

Q and A 7-g-1

August 13, 1959

My Dear Brother _____,

In regard to the perplexity that faces one of the members of your church, let me say that this is a matter that he must settle between himself and God. As he prays about this business of selling for the Founders Mutual Depositor Corporation, he will receive light from heaven. This pursuit in the eyes of the world is honorable. Indeed, it is a much-respected form of employment as businessmen estimate it. The question of whether or not a Christian should sell for a corporation which handles shares for Liggett and Myers Tobacco and R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company is one, of course, that causes him concern. I must admit that it would cause me concern, too.

I do not think that Sister White made any statements that would condemn the sale of shares in reputable stock companies such as those represented by the Founders Mutual Depositor Corporation, with the possible exception of these two tobacco companies. In view of the fact that investors in this corporation find their money invested in all of the corporations in equal amounts, naturally the tobacco companies come in for their share of the investment money. But does a Christian want to contribute to the financial growth and prosperity of two of America's biggest tobacco companies? Does he desire, while supporting the tobacco business, to earn a profit himself? Is he not, thereby, becoming a participant with these venders of disease and death in their evil work?

The foregoing observation may sound a bit narrow and strait-laced and an objector might retort, "Well, if it would be up to you, we wouldn't pay tax money because part of the money from our taxes is used to build atom bombs which possibly will be used to destroy human beings." Yes, I have heard these arguments, but Scripture supports the view that citizens should pay taxes. The use of the taxes by the government is largely out of the tax payers' control. The tax payer does not become responsible for the use made of tax money, unless he has opportunity by the use of his vote, to remedy a given situation, but does nothing about it. Then he is responsible, and not unless.

In the case of the good brother selling stocks in this large corporation, he can accept the job and do the work expected of him or he can refuse the job and find something else to do. I think if I were in his place I would find something else to do. A man with his talent and capacity might possibly become a literature minister. May I say in passing that Utah is one of the best places in the world to sell Seventh-day Adventist books. I wonder if he has tried it. Does he not desire to use his influence to the limit, in preparing the world to stand in the day of God? I feel certain that he must, for apparently he is a conscientious man.

Again may I say that there is nothing in the Spirit of Prophecy that would condemn investments in reliable stocks. But the Spirit of Prophecy does speak against the unwise use of money, and speculation. Note the statements which Sister White makes in SPECIAL TESTIMONIES, Series B, #17 about the "unwise use of money." This material warns against get-rich-quick schemes and unwise investments at a time when money is needed for the work of God. It cautions against the investment of money in speculative mining and railroad ventures. "The desire to engage in speculation," she said, "in buying up country and city lots or anything that promises sudden and exorbitant gains, has reached a fever heat; mind and thought and labor are all directed towards securing all that is possible of the treasures of earth in the shortest possible time." REVIEW AND HERALD, July 10, 1888, Series B, #17, page 4.

On p. 5 of this Series B she said, "In acquiring money Christians are safe only as they follow God's direction and use it in channels which He can bless. God permits us to use His goods with an eye single to His glory. He blesses us, that we may bless others."

One should be careful before investing money in stocks. Investments ought not to be speculative. If we are to invest money it seems to me that it should be in established institutions which represent safe investments with reasonable interest payments. I know of Adventist ministers who make such investments. But I am not attempting to interpret this counsel. When we have money we must use it in a manner that will enable it to multiply and produce extra talents to be used in God's service. However, when this money is taken and invested in wildcat schemes that were intended only to pad the purses of crooks, then God is robbed, the cause is robbed, and we are robbed. Said Mrs. White, "How pleased Satan would be if in the very time when men should be selling their possessions to sustain the cause of God he could deceive them so that all their available means shall be invested in land speculation and other worldly enterprises, thus taking away from the cause of God means which should flow into the treasury to advance His work in the earth."--Series B, #17, p. 7

I trust that this will be helpful to you as you counsel with this brother. Keep in mind that Sister White was, herself, a purchaser of stock in the establishment of early Seventh-day Adventist institutions. She borrowed money and paid interest; she engaged in business transactions, and followed the usual procedure that human beings must resort to in order to survive and to accomplish necessary objectives. Yet she was not a speculator. She did not invest her money in wildcat schemes and she counsels us not to do this. It is well for us to observe this counsel and put our money where it will gain for itself a reasonable interest and where it can be safe.

I trust that this information has been helpful.

Sincerely your brother in Christ,

D.A. Delafield, Associate Secretary
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