

W. C. WHITE STATEMENTS REGARDING

MRS. WHITE AND HER WORK

The Integrity of the Testimonies to the Church

(Remarks by W. C. White at College View, Nebraska, Sabbath Morning
November 25, 1905.)

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For some time I have hoped for a favorable opportunity to state to our physicians and ministers facts regarding the Testimonies to the church, which may answer questions that seem to be troubling many minds. Perhaps this morning is the opportunity.

Time is precious, and this subject is important; and I ask you to pray for me that I may speak to the point. My desire to speak about this matter is for the sake of the work.

As a body of Seventh-day Adventists, we believe that this church will stand until Christ comes. Those who have studied church history, know that each denomination which has come out from established bodies has proclaimed glorious truths. Men of God have started out with high motives and pure principles; and then, step by step, the enemy has undermined their integrity, until each church has fallen away from its first principles. The Seventh-day Adventist Church, we believe, will stand firm until the end, but it is by the power of God and obedience to His messages of warning that we hope to be kept from backsliding and the delusions that have crept into other churches.

The attack of the enemy upon this church has been along definite lines,-- the same lines as his attack upon our first parents. First of all, he got them separated, and then he deceived Eve with reference to obedience to God. So his strongest effort against this church has been the work of separation, a strange work against unity. Satan has sought to separate from the church the most precious part of its work. He has always opposed the united work of teaching the gospel and healing the sick. In many subtle ways has an effort been made to degrade the Sabbath, and to lead us to feel that humanitarian work was so valuable that in prosecuting it we could disregard the sacred claims of the Sabbath of Jehovah.

Most strenuous opposition has been brought against the means which God has selected for the strengthening and guidance of His church, an opposition manifest in efforts to unsettle confidence in the messages which God sends His people through ministers of the gospel, through teachers in our schools, and through the chosen agent whom He has appointed to give His special message of warning and counsel to the church. And finally the attack has been upon the Diety. An effort is being made to put man in the place of God, and if this be done, the work of apostasy is well nigh completed.

As you study the Testimonies of warning and counsel to this church, you will find that the burden of these testimonies follows very closely the line of the enemy's attack. They have been full of warning against separation, against building up and elevating unduly one branch of the gospel work and binding everything possible to it. That ambitious work we may well be afraid of, it is not yet complete; it will continue in various forms; and in whatever form it is brought before us, we may be afraid of it.

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The Scriptures say that a house divided against itself cannot stand. But there has been a movement among this people for many years for a divided house. And I am thankful to see in this assembly a body of people working together for a united house. Let us continue to work on these lines. But how shall complete union be accomplished? Several years ago Elder Irwin presented to Mother in Australia some of the perplexities we have had to meet, and I remember well her answer. "This controversy," she said, "will never be settled, until it is settled by our brethren and sisters working together in the field." And as time advances, I see more and more clearly that the field is the place to work for a settlement of the difficulties in the way of perfect union.

If those attending this convention go to their homes and unite every feature and branch of the work in our churches and conferences, light and power will come in. In working for humanity, the Saviour preached the gospel and healed the sick. If we would do more of this work, we would not need so much to be discussing plans in our committees and councils.

Apparent Lack of Harmony

For years there has been perplexity in the minds of many of our people because of what seemed to be a contradiction in the teachings of the Testimonies. I might illustrate this by referring to what was written regarding the medical work before and after the General Conference in 1897. Before that Conference, Mother read to me from time to time many, many things that she was writing, which showed that the Lord had revealed to her as clear as day the movements that were going on at the center of the medical missionary work, in the criticism of the ministry, and the church, and in exalting the medical work above all other branches. And it was outlined clearly what that would lead to.

After the Conference, it seems that the time had come for these things to be printed, but, to my surprise, Mother would read these things and then lay them aside, and later she would send them privately to the leading physicians and their associates, warning them against their danger. She sent some privately to ministers. Then she wrote articles for the papers to be sent out broadcast to our people, reproving them for their backsliding and their failure to come up to a correct standard of health reform living. She also reproved the ministers for not making the medical missionary work the work of the churches. Our people were sharply reproved for not standing by Doctor Kellogg and the Sanitarium.

Some of our people saw in this what seemed to be a contradiction, and some of them stumbled over it, and are stumbling today. Some said it must be a severe trial for Sister White to write testimonies of reproof to old personal friends. It must be that when she comes to write out these things that the Lord has revealed to her regarding the medical work that her years of friendship, her sympathy and her love for Doctor Kellogg are so strong that she has not the courage to put them out, and instead of that she puts out these appeals for the people to stand by him. I knew this was not the reason, but I could not discern at that time the real reason for the course that was followed.

This was indeed a severe perplexity to me at the time, as it was to others, but that very experience, as I look at it today, is one of the strongest evidences of the wisdom and power of God in directing and guiding His servant in the way that the testimonies are put forth. Some of the testimonies of warning, counsel, and entreaty, were sent out privately, and were given time to do their work. Others were put on file, and they show that the perils attending the medical work were often revealed by God to His messenger, long before the message was to be delivered.

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Let us ask, What would have been the result if the warnings and reproof regarding errors in the medical work had been made public when first given? Many of our people were then so half-hearted in this work of health reform, that they would have dropped it, and turned their backs on the physicians and nurses, and many would have gone back with joy to their flesh pots, as some are doing today. There would naturally have followed a great denominational backsliding on health reform.

The people were not ready for the things that were being sent to the leaders, therefore the messages needed by the leaders were sent to the leaders, and the people were sent those things which they needed. What has been the result? Through the mercy of God, a great victory has been gained and our people have been led to take a decided stand as health reformers; hundreds have given themselves to the Christian help work, and plans have been devised by which many in the church are striving to do the united work of healing and teaching. I thank God for His way of leading us, which to some has seemed mysterious.

There are many things in connection with the testimonies, and the opposition to them, that have been sore trials to me, and in times of great perplexity I have thrown myself on my face before God in agony of soul and said, O God, why didst Thou choose my Mother to be the instrument for this work? Why didst Thou let so much perplexity come to us, so much distress? It was at a time like this that I read the manuscript of those chapters in Desire of Ages, in which is related the experience of the disciples when they were distressed and perplexed, because their Master's teaching and manner of life seemed to leave the way open for misunderstanding and criticism (Chapters 40-44). I said then, Father, if it be Thy will that Thy people in all ages shall be perplexed and distressed, help me to enter into the experience meekly and intelligently.

Many times I have come to things in the testimonies, as also in the Bible, that I did not understand, that I could not explain and harmonize. These I have carried to the Lord and said, Here, Lord, are some things that I cannot understand; I leave them with Thee; help me to go straight forward and do the work that has been given me to do; and when Thy time comes, let me see clearly what Thou wouldst have me to understand. Lord, take me by the hand and lead me in the strait and narrow way.

Many of the Testimonies I do not understand. In many cases, if I was commissioned to use any discretion in the matter, I would not send them out. But that is not my business. Many a thing passes through my hand and goes out to the people with a prayer that God may help those to understand it to whom it is sent, but I do not understand it. And is it not a fact that the message should mean more to the person to whom it is addressed than to those who copy it, and more also than to the one who writes it?

Let me illustrate this point. At the General Conference when we reorganized the General Conference Association, and we were in great perplexity over the best method of work, Mother called together, in the committee room at the tabernacle, conference presidents and managers of institutions, and read a testimony which was based upon Isaiah 8:12-14, which was a decided reproof to us regarding confederacy.

There were at that time two plans for confederacy before us. One was our union with outsiders in the religious liberty work, and the other the question of the scope of the work of the General Conference Association. Some applied the testimony altogether to the former. Some of us felt in our hearts that it should be applied to our plans for the General Conference Association also.

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But instead of getting together and studying and praying over the matter until we comprehended what it meant to us, we called another meeting, and asked Sister White to come in and explain the matter that perplexed us. We questioned her as to whether the message applied to what we were planning for in the re-organization of the General Conference Association. She said she could not answer that question. Then we said, "Of course it does not apply to that."

We did not study and pray about it till we received light, but carried out our own plans. About six or eight years afterwards it was opened up to Mother plain and clear that the testimony was given us at that time to save us from going into those plans which resulted in binding together many lines of work in an unsatisfactory and unprofitable connection.

Oftentimes when we go to Mother and ask her to explain the things that she has said or written, she will say, "I cannot explain it; you should understand it better than I. If you do not understand it, pray to the Lord, and He will help you." Is not that the right way to get a correct understanding of the Testimonies?

Personal Influence

The question of personal influence is a matter that has perplexed many. The question is, Can persons go to Sister White and present their needs and their views, and, by presenting matters as they look to them, influence the character of the Testimonies and secure the bringing out of something in harmony with their minds?--No, indeed. If any one believes this, let them be assured it is not so.

You know that in the 90's there was a work going on to build up the work at Battle Creek disproportionately. This was led by strong financiers, men who had a large influence with the president of the General Conference. In the face of the counsels given immediately after the Minneapolis Conference, and during the years that followed, that there had been too much centralization of responsibility at Battle Creek and in the face of the effort to distribute responsibility by dividing the field, and appointing district superintendents, there were men who labored untiringly to continue the work of centralization.

The work was one of binding things together, bringing the management of everything possible under the control of a few men at Battle Creek, and unduly enlarging the institutions in that place. Mother's testimonies were strongly against this. She sent many reproofs and carried a heavy burden on her heart regarding the wrong character being given to the work. I could not understand why Mother should continue to carry this burden after having written to the responsible men many times, and I plead with her to give her time and energies to the writing of her books.

For years I have felt that it was my privilege to do all I could to draw Mother's attention to the most cheerful features of our work, to the many hopeful experiences in our institutions and conferences. I reasoned that as the Lord has chosen Mother to be His messenger for the correcting of wrongs in the church; opening up to her the dangers, the mistakes, the errors, and the weaknesses and the wickedness of men, and as these revelations burden her heart almost to death, therefore it cannot be wrong for me to gather up all the words of cheer, and all the good news that will comfort her heart, and every incident that will show the power of Christ working in the church, and that will make manifest the best side of the workings of men who are bearing heavy burdens in the work of the Lord. Therefore I will endeavor to bring to her attention the

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bright side of things. When a brother speaks well of what another brother is doing, I will try to bring it to her attention. The criticisms and the accusations that are made by brother against brother, I must try to keep to myself. I know that this is very different from the representations that have often been made to some of you regarding the character and aim of my work, but I assure you that this is what I have endeavored to do.

Well, one day while we were living at Cooranbong, New South Wales, we received letters from the President of the General Conference, filled with cheering reports, telling us about the good camp meetings, and how that some of these business men who had been reproved by the testimonies were going out to various states and speaking in the camp meetings, and that they were getting a new spiritual experience, and were a real help in the meetings.

We were made very happy by the reading of these letters. We were fairly overjoyed about it, and we united in praising the Lord for the good report. Imagine my surprise when in the afternoon of the next day Mother told me that she had been writing to these men of whom we had received the good report, and she then read to me the most far-reaching criticism, the most searching reproof for our bringing in wrong plans and principles in their work, that were ever written to that group of men. This was a great lesson to me in the matter of personal influence.

In recent years I have seen such experiences often repeated. Many persons have visited Mother at her home with the belief that personal representation of their work and plans would influence Mother to commend them. They have been welcome in our home; we enjoyed their society, and were glad of their friendship, but when Mother came to write, it was what the Lord had taught her. Sometimes it was very encouraging, and sometimes it was like hot iron piercing the heart, because the spirit of wisdom discerned that there were results to follow the plans proposed, that would be detrimental to the cause of God, and the messenger was obliged to speak that which God had given her to speak.

How is it then that there are some who have had opportunity to present to Sister White their plans, who feel that she is influenced, and that sometimes she favors one side, and sometimes another side? Brethren, the field of the controversy between right and wrong principles is broad, and extends far beyond our ordinary conception. There is weakness on all sides, and often when matters are opened to Mother's mind, it is presented to her that if a certain course is taken, that certain results will follow, and if such and such things shall be done, that other results will surely follow. With such a presentation of the field, the time and manner of sending out messages to the church depends largely upon the actual progress of the work.

When good strong men like the leading teachers in our schools are preplexed on some point, and they come and present to Mother their views regarding the dangers and duties of the hour, and ask her counsel, what does she do? Does she begin at the first of her interview to point out where they are wrong? No, indeed. She knows that these men are burdened with a great work that is not generally appreciated, and she knows that if she would help them most successfully she must show that she understands their motives and the weights of their burdens. Naturally the first thing is to express every word of confidence that she can sincerely express in the work they are doing; and to acknowledge the evils and dangers in the church which they see, showing to what extent these evils and dangers have been revealed to her. Then she often points out the weak points in their work and the dangers that attend their paths, and cautions them about matters that they may have overlooked.

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A man representing another side of the work my talk with her of the same experience. She also expressed confidence in his efforts. She acknowledges the danger that attend the work, and then she points out the weaknesses of his work, and the dangers that attend it. Now, if these men go forth and remember clearly that which was said that is in harmony with their views, and forget that which was said to correct their faulty plans and work, their views and reports of Sister White's counsels will often differ.

In reference to my relation to Mother's work, a great many say W.C. White keeps close to his Mother, and he makes suggestions and calls her out upon this and that, and thus largely influences her work. What are the facts? Often for weeks before a general meeting, and sometimes for months before a General Conference, the burden is laid upon Mother as to the character of the work she must do in the coming meeting. And as I meet her day by day, she speaks to me of what has been presented to her during the night regarding the work before her in the coming meeting.

Before the Oakland Conference, she presented to me morning my morning, sometimes three or four mornings in succession, what she was writing; and then she would lay aside her writings and tell me the character of the issues and conflicts of that meeting. She would say, At that meeting there are going to be such and such movements, and if I attend, I shall have to bear strong testimony of reproof. She presented the dangers that might arise from the wrong views of the medical men, and the dangers to arise from many of the wrong views of General Conference men. And she would outline the positions she would be obliged to take at the meeting.

Often I was impatient to get away to the office and resume my regular work, but I felt that it was for a purpose that she related these matters to me, and so I offered the silent prayer, Lord, help me to remember these things, so if at any time I ought to know them, they will come clearly to mind. As a result I had before the meeting a clear outline of the course she intended to follow at the General Conference.

When the General Conference was called, Mother often said that the burden would be so great that she dared not go, and sometimes we thought she did not have the strength to go. But the Lord gave her strength and courage, and she attended the meetings. Elders Daniells and Prescott came, at her request, to talk with her about the progress of the meeting, and they presented their views, plans, and perplexities, and asked for counsel. Then Brethren Paulson and Sadler came, at her request, and presented their view of things. You will remember that Brother Sadler had been working with us in California. As Mother gave counsel and encouragement, I wondered if it were possible that the course of her talks to the Conference was going to be changed in any way from what she had planned, by the facts brought out by these interviews with the brethren.

When the time came for Mother to bear her testimony before the Conference, I saw that every utterance was in perfect harmony with the outline that she had given me day by day, during the months before. I shall remember, as long as I live, that I could not discern that she varied a hair's breadth from the line laid down before the meeting. This is the result of my observation in the matter of personal influence.

The Integrity of Sister White's Writings

With reference to the integrity of the writings sent out from Mother's office, I can assure you that Mother is responsible, intelligently responsible, for the letters, manuscripts, and other documents that go out from her office over her signature.

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The Lord has blessed Mother with good, conscientious helpers, tender-hearted people, God-fearing people, who would not for their lives venture in any way to tamper with her testimonies.

Mother writes very rapidly. She does much of her writing early in the morning. She often writes upon many subjects in one letter or manuscript, just as subject after subject is flashed upon her mind. These manuscripts she passes to one who is expert in reading her writing, to copy off on the typewriter, and then it is given back to Mother, and she examines it, making such corrections, changes, and additions as she sees fit. Then it is copied again, and sent out according to Mother's direction. Sometimes a long personal letter will contain matter which she wishes to use in a more general letter to be sent to a group of workers. Sometimes it contains material for an article for one of our periodicals, or a chapter in a book.

Some of the most precious chapters of Desire of Ages are made up of matter first written in letters to men laboring under trying circumstances, for the purpose of cheering and instructing them regarding their work. Some of these beautiful lessons about Christian experience illustrated in the life of our Saviour, were first written in letters to my brother Edson, when he was struggling with many difficulties in his work in Mississippi. Some were written first to Elder Corliss, when he was holding a discussion with a wily Campbellite in Sydney.

Letters Received

Mother receives many letters. Some of these are reports of progress; some tell the story of the Lord's merciful dealings with His people. Some letters cheer her heart and do her lots of good. Others are sad and discouraging. Some are from strangers, asking many questions that she cannot answer, because the subjects upon which the Lord gives her light are seldom the subjects of her own choosing.

There are letters which come from men bearing heavy burdens, asking counsel regarding perplexing matters. Some have adopted the practice of sending their perplexing letters to me, asking that if it is reasonable and right, I bring the matter to Mother's attention, but if she is feeble, or pressed with other burdens to let the letters wait. Often these communications come to me when her mind is absorbed with some difficult subject, and I put them into a pigeon hole, to await a favorable time. It often happens that in the course of a week or two, I find her mind travelling over the subjects presented in some of these letters. She says, What is going on with reference to this matter? Then I tell her that I have several letters in the office on that subject, and, at her request, I bring them to her. At such times these letters do not burden her mind. When the Lord has directed her mind to any subject, it is not a burden for her to study into it deeply.

Information From Men

There is a part that men have to act, in bringing facts regarding the progress of events, by writing any by word of mouth, to the Lord's messengers. This is seen in the experience of Paul as recorded in 1 Corinthians 1:11.

While we were in Australia, the plans on which our school work ought to be developed were clearly outlined to Mother, and she presented these thoughts to those connected with the school. We were surrounded with difficulties, and the work laid out before us seemed to be impossible. Some wanted to push forward

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the work very rapidly; others were cautious, and wanted to wait for assurance that we could complete what we began. We had our struggles.

At one important meeting I determined not to tell Mother of the perplexities connected with our work, but that I would tell the Lord all about them, and ask Him to send us instruction according to our necessities. When I came home from Board meetings, late at night, I laid the matter before the Lord, and asked Him to help us, and send us messages as He would. Each morning I would go to Mother and say, Have you anything new for us this morning? Sometimes she would say, I do not know that I have; but I was in council last night, and we were talking over such and such a matter. Sometimes what she told me did not seem to have any bearing upon the subject that was on my mind, and sometimes it would answer the very questions that I had laid before the Lord the night before. Many times what she said gave light that was direct answer to my prayer.

One morning after I had asked Mother if she had anything new for us, she said, "What are you doing in your Board meeting? What kind of a time are you having?" I answered, I do not need to tell you; the Lord can tell you what you need to know, better than I can, and I might not tell is impartially. She said, "Willie White, you tell me what you are doing." I asked, Why? Then she said, "It is presented to me that you are having a hard time, and when you reach a certain point, I am to have something to say. I want to know if you have reached that point." Mother, I said, we are having a hard time, but for several reasons I did not want to tell you about it. Then she insisted, and I told her the best I could from my standpoint about the status of our work. When I had finished she said, "That is all right. I do not believe I will go today, but I think you are getting pretty near to the point when I must come over and bear my testimony." In a day or two she came over and told us what had been presented to her.

Some have wondered why it is that sometimes when Sister White is speaking, toward the close of her remarks she will turn to me and say, "Have I covered the points, Willie?" and from this they have drawn the conclusion that I have been prompting Mother regarding what she shall say in meeting.

It often happens that Mother tells us a few days, or a few hours before the meeting the line of thought which she wishes to present, and she sometimes asks me to remind her if any essential point is left out. Then in closing her remarks she feels anxious to know if any essential features of what she intended to present have been overlooked.

A Misunderstanding

Some have wondered if W. C. White did not sometimes prompt his mother as to what she ought to say to ministers or business men regarding their duty and connection with the general work. I will relate an instance showing what I sometimes do, and how one good woman thought she had the clearest evidence that I had undertaken to tell Mother what she ought to say to a minister who was under deep trial, and who felt that he needed counsel and advice.

At the close of the General Conference held in Battle Creek in 1901, the brethren urged that Mother should go to Indianapolis and attend the general meeting appointed there, to consider the fanatical work carried on by a group of laborers who had been teaching the doctrine of the holy flesh.

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Mother was weary, and felt that she had not strength for this additional burden. She repeatedly told me and other members of the family that she did not feel able to attend that meeting. She did not feel that she had strength to bear the testimony which she must bear if she attended the meeting. Then she told us many things which she would have to say to the brethren who had been teaching the strange doctrines in Indiana. She repeated this several times, so that I remembered very distinctly what it was that she said she must testify if she went to Indiana. Finally she decided to go. The Lord strengthened her for the journey, and she bore her testimony to a large congregation of our people in a clear, decisive way. After this she was requested to speak to a large public audience Sunday afternoon. This was a heavy draft on her strength, and at the close she was very weary.

Sunday afternoon I had a long talk with one of the ministers holding the strange doctrine against which Mother had borne her testimony, and he asked for an interview with Mother. I told him that Mother was weary. But when I saw that he would feel grieved and injured if the interview was denied, I told him I would do all I could to arrange for an interview early Monday morning.

I expected to see Mother Sunday evening and tell her of this brother's desire to see her in the morning, but committee work prevented my seeing her that evening.

Monday morning early I went to her room and found her very busy writing. Then she told me that an important subject had been opened up to her mind in the night, and she greatly desired to write it out before anything came in to divert her mind from the subject. I then told her that I had promised one of the ministers that I would do my best to arrange for an interview with her early Monday morning. Mother said, "But my mind is now on this other subject. I have borne my testimony to our people and my discourse to the large audience exhausted my strength, and now I have this new subject to write out. Why must I have a private interview with this brother?" Again I told her of his desire to have an interview with her, and she said, "But what can I say to him?" Then I saw that the Sunday afternoon discourse and the new subject opened to her mind had taken her thoughts completely away from the matter of the holy flesh fanaticism, and so I repeated to her some of the things which she told us in Battle Creek that she would have to say to these brethren if she came to Indiana. After calling her attention to a few of the things that she had repeatedly told us she must say to these brethren if she came to Indiana, her mind took up that line of thought, and then I went to look for the brother.

During this conversation, a good sister in the next room had heard some of our words. I had spoken quite loudly to Mother, and the sister had heard my words without hearing, perhaps, what Mother said, and she was greatly surprised and shocked to hear W. C. White telling his mother what she should say to a brother in perplexity. Of course the matter was told to others, and the report was circulated far and wide for many months before it came to my attention. When Elder Hankins wrote to me about it, I explained to him the facts in the case, and I have heard nothing from it since; but this is an illustration of how that which is fair and right may be misunderstood and regarded as serious error by those who but partially understand the facts in the case.

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It has often happened that because of the instruction I have received from Mother, I have in committee meetings taken a position disagreeing with some of my brethren, and afterward, when Mother had occasion to write upon the subject, our brethren were shocked and surprised to find that she was upholding those things which I had stood for, and they drew the conclusion that I had been influencing Mother; whereas, I had been trying to represent in the committee that which she had been teaching and advocating. Her testimony agreed with those plans and policies that I had stood for only because I had stood for that which I had been taught by her.--(Signed) W. C. White.--DF 107d.

Ellen G. White Publications, General Conference of S. D. A.
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