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THE PROPER USE OF THE TITHE

DF 113

(A Supplementary Document)

Clarifying Instruction from God in 1897

Dear Brother Daniells: I send you this morning a letter written for America, and sent there yesterday morning, which will show you how I regard the tithe money being used for other purposes. ["Spec. Test." Series A, No. 10, pp. 16-24. See page 10.] This is the Lord's special revenue fund, for a special purpose. I have never so fully understood this matter as I now understand it. Having had questions directed here to me to answer, I have had special instruction from the Lord that the tithe is for a special purpose, consecrated to God to sustain those who minister in the sacred work, as the Lord's chosen to do His work not only in sermonizing, but in ministering. They should understand all that this comprehends.--Letter 40, 1897 (To A. G. Daniells, President of the Australasian Union Conference.)

Lines of Work to be Supported by Tithes and Liberal Offerings.

[From the Ellen G. White 1879 Testimony Volume 4 statement penned before there was a separation of Systematic Benevolence funds into "tithes" and "offerings."

Ellen White's 1879 Statement

Late in 1879 Ellen White penned the article on "Sacredness of Vows" now in Testimonies, Vol. 4, pp. 462-476. In this she makes several references to "tithes and liberal offerings" as a means of supporting various facets of the work of the church. We present excerpts from the article, the first relating to institutions when we had two publishing houses, two sanitariums, and one college:

"Selfishness and fraud are practiced daily in the church, in withholding from God that which He claims, thus robbing Him and conflicting with His arrangements to diffuse the light and knowledge of truth throughout the length and breadth of the land.

"God in His wise plans has made the advancement of His cause dependent upon the personal efforts of His people and upon their freewill offerings. By accepting the cooperation of man in the great plan of redemption, He has placed a signal honor upon him. The minister cannot preach except he be sent. The work of dispensing light does not rest upon ministers alone. Every person, upon becoming a member of the church, pledges himself to be a representative of Christ by living out the truth he professes. The followers of Christ should carry forward the work which He left for them to do when He ascended into heaven.

"Institutions that are God's instruments to carry forward His work on the earth must be sustained, Churches must be erected, schools established, and publishing houses furnished with facilities for doing a great work in the publication of the truth to be sent to all parts of the world, These institutions are ordained of God and should be sustained by tithes and liberal offerings. As the work enlarges, means will be needed to carry it forward in all its branches. Those who have been converted to the truth and been made partakers of His grace may become co-workers with Christ by making voluntary sacrifices and freewill offerings to Him, And when the members of the church wish in their hearts that there would be no more calls for means, they vitually say that they are content that the cause of God shall not progress."--Testimonies, Vol. 4, p. 464. 1879

(1879) The Gospel Ministry and the Printed Page

In this 1879 statement Ellen White declared that tithes and offerings were to be used to support the ministry and spread the printed page:

"In commissioning His disciples to go 'into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature,' Christ assigned to men the work of spreading the gospel. But while some go forth to preach, He calls upon others to answer to His claims upon them for tithes and offerings with which to support the ministry and to spread the printed truth all over the land. This is God's means of exalting man. It is just the work which he needs, for it will stir the deepest sympathies of his heart and call into exercise the highest capabilities of the mind."--Testimonies, Vol. 4, p. 472.

"The plan of systematic benevolence was of God's own arrangement, but the faithful payment of God's claims is often refused or postponed as though solemn promises were of no significance. It is because church members neglect to pay their tithes and meet their pledges that our institutions are not free from embarrassment, If all, both rich and poor, would bring their tithes into the storehouse, there would be a sufficient supply of means to release the cause from financial embarrassment and to nobly carry forward the missionary work in its various departments. God calls upon those who believe the truth to render to Him the things that are His."--Testimonies, Vol. 4, pp. 475-6.

(1882) Reserved for Religious Purposes

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. They would have no occasion to resort to fairs, lotteries, or parties of pleasure, to extort means from worldlings for the support of the gospel.
--Review and Herald, May 16, 1882.

(1889) For Laborers at Home and Foreign Fields

This work of faithfully bringing in all the tithes, that there may be meat in the house of God, would supply laborers for both home and foreign fields. Although books and publications upon present truth are pouring out their treasures of knowledge to all parts of the world, yet missionary posts must be established at different points. The living preacher must proclaim the words of life and salvation. There are open fields inviting workers to enter. The harvest is ripe, and the earnest Macedonian cry for laborers is heard from every part of the world.—Review and Herald, February 19, 1889. Counsels on Stewardship, p. 39.

(1893) Solely for the Ministry of the Gospel

This matter of giving is not left to impulse. God has given us definite instruction in regard to it. He has specified tithes and offerings as the measure of our obligation. And He desires us to give regularly and systematically. . . . Let each regularly examine his income, which is all a blessing from God, and set apart the tithe as a separate fund, to be sacredly the Lord's. This fund should not in any case be devoted to any other use; it is to be devoted solely to support the ministry of the gospel. After the tithe is set apart, let gifts and offerings be apportioned, "as God hath prospered" you.—Review and Herald, May 9, 1893. Counsels on Stewardship, pp. 80, 81.

(1896) For Sending Messengers in Regions Beyond

In the tithe, with gifts and offerings, God has made ample provision for this work. He intends that the ministry of the gospel shall be fully sustained. He claims the tithe as His own, and it should ever be regarded as a sacred reserve, to be placed in His treasury for the benefit of His cause, for the advancement of His work, for sending His messengers into "regions beyond," even to the uttermost parts of the earth.—Review and Herald, December 8, 1896.

(1897) In Exceptional Cases for Church Buildings

There are exceptional cases, where poverty is so deep that in order to secure the humblest place of worship, it may be necessary to appropriate the tithes. But that place is not Battle Creek or Oakland. Let those who assemble to worship God consider the self-denial and self-sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Let those brethren who profess to be children of God study how they can deny themselves, how they can part with some of their idols, and carefully economize in every line. In each house there should be a box for the church fund, to be used for the needs of the church. . . .

Let not those to whom are entrusted responsibilities, allow the treasury that God has appointed to sustain the ministers in the field, to be robbed to supply the expenses incurred in keeping in order and making comfortable the house of God. Thousands upon thousands of dollars have been taken from the tithes and used for these purposes. This is not as it should be. The gifts and offerings that have cost some self-denial are to be brought in. A separate fund for the purpose of defraying the expenses which every church member should share according to his ability should be instituted in every place where there is a church.—Manuscript 24, 1897.

The Tithe for Those Who Labor in Word and Doctrine--Men or Women

In 1898, 1899, and 1900 Ellen White on several occasions spoke of the work of women in evangelistic work either in the sacred desk or in carrying the message from door to door, and their remuneration. The book Evangelism carries several of these messages.

"A great work is to be done in our world, and every talent is to be used in accordance with righteous principles. If a woman is appointed by the Lord to do a certain work, her work is to be estimated according to its value. Every laborer is to receive his or her just due. . . .

"Those who work earnestly and unselfishly, be they men or women, bring sheaves to the Master; and the souls converted by their labor will bring their tithes to the treasury."--Manuscript 47, 1898. March 31, 1899 [Evangelism, pp. 491-2]

The next year she wrote:

"The tithe should go to those who labor in word and doctrine be they men or women."--Manuscript 149, 1899 [Evangelism, p. 492]

Here is the fuller setting of this statement:

Women, as well as men, are needed in the work that must be done. Those women who give themselves to the service of the Lord, who labor for the salvation of others by doing house to house work, which is as taxing as, and more taxing than, standing before a congregation, should receive payment for their labor. If a man is worthy of his hire, so also is a woman.

God has entrusted talents to His servants, and He expects them to see that mistakes can be readily made. Make no mistake in neglecting to correct the error of giving ministers less than they should receive. When you see persons in necessity who have been placed in positions of trust, let God move upon your heart to set things right. The tithe should go to those who labor in word and doctrine, be they men or women.

It is not right to leave persons unacknowledged who are doing a good work because they do not work just exactly in accordance with other men's ideas.--Ms 149, 1899 (Oct 24, 1899, General Ms)

Ellen G. White Discusses the Matter Further on March 22, 1898. She wrote:

Some matters have been presented to me in regard to the laborers who are seeking to do all in their power to win souls to Jesus Christ. The ministers are paid for their work, and this is well. And if the

Lord gives the wife as well as the husband the burden of labor, and if she devotes her time and her strength to visiting from family to family, opening the Scriptures to them, although the hands of ordination have not been laid upon her, she is accomplishing a work that is in the line of ministry. Should her labors be counted as naught, and her husband's salary be no more than that of the servant of God whose wife does not give herself to the work, but remains at home to care for her family?

While I was in America, I was given light upon this subject. I was instructed that there are matters that need to be considered. Injustice has been done to women who labor just as devotedly as their husbands, and who are recognized by God as being as necessary to the work of ministry as their husbands. The methods of paying men-laborers and not their wives, is a plan not after the Lord's order. Injustice is thus done. A mistake is made. The Lord does not favor this plan. This arrangement, if carried out in our Conferences, is liable to discourage our sisters from qualifying themselves for the work they should engage in.

A mistake is made when the burden of the work is left entirely upon the ministers. This plan was certainly arranged without the mind of God. Some women are now teaching young women to work successfully as visitors and Bible readers. Women who work in the cause of God should be given wages proportionate to the time they give to the work. God is a God of justice, and if the ministers receive a salary for their work, their wives, who devote themselves just as interestedly to the work as laborers together with God, should be paid in addition to the wages their husbands receive, notwithstanding that they may not ask this. As the devoted minister and his wife engage in the work, they should be paid wages proportionate to the wages of two distinct workers, that they may have means to use as they shall see fit in the cause of God. The Lord has put His spirit upon them both. If the husband should die, and leave his wife, she is fitted to continue her work in the cause of God, and receive wages for the labor she performs.

Seventh-day Adventists are not in any way to belittle woman's work. If a woman puts her housework in the hands of a faithful, prudent helper, and leaves her children in good care, while she engages in the work, the Conference should have wisdom to understand the justice of her receiving wages.

Women helped our Saviour by uniting with Him in His work. And the great apostle Paul writes, "I entreat thee also, true yoke-fellow, help those women which labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellow-laborers, whose names are in the book of life."

If women do the work that is not the most agreeable to many of those who labor in word and doctrine, and if their works testify that they are accomplishing a work that has been manifestly neglected, should not such labor be looked upon as being as rich in results as the work

of the ordained ministers? Should it not command the hire of the laborer? Would not such workers be defrauded if they were not paid?

This question is not for men to settle. The Lord has settled it. You are to do your duty to the women who labor in the gospel, whose work testifies that they are essential to carry the truth into families. Their work is just the work that must be done. In many respects a woman can impart knowledge to her sisters that a man cannot. The cause would suffer great loss without this kind of labor. Again and again the Lord has shown me that women teachers are just as greatly needed to do the work to which He has appointed them as are men. They should not be compelled by the sentiments and rules of others to depend upon donations for their payment, any more than should the ministers.--Ms 43a, 1898 (March 22, 1898, "The Laborer is Worthy of His Hire.")

The next day, March 23, 1898, she wrote:

All along the line faithful workers are called for. Christ has opened a fountain for the sinful, suffering world, and the voice of divine mercy is heard, Come, all ye thirsting souls; come and drink. You may take of the water of life freely. Ye weary, fainting, parched souls, come, and let him that heareth say, Come, and whosoever will, let him come." Let every soul, women as well as men, sound this message. Then the work will be carried to the waste places of the earth.--Letter 18, 1898 (To C. H. Jones)

A month later, April 21, 1898, she wrote to leading workers G. A. Irwin,

I. H. Evans, Uriah Smith, and A. T. Jones:

I received your letter, and will write a few lines now. Elder Robinson thought my testimony must be given, as it was greatly needed. He and his wife were left to bear the responsibility of the work, giving Bible readings, conducting the Mission, and training several young men and women as workers. The work has rested heavily upon them. Sr. Robinson has hired a girl to do her housework, and is doing work every way as taxing as that of a minister. The women workers have not received pay; but this will be changed in due time. The cause is now hemmed in for want of means. . . .

There are ministers' wives, Sisters Starr, Haskell, Wilson and Robinson, who have been devoted, earnest, whole-souled workers, giving Bible readings and praying with families, helping along by personal efforts just as successfully as their husbands. These women give their whole time, and are told that they receive nothing for their labors because their husbands receive wages. I tell them to go forward and all such decisions will be revised. The Word says, "The laborer is worthy of his hire."

When any such decision as this is made, I will in the name of the Lord, protest. 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. I know that the faithful women should be paid wages as is considered proportionate to the pay received by ministers. They carry the burden of souls, and should not be treated unjustly. These sisters are giving their time to educating those newly come to the faith and hire their own work done, and pay those who work for them.

All these things must be adjusted and set in order, and justice be done to all. Proof-readers in the Office receive their wages; those who are working at house work receive their wages, two dollars-and-a-half and three dollars a week. This I have had to pay and others have to pay. But ministers' wives, who carry a tremendous responsibility, devoting their entire time, some of them, have nothing for their labor.-- Letter 137, 1898 (April 21, 1898).

(1900) A Bible Instructor Addresses Congregation

Every week tells its story; one soul or two souls receive the truth, and the wonderful change in their features and in their character is so marked by their neighbor that the conviction of the very life of their neighbors is leading others to the truth; and they are now searching the Scriptures diligently. . . .

Sister R and Sister W are doing just as efficient work as the ministers; and some meetings when the ministers are all called away, Sister W takes the Bible and addresses the congregation.--Letter 169, 1900 (Evangelism pp 472-3)

Bible Teachers To be Paid From Tithe

Our conferences should see that the schools are provided with teachers who are thorough Bible teachers and who have a deep Christian experience. The best ministerial talent should be brought into schools, and the salaries of these teachers should be paid from the tithe.-- Manuscript 139, 1898.

Our conferences look to the schools for educated and well-trained laborers, and they should give the schools a most hearty and intelligent support. Light has been plainly given that those who minister in our schools, teaching the word of God, explaining the Scriptures, educating the students in the things of God, should be supported by the tithe money. This instruction was given long ago, and more recently it has been repeated again and again.--Testimonies, Vol. 6, p. 215. Counsels on Stewardship, p. 103.

The best ministerial talent should be employed in teaching the Bible in our schools. Those selected for this work need to be thorough Bible students and to have a deep Christian experience, and their salary should be paid from

the tithe. God designs that all our institutions shall become instrumentalities for educating and developing workers of whom He will not be ashamed, workers who can be sent out as well-qualified missionaries to do service for the Master; but this object has not been kept in view. In many respects we are far behind in this work, and the Lord requires that a zeal be shown in it infinitely greater than has hitherto been manifested. He has called us out from the world that we may be witnesses for His truth, and all through our ranks young men and women should be trained for positions of usefulness and influence.—Testimonies, Vol. 6, pp. 134, 135.

For Overseas Work

More and more we must come to realize that the means that comes into the conference in the tithes and gifts of our people should be used for the support of the work not only in the American cities, but also in foreign fields. Let the means so zealously collected be unselfishly distributed. Those who realize the needs of mission fields will not be tempted to use the tithe for that which is not necessary. All may be tempted to be selfish in the use of their means, but they will gain strength to resist these temptations as they study the needs of the fields that have little labor given them.—Manuscript 11, 1908.

(1901) The Gospel Minister as a Medical Missionary To Receive Tithe Support

May Be Used for Medical Missionaries

In the night season I am laboring earnestly with persons who do not seem to understand that in the providence of God the medical missionary work is to be as the right hand of the body. Some utterly fail to realize the importance of missionaries being also medical missionaries. A gospel minister will be twice as successful in his work if he understands how to treat disease.

Continually increasing light has been given me on this subject. Some who do not see the advantage of educating the youth to be physicians, both of the mind and of the body, say that the tithe should not be used to support medical missionaries, who devote their time to treating the sick.

In response to such statements as these, I am instructed to say that the mind must not become so narrowed down that it cannot take in the truth of the situation. A minister of the gospel, who is also a medical missionary, who can cure physical ailments, is a much more efficient worker than one who cannot do this. His work as a minister of the gospel is much more complete.—Manuscript 58, 1901.

For Sustentation

When a man enters the ministry, he is to be paid from the tithe enough to sustain his family. He is not to feel that he is a beggar. . . .

Many ministers are lying in their graves, brought there by sorrow and disappointment, and by the hardship brought upon them because they did not receive sufficient for their labors.

Let us remember that God is a God of justice and equity. There would today be many more ministers in the field, but they are not encouraged to labor. Many workers have gone into the grave heartbroken, because they had grown old, and could see that they were looked upon as a burden. But had they been retained in the work, and given an easy place, with a whole or part of their wages, they might have accomplished much good. During their term of labor, these men have done double labor. They felt so heavy a burden for souls that they had no desire to be relieved of overwork. The heavy burdens borne shortened their lives. The widows of these ministers are never to be forgotten, but should, if necessary, be paid from the tithe.—Manuscript 82, 1904.

CONSECRATED TO ONE PURPOSE

For the Ministers

A great mistake is made when the tithe is drawn from the object for which it is to be used—the support of the ministers.—Testimonies, Vol. 9, p. 249.

The tithe is to be used for one purpose,—to sustain the ministers whom the Lord has appointed to do His work. It is to be used to support those who speak the words of life to the people, and carry the burden of the flock of God.—Manuscript 82, 1904.

God's ministers are His shepherds, appointed by Him to feed His flock. The tithe is His provision for their maintenance, and He designs that it shall be held sacred to this purpose.—Manuscript 139, 1898.

The use of the tithe must be looked upon as a sacred matter by our people. We must guard strictly against all that is contrary to the message now given. . . .

The impression is becoming quite common that the sacred disposition of the tithe no longer exists. Many have lost their sense of the Lord's requirements.—Manuscript 82, 1904.

SURPLUS TITHES

To Share the Lord's Money With Needy Fields

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 these destitute places. Special light on this point has been given. I was

listening to the voice of a heavenly Messenger, and the directions given were that the churches that had buildings and facilities should in this way assist the missions in foreign countries.—Manuscript 139, 1898. [Published in tract "Appeal for Missions," pp. 24, 25.]

In Strictly Appointed Lines

[In the setting of a discussion of using tithe for church expense.]

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.—Letter 81, 1897. (May 27, 1897 To A. T. Jones)

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 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.—Letter 81, 1897. (May 27, 1897 to A. T. Jones)