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Bible Explorations Newsletter

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THE SACRED TITHE (Part 3)

By Ted Schultz

EDSON WHITE FORBIDDEN TO SPEAK

“I was called to Battle Creek on business and met Brethren H.W. Kellogg and C.W. Amadon. I told them of our story [the Southern work], and they began at once to arrange for a meeting at the Tabernacle for they wanted me to tell our experience to the Battle Creek people. Soon L.A. Hoopes, Secretary of the Gen. Conf., heard of it, and immediately called on Br. Kellogg and Amadon, and put a ban on the Gen. Conf. meeting. **His words were ‘in the name of the General Conference I forbid the meeting.’** This action showed the venomous attitude toward us by the officers of the Gen. Conf. even though they had given us Credentials.” *James Edson White, Letter to A.G. Daniells, April 21, 1921.*

A STUDY OF CONTRAST

In the study of this history we may learn some important lessons. Notice the two authorities seeking the loyalty of the people.

“In the name of the Lord withhold your forbiddings.”
 Vs.

“In the name of the General Conference I forbid this meeting.”

Do we not see this same dynamic working through various policies today?

THE CASE OF THE MISSING MANUSCRIPT

The venomous attitude of which Edson White spoke was not isolated to the General Conference Secretary. There had been for some time already a foul spirit that was spreading out from the General Conference to the Presidents of the various conferences. There is a 46-page manuscript that contains many testimonies given by the servant of the Lord to the leadership of the last decade of the nineteenth century through most of the first decade of the twentieth century. This manuscript, *Manuscript Release #365*, is missing from the sequence of releases in the published twenty one volumes of *Manuscript Releases* and is also not listed among the *Manuscript Releases* in the Ellen White Writings Infobase, 2008. The present writer obtained this manuscript directly from the White Estate while at Loma Linda in 1985. It is amazing when we read these testimonies to see how applicable they are to the present time. Let us sample a few lines from these testimonies. “The high-handed power that has developed, as though positions had made men gods, makes me afraid, and ought to cause fear. It is a curse wherever, and by whomsoever it is exercised. This lording it over God’s heritage will create such a disgust of man’s jurisdiction that a state of insubordination will result. The people are learning that men in high positions of responsibility cannot be trusted to mold and fashion other men’s minds and characters. The result will be a loss of confidence even in

the management of faithful men...**The spirit of domination is extending to the presidents of our conferences.**" *Manuscript Release #365*, pp. 1,2. Contained within *Manuscript Release #365* is another very significant statement. "It is working upon wrong principles that has brought the cause of God into its present embarrassment. The people have lost confidence in those who have the management of the work. Yet we hear that the voice of the Conference (the General Conference) is the voice of God. Every time I have heard this, I have thought it was almost blasphemy. The voice of the conference ought to be the voice of God, but it is not, because some in connection with it are not men of elevated principle." *Ibid.* (This is taken from a talk that Ellen White gave in April, 1901 in the Review chapel regarding the Southern work.) We see in that statement the conditional nature of the General Conference being the voice of God.

THEN AND THEN ONLY

"**When** every specification that Christ has given is carried out in the true, Christian spirit, **then**, and **then only**, heaven ratifies the decision of the church, because its members have the mind of Christ, and do as Christ would do if he were upon earth." *Review and Herald*, July 22, 1890.

THE WATSON LETTER

Apparently C.F. Watson who became the president of the Colorado Conference in the year 1900 was one of the presidents to whom the spirit of domination had extended. History shows us the spirit of domination is a very contagious spirit. It was a problem that Ellen White had repeatedly warned against. Yet the very ones in high positions that needed the counsel were the ones that seemed impervious to it.

Because leaders at the General Conference were working contrary to the testimonies being sent to them the Southern work was being "robbed" (as Ellen White put it) of the means to carry on that work and was years behind because of the ongoing robbery. On the other hand faithful self-supporting workers who were evangelizing the black folk in the South were obedient to the testimonies sent to them. The Lord had revealed that they were to go direct to the people for means to carry on the work and this they did. It was when representatives of the Southern work were telling church members in the West of their work and the great need of means to carry on that work that people responded with financial help some of which was tithe. When president Watson heard of it, he sent a letter to the leaders in the South demanding that the tithe be returned to the Colorado Conference. We pause to ask, does this not sound familiar as to present policy? But now observe what Ellen White said in a letter of response to Elder Watson's actions. Notice that the testimony of correction comes to the conference president not to those workers in the South who had directly received tithe funds from

church members, or to the church members who sent tithe funds directly to the South.

"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 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 to 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 to 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 still is 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 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 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 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 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 this example.” Ellen G. White, Letter 267, 1905, *Manuscript Releases*, Vol. 2, pp. 99-100, (Manuscript Release No. 109). See also *Spalding-Magan’s Unpublished Manuscripts*, p. 215.

A REVIEW

- The Scriptures contain a complete plan for sustaining the ministers.
- “Everyone” is to give as God has prospered.
- We acknowledge God’s benevolence to us when we return back to Him a portion that He has given us.
- God’s statute commands us to return our tithes, offerings, and vows to Him.
- Members are to make a close search of how the money in the treasury is used.
- The Lord has not specified any regular channel through which means should flow.
- “Means” refers to tithes, offerings, gifts, and loans.
- Those in charge of the treasury are “robbing God” when they use tithe to defray expenses of the church.
- Ellen White “for years” sent tithe directly to white and colored ministers who were neglected, because the work in the South was being “robbed.”
- Every man was to hold his peace if “sisters have appropriated their tithe to the support of the ministers working” in the South.
- The Servant of the Lord said “I commend those sisters who have placed their tithe where it was most needed.”
- **Note: They were commended not disciplined when they bypassed the conference treasury and sent their tithe direct to the point of need. Nor were they warned that this was “a serious offense” to send “their tithe to an organization outside their home territory.”**
- The work of directly appropriating tithe to the neediest cases was a work which the Lord appointed Ellen White to do, “**and others to do.**”
- No distinction is made between conference and self-supporting ministers.
- Those who had lost confidence in how the tithe was being appropriated, placed the tithe in Ellen White’s hands and said that if she did not appropriate it they would find the neediest ministers and appropriate it themselves.
- These persons were not reprimanded, reprovved, or singled out by the servant of the Lord as worthy of disciplinary action.
- Bypassing the conference treasury and appropriating the tithe directly is not withholding tithe.
- The servant of the Lord does not rebuke or reprove those who withhold their tithe from the

conference, but those who withhold their tithe from the Lord.

- Reproofs were repeatedly given to those who declared that all the money should go through the treasury at the G.C. headquarters at Battle Creek.
- No one is to withhold tithe because tithe is misused or misapplied, rather they are to take personal responsibility to assure their tithe goes to its appropriate use.
- Those who sent tithe directly to the point of need were **not** looked upon as **not** supporting the church by the servant of the Lord.

“CIRCUMSTANCES ALTER CASES”

Ellen White’s letter to Elder Watson makes it very clear that when it comes to where the treasury is and where the tithe is to be returned depends on the circumstances existing at any particular time; “Circumstances alter cases.” The question before God’s people today is, “Are the circumstances now existing similar to those that existed when people had “lost confidence in the appropriation of the tithe”? The dedicated believers that have expressed to this writer their concerns about how tithe is being applied for non-tithe purposes are not for one moment considering not returning tithe any longer. They have always been keenly conscientious about returning their tithes and offerings. Being lectured over the years on the concept that the conference treasury is the only treasury has not helped to ease their convictions that something is seriously amiss. When they ponder the thought that the tithe they send in is being used for non-tithe purposes is in fact robbing God their perplexities mount. They see that this is being done regularly and systematically. It is actually part of conference policy to appropriate tithe for non-tithe purposes. Applying tithe to non-tithe purposes is not a matter of an individual here and there in high places doing something they ought not to do. Obviously an organization made up of millions of members with hundreds of people occupying important positions of great responsibility is going to have problems from time to time with certain individuals that prove unfaithful. But this is not the **case** with the present **circumstances**. The misapplication of tithe is in fact a formally voted arrangement, codified into church policy at the highest level down through every echelon as to how those tithe funds will be used! The misuse of tithe which led to the “lost confidence in the appropriation of the tithe”, which factored into Ellen White’s January 1905 letter to Elder Watson, pales in comparison to the scale with which tithe is being systematically misappropriated today. Conscientious members are seeing themselves as an accessory to the robbery that is taking place at high levels when they continue to send in their tithe to an organization that is systematically misapplying tithe, thus robbing God. Their souls are not quieted by reminders that the only treasury is that of the conference.

ONLY TWO STOREHOUSES

“There are only two places in the world where we can deposit our treasures – in God’s storehouse or in Satan’s, and all that is not devoted to Christ’s service is counted on Satan’s side and goes to strengthen his cause.” *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 6, p. 448.

“AN UNDENIABLE FACT”

It has been said that, “And it is an undeniable fact that Mrs. White *never counseled* anyone to place his or her tithes anywhere except in the denominational “treasury.” Roger Coon, *Ellen G. White’s Counsel and Practice on Tithes*, p. 6. This statement infers that the only treasury that Mrs. White envisioned was the conference treasury and that any tithe that did not go to that specific treasury was against any counsel she ever gave. This is not entirely correct. Of course it was her desire that all members and leaders everywhere be faithful in both the returning of tithe and the application of the tithe. That is the ideal in one respect. The true ideal in all respects is that all those who labor in the gospel ministry be supported from the tithe whether they are connected with the conference or whether they are working independently.

The apostle Paul labored independently yet he at times received “wages” (tithes and offerings). “It was as a self-supporting missionary that the apostle Paul labored in spreading the knowledge of Christ throughout the world. While daily teaching the gospel in the great cities of Asia and Europe, he wrought at the trade of a craftsman to sustain himself and his companions. *Ministry of Healing*, p. 154. Writing to the church in Corinth Paul said, “I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service. And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man.” 2 Corinthians 11:8. In a previous letter to the converts at Corinth he defended his right to receive tithe for the support of his labors in the gospel and made reference to the law of Moses for doing so. “Say I these things as a man? Or saith not the law the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care of oxen? Or saith He it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we reap your carnal things? If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ. Do we not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? And they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.” 1 Corinthians 9:8-14.

“While Paul was careful to set before his converts the plain teaching of Scripture regarding the proper support of the

work of God, and while he claimed for himself, as a minister of the gospel, the power to forebear working at secular employment as a means of self-support, yet at various time during his ministry in the great centers of civilization, he wrought at a handicraft for his own maintenance.” *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 346.

No doubt those still carrying on a semblance of worship at the temple in Jerusalem were indignant that Paul from the tribe of Benjamin should claim a right to receive that which was to go to the Levites. Again referring to the law of Moses Paul wrote, “And verily they are the sons of Levi, who receive the office of priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham.” Hebrews 7:5. Just as it was no doubt very difficult for many in leadership positions at the temple in Paul’s day to grasp the principles in play as to what and where the treasury was, so it is today.

THE ACCOUNT OF THE PHILIPPIANS

In the account of the support of the Philippians in Paul’s gospel labors we find an example of an arrangement that may be followed today. “Notwithstanding, ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction. Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.” Philippians 4:14-17. The arrangement of things as we find it in these verses of Scripture is not even allowed by church policy today. Here Paul is addressing the church at Philippi not one, two or three members within that church. Here a local church, as a body, is sending support directly to the apostle without its going to an intermediary entity of any kind. Paul said that in the matter of giving and receiving it was the Philippians only that communicated with him at the time of his departure from Macedonia. If as we have already seen that Paul carefully instructed his converts in the plain teaching of Scripture regarding the proper support of the work of God and that plain teaching was rooted and grounded in the law of Moses, we cannot but see that it was tithes and offerings that the Philippian church had given directly to Paul. The apostle did not reprimand those dear souls in Philippi for sending tithe directly to him nor did he school them on the concept that there is only one treasury and he was **not** it. It is obvious that the apostle Paul considered the Bible’s appointed use of the tithe to be the treasury. Jesus spoke to this principle in His discussion with the Samaritan woman at the well when He said, “Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to

worship him.” John 4:21-24. To the Samaritan woman the important thing was who did what where. Jesus was setting things on an entirely different basis. It was not those who had come to worship at a specific place that God was seeking, rather those who were worshipping Him in spirit and in truth. The temple at mount Gerizim had been destroyed just as the temple with its treasury in Jerusalem was soon to be destroyed, thus Jesus was shifting the focus from where worship took place to how they worshiped. – in spirit and in truth. Likewise a great deal is made of the issue as to where the treasury is and that it is the only place that tithe can be returned. In as much as the returning of our tithes and offerings is an act of worship, so it is that Christ seeks those who will do so in sincerity and truth. One can be sending their tithe either to the conference treasury or directly to an appropriate use and do so with the wrong spirit or attitude. Each one needs to return their tithes and offerings to the biblically appointed purposes with a sanctified spirit.

MORE UNDENIABLE FACTS

While anyone is free to declare it to be an undeniable fact that Mrs. White never counseled anyone to place his or her tithe anywhere except in the denominational “treasury”, it is equally an undeniable fact that unless you are God, you cannot know what Mrs. White “never” did. It is also an undeniable fact that she received tithes from others and commended them for so doing. It is also an undeniable fact that when tithe was sent directly to the point of need, thus bypassing the conference treasury, the servant of the Lord said that the money was not withheld from the Lord’s treasury. It is an undeniable fact that Ellen White did this for years. And perhaps most importantly, the servant of the Lord in her counsel as to the issue of where tithe is to be returned said, “Circumstances alter cases.” These undeniable facts make it very clear that the conference treasury is not the only treasury.

When faithful members see God being robbed by the misapplication of tithe they are being convicted that they should not walk in the footsteps of disobedient leaders who are not using tithe for its appointed use as the Lord has commanded. If they are ignorant of the disobedience of leaders, as may have been the case with the widow and her two mites, they are not guilty of their mishandling of tithe, but if they are aware of the disobedience of leadership in the handling of tithe and continue to support them then they are accountable. We have been counseled that the members are to awake and enquire how the tithe is being used. Strange as it is to relate, many do not even seem mildly curious as to how the tithe is being used. This kind of attitude toward the sacred tithe is not a very high form of worship.

“I call upon God’s people to open their eyes. When you sanction or carry out decisions of men who, as you know, are not in harmony with truth and righteousness, you weaken your own faith...” *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 91.

If we return tithe to a system set up by men who have gone contrary to God’s directions do we not in fact sanction their actions, any denials notwithstanding? And by continuing to support those men and their policies that run directly contrary to the counsels of God, do we not enable them to carry out their decisions? The answers to these questions are self evident. When faithful church members see a veritable army of pastors and administrators promulgating false theology from the pulpit and in the church papers are those member’s consciences bound to support it with their tithe? Our own history shows us that there is a way for faithful members to be faithful in returning of tithe to the support of the gospel work without compromising their consciences. We can be thankful for the privilege of being able to continue the faithful returning of our tithe directly to the purpose for which the Lord specified tithe is to be specifically used. God’s people are not duty bound to follow disobedient leaders in their systematic misapplication of tithe. In fact sacred history points out that this was ancient Israel’s great besetment. When their kings “did evil in the sight of the Lord” the people generally followed right along. Israel followed their wayward leaders more than they followed the instructions of the Lord in the book of the law.

THE CIRCUMSTANCES THEN AND NOW

It will perhaps be viewed by some that in this series of studies certain Testimonies have been taken out of their historical context to support an unwarranted position on the returning of tithe. Each one will have to determine that for themselves through their own study. It is often stated in reference to the Watson letter that in 1905 the world work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church was not organized to the same extent as it is today and that is why there were certain inequities in the distribution of tithe. (See *Adventist Review*, August 15, 1985 as an example of this concept. But as we have seen the circumstances that brought about the Watson letter were not because the church was not as well organized as it is today but rather because the state of things at the General Conference were in fact “abhorrent” as Ellen White had revealed. That abhorrent condition at the General Conference level was spreading to the presidents of the various conferences. For years testimony after testimony had come to the leadership at the highest levels with virtually no effect. Those same testimonies so faithfully disregarded at the time are testifying to the church still. There is an abundance of evidence that the testimonies are being disregarded to a greater extent now than in 1905. (See *1888 Materials*, pp. 1556-1593). The thinking largely today is that if the tithe was not used to defray various expenses as is now done there would not be near enough means to carry on the work. A great curse would befall the church and the work would fall to pieces. But this thinking is the opposite of what the Lord has promised. God has promised blessings to those who obey Him and curses to those who disobey. Deut. 11:26-28, 28:15. “The curse causeless shall not come.” Prov. 26:2. It is by man’s wisdom only that it is

believed that blessings come by disobedience and curses come by way of obedience.

“Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.” 1 Samuel 15:22. King Saul like Cain brought burnt offerings and sacrifices but was not faithful in all of the Lord’s instructions pertaining thereto. Modern Israel has a lesson yet to be learned on this point.

MORE FROM THE NEWS HEADLINES...

By Chris Hall

LaTimes – 8/9/2019 "LOS ANGELES MAYOR ERIC GARCETTI MET WITH POPE FRANCIS ON FRIDAY IN A PRIVATE MEETING AT THE VATICAN, where they discussed climate change, youth, poverty and immigration." "Garcetti, who is Jewish, said he was 'grateful to Pope Francis for the deep and humbling honor of meeting with me at the Vatican today.'" "According to a mayoral aide, Garcetti is traveling in Europe to attend meetings related to his participation on the C40 steering committee, which is made up of mayors from cities around the world working on the climate change issue." <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2019-08-10/mayor-garcetti-pope-francis-vatican-climate-change-immigration?fbclid=IwAR1ORksRct1KOGVY2Lxh209kqn76vGefdu56c6GNO3Nomd60js499mciKvk>

GC 53, "Vast counsels were held from time to time in which the dignitaries of the church would convene FROM ALL THE WORLD. In nearly every council the SABBATH which God had instituted was PRESSED DOWN a little lower, while the SUNDAY was correspondingly EXALTED. Thus the pagan festival came finally to be honored as a divine institution."

GC 235, "Under various DISGUISES the JESUITS worked their way into OFFICES OF STATE, climbing up to be the counselors of kings, and SHAPING the POLICY of nations."

FALLING AWAY...

The Blaze (8/14/2019) John L. Cooper, the lead singer of popular Christian rock band Skillet, issued heartfelt advice to Christian influencers who have recently renounced their Christian faith in public. In a lengthy Facebook post directed at the influencers as well as the Christian church, Cooper wrote, "Ok I'm saying it. Because it's too important not to. What is happening in Christianity? More and more of our outspoken leaders or influencers who were once 'faces' of the faith are falling away."

"It is time for the church to rediscover the preeminence of the Word. And to value the teaching of the Word. We need to value truth over feeling. Truth over emotion. And what we are seeing now is the result of the church raising up

influencers who did not supremely value truth who have led a generation who also do not believe in the supremacy of truth," he reasoned. "And now those disavowed leaders are proudly still leading and influencing boldly AWAY from the truth." https://www.theblaze.com/news/skillet-lead-singer-warning-after-christian-influencers-renounce-faith?utm_content=bufferf995&utm_medium=organic&utm_source=facebook&utm_campaign=fb-whitehousebrief&fbclid=IwAR1kG7LXZEggPTxkRcKe3zeNNNZ24ZvHQmJbs6R7XMFtn8NhAkIw1qqM5f4

This is being found today in our own SDA churches. What we need is to teach about Him and His Word as Truth and what it means. He is coming, but are we listening to the wrong spirit? Are we listening for truth or just going by emotion?

"To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Isaiah 8:20. The people of God are directed to the Scriptures as their safeguard against the influence of false teachers and the delusive power of spirits of darkness. Satan employs every possible device to prevent men from obtaining a knowledge of the Bible; for its plain utterances reveal his deceptions. At every revival of God's work the prince of evil is aroused to more intense activity; he is now putting forth his utmost efforts for a final struggle against Christ and His followers. The last great delusion is soon to open before us. Antichrist is to perform his marvelous works in our sight. So closely will the counterfeit resemble the true that it will be impossible to distinguish between them except by the Holy Scriptures. By their testimony every statement and every miracle must be tested. Those who endeavor to obey all the commandments of God will be opposed and derided. They can stand only in God. In order to endure the trial before them, they must understand the will of God as revealed in His word; they can honor Him only as they have a right conception of His character, government, and purposes, and act in accordance with them. None but those who have fortified the mind with the truths of the Bible will stand through the last great conflict. To every soul will come the searching test: Shall I obey God rather than men? The decisive hour is even now at hand. Are our feet planted on the rock of God's immutable word? Are we prepared to stand firm in defense of the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus?" EGW, Great Controversy, "The Scriptures a Safeguard."

Come to the Feast of Tabernacles here at Bible Explorations in Terra Bella October 14-21 and learn more about God and what He desires from us. Learn what we need to know, and how to truly know Him and love Him and follow Him in our daily lives! We all need to be ready!

***SEE THE ENCLOSED SCHEDULE FOR CAMPMEETING
OCTOBER 14-21, 2019***

