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ON MARRIAGE AND DIVORCESaint Helena, Calif.,  
2/21/27

Dear Brother:

You ask if we have any writings of Sr. White relative to Elder W. C. Wales, and of Prof. Sydney Brownsberger, which would throw light on the question as to how people should be dealt with who have married after separation from their companion other than adultery.

It may be that I could find something as the result of painstaking search, but that search I cannot now make. I think, however, that it would be right for me to state to you that Sr. White did not sympathize with those who took the ground that a person who had separated from a companion on other than scriptural grounds, had married again, that this second marriage must be broken up if they were to be accepted or retained in a S.D.A. church. Sr. White fully recognized that these people in most cases had sinned, that some had sinned grievously, and that they should not be accepted into the fellowship of our churches unless that sin was repented of. Sr. White did not accept the contention that such repentance could not be genuine without breaking the new bond, and making an earnest effort to return to former companions. She recognized the fact that in most instances, a re-union with the parties formerly connected with in marriage, would be either impossible or exceedingly unprofitable. She also recognized that the vows entered into in the second marriage called for such action as was most merciful and kind to the contracting parties. She sometimes referred to the teaching of Paul, who having reached a certain point in his experience, said, "But I spare you." He knew there were existing conditions that people were living in relations resulting from sin. He also knew that Christ would accept their genuine repentance, and that in many cases, it would make matters worse if existing relations were torn up, to prepare a way for a re-union with the parties who were incompatible, so Sr. White used to say, "But I spare you."

Sr. White's next oldest sister, Sarah Harmon, was married to Stephen Belden, and became the mother of five children. After her death, in pity for his children, he married a woman who had many years been a faithful servant in his household. Shortly after this, the measles visited the vicinity, and she with others had the measles in a severe form. The measles went to her brain and she became crazy, and had to be taken to the asylum. Belden struggled along for some time, trying to care for his five children, then for their sake, married a good, efficient woman by the name of Vina Williams. She helped him make a home and bring up his children, and was with him in Norfolk Island when he died. At various times, individuals, where the Beldens lived, undertook to secure his exclusion from the church because he had married without separation from his wife, on the charge of adultery. When appealed to in regard to this matter, Sr. White said, "Let them alone."

Regarding Sydney Brownsberger, I can speak quite freely. About 1875, he married a very brilliant school teacher. Her mother was a very devoted woman; her father was a great hypocrite. She was very talented, but after a number of years she became quarrelsome and made his life miserable. At that time he was associated with a very brilliant young woman who was

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an accountant at Healdsburg College, and formed a fondness for her. Sr. White wrote him a very plain warning which he promised to heed. Shortly after Sr. White had gone to Europe, Brownsberger resigned his position at Healdsburg College, went to Michigan to visit his sister, and offered no obstruction to his wife in getting a divorce. Thus far those who knew the case approved, but shortly after this he married the bookkeeper before mentioned, then all his friends were greatly grieved. He taught a while at Graysville, then settled near Ashville, and for many years worked very hard, his wife helping him to make a living on a little fruit and vegetable farm. They came to see the wickedness of the course they had taken, and repented of it very bitterly, and their brethren and sisters were satisfied that their repentance was genuine. They had three beautiful children, growing up, and no one as far as I know encouraged them to separate. When the matter was put before Sr. White, she did not encourage a separation, nor could she encourage any movement to exclude him of participation in the work of the Third Angel's Message. Brownsberger was asked to re-enter our work as teacher in a rural school. Later on he and his wife were teachers at Madison, Tenn. And their children who have now all qualified as medical physicians, promise to be persons of extraordinary usefulness.

If persons living in the light of the Third Angel's Message, purpose to leave one companion for the sake of uniting with some one else, it is our duty to warn and reprove and discipline.

If persons before embracing the Message have entangled themselves and afterwards have repented, confessed their sins, received forgiveness of God and won the confidence of their brethren, it is better for both ministers and laymen to leave them alone, enjoying the forgiveness and justification which have been wrought through Christ, without undertaking to tear up existing relations.

Yours very truly,

(Signed) W. C. White