we had chosen the name “Seventh-day Adventists,” the believers came to see the binding claims of the tithing system presented so clearly in the Scriptures. Under the general term “systematic benevolence” they adopted early in 1859 a tithe plan which was figured on the basis of property. It was estimated that one’s property should yield an income of ten percent a year—this was the increase. A tithe would be one tenth of this, or one percent a year of total property valuation. ¹

As *Testimony* No. 5 came from the press in June 1859, it bore the assurance that “the plan of systematic benevolence is pleasing to God.” Ellen White told of how in vision she “was pointed back to the days of the apostles, and saw that God laid the plan by the descent of His Holy Spirit, and that by the gift of prophecy He counseled His people in regard to a system of benevolence.

“All were to share in this work of imparting of their carnal things to those who ministered unto them in spiritual things.”—[Testimonies for the Church 1:190](#).

There was a good response to the plan. And for nearly twenty years there was little or no change in the plan of “systematic benevolence.” Then in 1878 workers and church members came to see that there was a defect in figuring the tithe on the basis of property holdings and that “by the Bible plan, one dollar of every ten earned is secured to the Lord’s cause,” and that to pay a proper tithe called for “a tithe of all our income.” (See *Systematic Benevolence; or the Bible Plan of Supporting the Ministry*. 1878.)

From the inception of tithing among us, certain principles stood out in bold relief:

1. The tithe is to be used for the support of the ministry.

¹We propose that the friends give a tithe, or tenth of their income, estimating their income at ten percent of what they possess.”—James White in [The Good Samaritan](#), January, 1861.

This thought is embodied in the initial Spirit of Prophecy statement just quoted above in the reference to “those who ministered” “in spiritual things.” It is a thread running through all the counsel touching on the tithe given over a period of fifty years, as in such typical statements:

“The tithe is sacred, reserved by God for Himself. It is to be brought into His treasury to be used to sustain the gospel laborers in their work.”—[Gospel Workers, 226](#).

“It [the tithe] is to be devoted solely to support the ministry of the gospel.”—[Counsels on Stewardship, 81](#).

[27]

“Let the work no longer be hedged up because the tithe has been diverted into various channels other than the one to which the Lord has said it should go. Provision is to be made for these other lines of work. They are to be sustained, but not from the tithe. God has not changed; the tithe is still to be used for the support of the ministry.”—[Testimonies for the Church 9:250](#).

2. The tithe is to be brought into the “storehouse” and from there is to be dispersed.

“It is part of the minister’s work to teach those who accept the truth through his efforts to bring the tithe to the storehouse as an acknowledgement of their dependence upon God.”—[Gospel Workers, 370](#).

“He [God] claims the tithe as His own, and it should ever be regarded as a sacred reserve, to be placed in His treasury and held sacred for His service as He has appointed.”—[Testimonies for the Church 9:247, 248](#).

3. Unlike his responsibility in the matter of freewill offerings, the tithepayer has no discretion as to the place where his tithe should be paid.

“That portion that God has reserved for Himself is not to be diverted to any other purpose than that which He has specified. Let none feel at liberty to retain their

tithe, to use according to their own judgment. They are not to use it for themselves in an emergency, nor to apply it as they see fit, even in what they may regard as the Lord's work."—[Testimonies for the Church 9:247](#).

"A very plain, definite message has been given to me for our people. I am bidden to tell them that they are making a mistake in applying the tithe to various objects which, though good in themselves, are not the object to which the Lord has said that the tithe should be applied. Those who make this use of the tithe are departing from the Lord's arrangement. God will judge for these things."—[Testimonies for the Church 9:248](#).

"Some have been dissatisfied and have said: 'I will not longer pay my tithe, for I have no confidence in the way things are managed at the heart of the work.'

"But will you rob God because you think the management of the work is not right? Make your complaint, plainly and openly, in the right spirit, to the proper ones. Send in your petitions for things to be adjusted and set in order, but do not withdraw from the work of God and prove unfaithful because others are not doing right."—[Testimonies for the Church 9:249](#).

4. God has had one plan for all dispensations.

"A tithe of all our increase is the Lord's. He has reserved it to Himself to be employed for religious purposes. It is holy. Nothing less than this has He accepted in any dispensation. A neglect or postponement of this duty will provoke the divine displeasure. If all professed Christians would faithfully bring their tithes to God, His treasury would be full."—[The Review and Herald, May 16, 1882](#).

Chapter 1—Mrs. White and the Payment of the Tithe

Nothing is plainer in the E. G. White writings than the clear instruction concerning the faithful payment of the tithe and the fact that it is reserved for the support of the ministry.

[28] There are a few individuals who use the E. G. White writings and their knowledge of certain special situations in a strange manner. They attempt to circumvent the clear, plain counsels which have guided the church in the matter of handling the tithe, and aim to lead others to assume the responsibility of handling their tithe on their own responsibility. We feel duty-bound to point out a gross distortion of E. G. White teaching. As we do this, it will become clear that there is no justification for certain conclusions drawn and expounded by these detractors.

First we should establish Mrs. White's personal relationship to the obligation of the tithe and the manner in which she paid her tithe. Let her speak, as she did in 1890 in a statement published in an early pamphlet: "I pay my tithes gladly and freely, saying as did David, 'Of thine own have we given thee.'"

Lest some argue that this statement does not indicate that Mrs. White paid her tithes in the regular way into the conference treasury, we give here the fuller setting:

"You who have been withholding your means from the cause of God, read the book of Malachi, and see what is spoken there in regard to tithes and offerings. Cannot you see that it is not best under any circumstances to withhold your tithes and offerings because you are not in harmony with everything your brethren do? The tithes and offerings are not the property of any man, but are to be used in doing a certain work for God. Unworthy ministers may receive some of the means thus raised, but dare anyone, because of this, withhold

from the treasury and brave the curse of God? I dare not. I pay my tithes gladly and freely, saying, as did David, ‘Of Thine own have we given Thee.’

“A selfish withholding from God will tend to poverty in our own souls. Act your part, my brethren and sisters. God loves you, and He stands at the helm. If the conference business is not managed according to the order of the Lord, that is the sin of the erring ones. The Lord will not hold you responsible for it, if you do what you can to correct the evil. But do not commit sin yourselves by withholding from God His own property. ‘Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord negligently,’ or deceitfully. When persons declare that they will not pay their tithes because the means are not used as they think they ought to be, will the elder of the church or the minister sympathize with the sinners? Will he aid the enemy in his work? Or will he, as a wise man, endowed with knowledge, go to work to correct the vile, and thus remove the stumbling-block? But, brethren do not be unfaithful in your lot. Stand in your place. Do not, by your neglect of duty, increase our financial difficulties.”—[An Appeal to Our Ministers and Conference Committees, 27, 28](#) (Aug. 10 1890).

Chapter 2—The Special Work of Ellen G. White

Seventh-day Adventists accept that Mrs. White was called to a special work—that of serving as a prophet. But her work was broader than this. She says:

“My commission embraces the work of a prophet, but it does not end there. It embraces much more than the minds of those who have been sowing seeds of unbelief can comprehend.”—[Selected Messages 1:36](#).

In an article in the *Review and Herald*, the same year she penned the words quoted above, Ellen White outlined in considerable detail the broad work to which she was called. The account is found in [Selected Messages 1:33, 34](#). We quote one item:

“I was charged not to neglect or pass by those who were being wronged.... If I see those in positions of trust neglecting aged ministers, I am to present the matter to those whose duty it is to care for them. Ministers who have faithfully done their work are not to be forgotten or neglected when they have become feeble in health.² Our conferences are not to disregard the needs of those who have borne the burdens of the work.”

[29]

This placed a heavy burden on Ellen White. As a denominational worker, she knew from experience what it meant to face illness in the family with no provision for financial assistance. She knew what it meant when James White, while serving as president of the General Conference, was stricken with paralysis and she had to pull up the carpets from the floor, the rag rugs of her own making, and sell them, as well as the furniture, to secure means for the care of her husband.

²The retirement plan which makes provision for aged or incapacitated workers was not in effect until 1911.

So the instruction that in a special manner she was to watch out for ministers who might be in need was significant to her.

And not only was she to be alert to the needs of faithful workers, but her attention was often called through vision to the cases of ministers or their families who were being neglected. In many cases she gave financial assistance from her own income, or from funds in her control, for at times her personal resources were inadequate. Her son, Elder W. C. White, wrote of this experience, making reference to her request that certain neglected workers be given assistance from her income:

“When we pleaded with her that her income was all consumed in the work of preparing her books for publication, she said, in effect:

“‘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 to 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.’

“In harmony with this, Mother has many, many times made request of our conference officers to give consideration to the necessities of humble but faithful workers whose needs were by some means overlooked.

“In many instances her requests have been responded to, and the needed help given. But in some cases the lack of funds and the absence of appreciation of the worthiness and the necessities have left the needy workers without help, and have left her to face the burden. Then she has said to me or to the bookkeeper, ‘Send help as soon as you can, and if necessary take it from my tithe.’ In many cases we found it possible to

respond to her requests by gifts from her personal funds, and in some cases a portion of her tithe has been used.

“These experiences relate mostly to the years we were in Europe and Australia, and to the years 1900 to 1906, in behalf of the work in the Southern States.

“During the greater part of the time since my connection with Mother’s business in 1881, a full tithe has been paid on her salary to church or conference treasurers. Instead of paying tithe on the increase from her books, there has been set apart an amount greater than a tithe from which she has made appropriations from time to time in accordance with the instruction mentioned above.

“In view of the extraordinary and exceptional responsibilities placed upon her as a messenger of God having special light and special responsibility in behalf of the needy and the oppressed, she says she has been given special and exceptional authority regarding the use of her tithe. This authority she has used in a limited way as seemed to be for the best interests of the cause.”—W. C. White in a statement, “Regarding the Use of the Tithe.”

[30]

Chapter 3—The E. G. White Letter Concerning the Tithe

On January 22, 1905, Mrs. White wrote a letter to the president of a local conference in which she sounded certain cautions and referred to the experience just recounted. It has been quite widely published by those who would make inroads on the sacredness of the handling of the tithe. Some set it forth as an exhibit to give seeming justification to their course of action. Before we present the letter we will give the historical background.

The work of the denomination began relatively late and grew slowly in the southern part of the United States. This was particularly so among the blacks. The South of a century ago was backward, and in general on a low economic level. Even when the church did make a beginning, it was scattered and small, and it was with great difficulty that it was maintained financially. Long before the Southern Union Conference was organized, a work was begun among the blacks by several workers who went at their own expense into the South. This was recognized by the church and when the Southern Missionary Society was formed to foster this endeavor in the South, it was fully recognized and is found listed in the *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* as one of the organizations of the denomination.

The greater part of the work of the Southern Missionary Society was the starting and maintenance of mission schools, but it was also carrying forward other lines of evangelism and was supporting several ordained ministers. For a time the Society received a small appropriation from the conference, but this amount, though greatly appreciated by the officers of the Society, was a very small gift compared with the magnitude of the work. They felt distressed over the fact that a neglected people, in a destitute field, were being deprived of the gospel message because their need and their helplessness were not understood.

While visiting in the State of Colorado in the latter part of 1904, an agent of the Southern Missionary Society received from one

church a gift of about \$400 to assist in the work of the Society. These funds came in response to his appeal for help in evangelizing the South. Some of the money was tithe. Elder W. C. White, who was familiar with the details of this circumstance, writes of this:

“When the agent of the Southern Missionary Society asked the members of this Colorado church for a donation, they manifested a willingness to give, and some of them said that they were paying a large tithe, and some were not wholly pleased with the way in which it was used. Compared with the population of the State, the conference was strong and it had a good income. Therefore, some said, let us send some of our tithe to be used in the good work for the neglected colored people in the Southern States.

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

“The officers of the Southern Missionary Society did not use this money to pay their own wages. They did not use it in any way for their personal benefit.

[31] Neither did they pay it to the support of men whom the conferences in the South thought to be unfitted or unworthy. Neither was it paid to men who were carrying on an unauthorized work of their own devising.

“The money was placed in the treasury of the Southern Missionary Society and was paid out in a regular and economical way to approved laborers who were engaged in regular denominational work.

“But the action was irregular on the part of the agent who received the money, and the church that paid it to him. By the officers of the Colorado Conference this action was considered to be not only irregular but wrong and censurable. They thought that they needed

the money for home use, and they felt that the action of the officers of the Southern Missionary Society was worthy of public condemnation and censure and that the money should be returned.

“The officers of the Society were in trouble. They had used the money quickly in paying the wages of preachers, and their income was greatly below their needs. Moreover, they felt that a public denouncement would tend to diminish the small income that they were then receiving. Their trouble became known to Sister White, and from Mountain View she wrote a letter to the conference president, dated January 22, 1905.”

Here is her letter. Note carefully its wording:

“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 has been presented to me for years that my tithe was to be appropriated by myself to aid the white and colored ministers who were neglected and did not receive sufficient 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 in that field. If there have been cases where our sisters have appropriated their tithe to the support of the ministers working for the colored people in the South, let every man, if he is wise, hold his peace.

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

“Some cases have been kept before me for years, and I have supplied their needs from the tithe, as God has instructed me to do. And if any person shall say to me, Sister White, will you appropriate my tithe where you know it is most needed, I shall say Yes, 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. If this matter is given publicity, it will create a knowledge which would better be left as it is. I do not care to give publicity to this work which the Lord has appointed me to do, and others to do.

[32]

“I send this matter to you so that you shall not make a mistake. Circumstances alter cases. I would not advise that anyone 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 ministers 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.”—[Letter 267, 1905](#).

As Mrs. White speaks of the use of the tithe in this particular case, and in other cases, it is always in the setting of money which was to be used for the support of our ministers. Any tithe money she handled was used as tithe money should be used.

In the letter under discussion she says, "I would not advise that anyone should make a practice of gathering up tithe money."

She also says, "As the money is not withheld from the Lord's treasury, it is not a matter that should be commented upon."

And regarding the field to which it was transferred, she says, "That field has been and is still being robbed of the means that should come to the workers in that field."

Sister White, then, at a time when there was inadequate provision for these ordained ministers, was authorized to meet these necessities even to the use of her tithe. But this does not in any degree open the way for church members or ministers to bestow their tithe wherever they see fit. It is very clear that this extraordinary experience does not authorize any laborer to gather up tithe money and appropriate it to his own use or to the use of his associates. Neither does it give license for anyone to invite our people to give their tithe to them for some very needy missionary enterprise.

There is not one phrase or sentence in this letter which would neutralize or countermand the clear and full instruction concerning paying tithe or its use. When all the facts are before us it can easily be seen that any such use of the letter is a misuse.

Chapter 4—The Tithe That Was Entrusted to Mrs. White

In the letter to the conference president, quoted above, Mrs. White, on the basis of the special instruction God had given to her, stated that “If there are any persons that shall say to me, ‘Sister White, will you appropriate my tithe where you know it is the most needed,’ I should say, ‘I will do this,’ and I have done it ... I have taken the money, given a receipt for it, and reported how it was appropriated.” She did not make a practice of gathering up tithe funds; she never requested that tithe be placed in her hands.

There was a veteran colporteur who at times sent a portion of his tithe to Mrs. White to be used properly in the Lord’s work. How she handled such tithe is reflected in a letter she wrote to our workers in the South, in which she explained the source of some \$500, which she was hastening on to them in response to an urgent need made known to her. She related how a large part of this was money given by the general public as she made an appeal at a large gathering. A part of it was tithe money placed in her hands by this colporteur. Of this portion she wrote:

[33] “I have \$75 from Brother R, 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.”—[Letter 262, 1902](#).

But writing to this man at another time, she revealed not only her course of action but her attitude toward such matters, urging confidence in his brethren and the regular manner of handling the tithe:

“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 faithfully in the fear of God. ‘Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.’”—[Letter 96, 1911](#).

Great changes have come into our work since the days when Mrs. White made use of tithe funds entrusted to her.

The Retirement Fund has been established, and through this blessed agency money is wisely distributed to workers who were formerly neglected.

Furthermore, plans have been adopted by which tithe is sent out of the conferences that are strong for the support of the work in conferences and missions that are needy.

Much will be found in the *Testimonies for the Church* regarding tithe paying and systematic benevolence, but nothing to sustain the idea that it is right for ministers or other workers, either authorized or self-appointed, to receive and use the tithe to support themselves in independent work.

Surely no honest-hearted person will find in these experiences a justification for the withholding of tithe funds, or for appropriating them as he thinks best. Unless he can qualify as one to whom God has through special instruction guided a course divergent from that so clearly set forth in the many E. G. White published counsels, is he not duty-bound to adhere to those counsels?

Responsibility Concerning the Tithe Confused With Personal Responsibility in the Matter of Freewill Offerings

In several instances in privately-issued publications reproducing the letter written by Mrs. White to the conference president in 1905, other exhibits are presented which would seem to lend support to the idea that in the matter of the tithe each individual is alone responsible to God and is to seek the counsel of no man. Short

quotations removed from their setting and placed in proximity to statements relating to the tithe would seem to countermand the clear counsels which appear in the E. G. White books.

It should be noted that the principal exhibit is taken from a document not generally accessible today. Here is the quotation as it has been privately published in several tracts:

“The Lord has made us individually His stewards. We each hold a solemn responsibility to invest our means ourselves. 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.”—[Special Instruction Relating to the Review and Herald Office, and The Work in Battle Creek, 41, 42.](#)

[34] In these two sentences—actually quite widely separated in the original tract—no mention is made of the tithe. In these sentences Mrs. White is not writing about the tithe. Nor is she writing about our regular offerings. The statements concern the responsibility of the author of literary productions in the stewardship of his royalties from his published work. The setting is the same as that of the article entitled “The Author,” found in [Testimonies for the Church 7:176-180.](#)

Perhaps we should review briefly the historical backgrounds. Most authors receive remuneration for their literary work from a royalty—a certain percentage of the sale price of each book. When a publisher accepts a manuscript for publication he usually does so on this basis. This plan has been followed in our denomination from its beginning days. There came a time in the mid-1890s when some of our publishing houses reasoned that the organization was in a much better position to know the needs of the cause than the author of a book, and they urged authors to either give their manuscripts to the publishing house or to accept a very modest lump sum payment. Then whatever success might come to the book would in turn benefit the publishing house and not the author.

Ellen White pointed out that this was unjust, and that the author should receive his due royalties. At the same time, she pointed

out to the author that his royalty income was not his to use as he might please, but that he was a steward for God. The Lord had given him special talents, and if the Lord in blessing those talents brought financial benefit to the author, the author was to recognize his stewardship in the use of such funds. Sister White addressed several communications to the brethren on this point, and it is from one of these communications, which appeared in *Special Instruction Relating to the Review and Herald Office and the Work in Battle Creek*, that the parts of three sentences in question are extracted.

On page 38 of this pamphlet, Mrs. White wrote as an introduction:

“I have borne abundant testimony, setting forth the fact that the ability to write a book, is, like every other talent, a gift from God, for which the possessor is accountable to Him. This talent no man can buy or sell without incurring great and dangerous responsibility.”

Then from page 40 and onward we quote in their fuller setting the sentences in question, placing them in italics to identify them. Because the tract is not generally accessible, we quote quite fully:

“It is not our property that is entrusted to us for investment. If it had been, we might claim discretionary power; we might shift the responsibility upon others, and leave our stewardship with others. But this we cannot do, because the Lord is testing us individually. If we act wisely in trading upon our Lord’s goods and multiplying the talents given us, we shall invest this gain for the Master, praying for wisdom that we may be divested of all selfishness, and laboring most earnestly to advance the precious truth in our world.

“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. *The Lord has made us individually His stewards. We each hold a solemn responsibility to invest this means ourselves.* A portion it is right to place in the

[35]

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 providence 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 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.

“Age after age Jesus has been delivering His goods to His church. At the time of the first advent of Christ to our world, the men who composed the Sanhedrin exercised their authority in controlling men according to their will. If men’s wills were always submerged into God’s will, this would be safe, but when men are separated from God, and their own wisdom is made a controlling power, the souls for whom Christ has given

His life to free from the bondage of Satan, are brought under bondage to him in another form.

“Do we individually realize our true position, that 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. The humblest of us have been entrusted with talents, and made agents for God, using our gifts for His name’s glory. It is the duty of everyone to realize his own responsibility, and to see that his talents are turned to advantage as a gift that he must return, having done his best to improve it. He who improves his talents to the best of his ability may present his offering to God as a consecrated gift that will be as fragrant incense before Him, a savor of life unto life.”—[Special Instruction Relating to the Review and Herald Office, and The Work in Battle Creek, 40-43.](#)

The merchant carries a responsibility as a steward for the Lord. He is responsible for the way in which he uses his profits from his business after he has paid a faithful tithe. The farmer is responsible to God for his use of the means the Lord entrusts to him. These were not to transfer to someone else the responsibility of the use of the means which God gave to them, and this was so with the author. It has nothing whatsoever to do with the tithe, but it was dealing with the principle of stewardship in general, and it is a gross misuse of the parts of three sentences to put them together as has been done in several privately published tracts.

Chapter 5—Another Case of Gross Distortion

Another case in which Mrs. White’s words relating to freewill gifts are erroneously applied to the tithe is found in some of these privately published tracts in close proximity to the sentences dealt with above. Here is the statement and its supposedly-supporting quotation taken from the *Testimonies*:

“Before the Lord directed Sister White where to pay her tithe, she for a while paid tithe to the Seventh Day Adventist Publishing Association. Later on she could not conscientiously do so for she writes: ‘When means has been pressed upon me, I have refused it, or appropriated it to such charitable objects as the Publishing Association. I shall do so no more.’”—[Testimonies for the Church 1:678](#). (Taken from page 5 of a privately published tract.)

In this statement, penned in 1868, Mrs. White is not speaking of the tithe in any sense. This is made clear by reading the sentences quoted in their context in the full paragraph. It is found to be in the setting of the distressing experience of the mistreatment of Hannah More. Mrs. White declared:

“We see outcasts, widows, orphans, worthy poor, and ministers in want, and many chances to use means to the glory of God, the advancement of His cause, and the relief of suffering saints, and I want means to use for God. The experience of nearly a quarter of a century in extensive traveling, feeling the condition of those who need help, qualifies us to make a judicious use of our Lord’s money. I have bought my own stationery, paid my own postage, and spent much of my life writing for the good of others, and all I have received for this work, which has wearied and worn me terribly, would not pay

a tithe of my postage. *When means has been pressed upon me, I have refused it, or appropriated it to such charitable objects as the Publishing Association. I shall do so no more.* I shall do my duty in labor as ever, but my fears of receiving means to use for the Lord are gone. This case of Sister More has fully aroused me to see the work of Satan in depriving us of means.”—[Testimonies for the Church 1:678, 679](#).

Here Mrs. White points out that when those who had been benefited by her patient toil in writing out what the Lord had revealed to her for them [and they] wished to give her something by way of remuneration, she had refused. Or if it was accepted she did not keep it, but gave it to such organizations as the Publishing Association. Now, as she saw the pressing needs about her, she declared that she would accept such gifts and use the money to help the needy. There is no reference here at all to tithe. The discovery of such use of the Spirit of Prophecy writings should lead all to approach privately published tracts with great caution, and should underscore the absolute necessity of looking up in the full setting every Ellen G. White quotation employed.

But this is not all. Not satisfied with this clear distortion, the author of the privately published tract referred to here, after the brief distorted statement just given, adds:

“Why she could not conscientiously pay her tithe to the publishing of Seventh Day Adventist literature any more is seen better by a testimony given out later on: ‘I feel a terror of soul as I see to what a pass our publishing house has come. The presses in the Lord’s institution have been printing the soul-destroying theories of Romanism and other mysteries of iniquity. This is taking all sacredness from the office. The managers are loading the guns of the enemy and placing them in their hands, to be used against the truth. How does God regard such work? In the books of heaven are written the words: Unfaithful stewardship. Thus God regards the publication of matter which comes from Satan’s

manufactory—his hellish scientific delusions.’ Mrs. E. G. White in *A Solemn Warning*, read to the Review and Herald Board, in November 1901. Published by the Pacific Press, Oakland, California, 1903.”

We have pointed out that the tithe is in no sense involved. Mrs. White stated in 1868 that because of the pressing needs of those about her she would use funds given to her, not as a gift to the Publishing House, but to help the destitute.

But the writer of the privately published tract, first removing from its context the 1868 E. G. White statement, “I shall do so no more,” unequivocally declares that the shift in Mrs. White’s liberalities was because of the type of literature published at the Review office, and quotes a 1901 statement in support.

Concerning the objectionable literature published for a brief period in the Review office, we have ample information in [Testimonies for the Church 7:164-168](#). It was not until the early 1890s that this problem arose, a full 25 years after Mrs. White wrote her statement regarding the objectives of her liberalities.

Surely such falsehood and gross distortion of the Spirit of Prophecy writings should alert readers to the true objectives of those who make such use of the precious counsels which mean so much to the church.

To all who really wish to know what Mrs. White has actually taught, we would urge the reading of the Spirit of Prophecy counsels in the E. G. White books themselves rather than in privately issued tracts and mimeographed sheets.

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