



*For Such
a Time*

Dave Fiedler

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© 2025 by Dave Fiedler
dfiedler@AdventistCityMissions.org

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For Such A Time

WITHIN the military worldview, few issues are as problematic as deciding if an order is “lawful” or not. The concept is clear enough: no soldier is to obey an unlawful order. To do so puts the soldier himself on the wrong side of the legal code. That’s the simple part.

What’s not so simple is the fallout that is likely to follow any such refusal. Commanding officers are used to being obeyed, and they don’t often rely on the analytical powers of soldiers in the lower ranks for their understanding of what ought to be done. Their commands are simply to be obeyed... until they’re not. And therein lies the delicate issue. This is the challenge that requires one of the rarest forms of bravery to be seen in the armed forces.

A soldier may be entirely correct in disobeying an unlawful order, but until someone of a higher rank than the one who gave the order shows up, that brave soldier is entirely at the mercy of his commanding officer and all else who choose to follow his orders. This is the unpleasant reality. In some cases, it could mean death.

None of this is to say that the commanding officer is intentionally rebelling against the law. It could all simply be a tragic mistake. But that does little to help the soldier who refuses to break his oath to only obey lawful orders. The clarity to resolve the situation comes only from a yet more senior authority, and—ultimately—from the highest authority of the land, whether that be a constitution, a royal charter, or the arbitrary decree of a dictator. Little wonder that no soldier in the trenches is anxious to go up against a general on such an issue.

Though God's church is not an authoritarian military organization, the situation is similar in some respects. And that raises the question as to the existence of what we might term "sanctified insubordination."

Some sort of organizational structure is a simple necessity in order to coordinate the work around the whole world. But there is, of course, a flip side to that necessity. As any military strategist knows, the command and control mechanisms of the enemy are among the most inviting of targets for attack. Little wonder, then, that Ellen White would write: "At the great heart of the work Satan will use his hellish arts to the utmost."¹

To one who had visited Battle Creek, she wrote: "Did you get the impression that there was no devil to bring his temptations upon souls at the heart of the work? Did you think that there would be no tares among the wheat? If you received these impressions, there was no warrant for them."²

This is not to say that Battle Creek was the worst place on earth; more that it was perhaps the most *important* place on earth. Not in the world's eyes, but in God's eyes, and in the malicious view of the devil. For God's people to ignore the significance of this was to walk blindly into a disaster.

The problem is obvious: one who naively believes there could be "no tares among the wheat" at the heart of the work, is far from prepared to spot the difference between a lawful and an unlawful order. This would cost the church dearly at times, particularly during the 1890s. At its worst, the situation prompted Ellen White to lament, "It has been some years since I have considered the General Conference as the voice of God."³

While even then there were people who could not sense that something was amiss, others struggled with a very basic conviction that whatever "voice" had taken the place of the "voice of God," could not in every case be trusted to issue lawful orders, let alone consistently wise orders. And this posed an extremely challenging practical problem: how was one to relate to "unwise," but not *clearly* "unlawful" orders? How foolish did an unwise order have to be before it became "unlawful"? It takes no great insight into human beings to realize that this was going to be a fruitful field for misunderstanding.

As Ellen White once observed, "Human nature is human nature still."⁴ Unsurprisingly, the question remains to this day, with no definitive, all-encompassing answer. This is why there is value in considering the challenges presented in this regard.

1. E.G. White, "Religious Liberty," 1888; Manuscript 18, 1888

2. E.G. White, Letter to P.B.W. Wessels, March 17, 1893; Letter 63, 1893

3. *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, February 24, 1899

4. *Selected Messages*, Book 1, 72

2. *At the Heart of the Work*

Perhaps the first approach that will be of value is to consider what the actual “challenges” are. In what way, in which areas, does this issue of human fallibility at the “heart of the work” play out? Surely there is room for mistakes in every aspect of denominational administration, and some should certainly be treated as minor matters, the sort of thing that will always crop up when two or more people try to stake out a position. No one in their right mind would insist that the officers of the church must conform to their ideas in every single detail. But, then, what to do with more significant challenges?

A quick spin through Ellen White’s comments on this sort of thing yields an interesting result. She doesn’t “draw the line” over some of the doctrinal issues we might be inclined to expect. That’s not to say that she wouldn’t have had issues with someone at the General Conference openly advocating Sunday sacredness! On that issue, fortunately, it just never happened. The closest case was long before there *was* a General Conference, and the ones keeping Sunday were James and Ellen White! There was a period of time when the Whites knew that Joseph Bates was keeping Sabbath, and they just thought he was wrong. When they took the time to read his book on the subject, though, they decided he was right, and made the change immediately. What’s pertinent about all this is simply that, even though they thought Bates was off championing a topic they regarded as unimportant, they didn’t write him off. They continued to cooperate with him in holding meetings for the “scattered flock,” listening to his preaching, and reading his book. Once the importance of the Sabbath became clear, of course, that issue would not have been seen as insignificant.

But there were still differences of opinion on the time to start the Sabbath, and those differences were tolerated until all had a chance to study the subject and come to a common understanding. Same on the complete reinterpretation of the Laodicean message (though James White played the lead role in that case).

Another prominent example would be Ellen White’s long toleration for Uriah Smith’s semi-Arian view of the Godhead. She painted quite a different picture, especially in *Desire of Ages*, but didn’t see the need to pick a fight over the issue. Today, of course, there are any number of similar topics that could be turned into a dumpster fire with the slightest mention of a controverted point. The situation is much like that of the Pharisees and the Sadducees arguing over angels and the resurrection. That may deserve a little thought at some point.

But our focus at the moment isn’t doctrinal differences, so let’s get back to Ellen White’s comments that have a bearing on the possibility of “unlawful orders” coming from the “heart of the work.” Where did she have a concern with this?

In the great majority of cases, the issue wasn't doctrinal in the way we might think of the word. It was more *applied doctrine* than anything else, and she commonly expressed her concern with words like "liberty" and "freedom." What's the doctrine in that? Religious liberty, of course. And as a theoretical doctrine it is pointless (or worse) if it's not applied within our own church fellowship.

How does the spirit of self-exaltation and grasping for arbitrary authority compare with the spirit and example of Christ? Our people, who talk of religious liberty, have lessons to learn as to what liberty in Christ really is. The Lord has marked the oppression that has been practiced.⁵

For years, to a greater or less degree, the spirit of oppression has been leavening men in responsible positions in our offices of publication. While they have talked and written much on the subject of religious liberty, they have practiced injustice and oppression at the very heart of the work.⁶

The man who magnifies his own office in working in any line to bind about the conscience of another, be he president of the General Conference, president of a smaller conference, or the elder or deacon or lay member of a church, he is out of God's line. The Lord has been dishonored by the misrepresentations that have weakened and discouraged some of His servants, and deprived them of the opportunity to employ their talents because they will not sell their conscience or their powers for other men to use. God desires that men shall stand in their own individual responsibility, and while they are consecrated to Him there will be unity in their diversity, as branches of the true Vine. But in the present condition of things, if one stands fast to his integrity, he is by some scorned, scouted, criticized, and dropped out if it can be brought about.⁷

God has not appointed any man guide, nor made any man conscience for another; therefore let human hands be withheld from restraining His servants who feel the burden to enter His vineyard to labor. Let God work with His own chosen agents by His Holy Spirit. No human being is to sit in judgment upon his brother. Neither are any to feel that they can handle roughly the precious pearls for which Christ gave His life. The pearl, the precious human pearl, was found by Christ. Let man be warned; be careful how you treat the Lord's "peculiar treasure." All discourtesy, all pain, all neglect, which these souls suffer at your hands, is charged against you as inflicted upon Jesus Christ. They are not to be treated in a lordly, commanding manner.

Laws and rules are being made at the centers of the work that will soon be broken into atoms. Men are not to dictate. It is not for those in places of authority to employ all their powers to sustain some, while others are cast down, ignored, forsaken, and left to perish. But it is the duty of the leaders to lend a helping hand to all who are in

5. E.G. White, "The Danger of Self-Sufficiency in God's Work," May 30, 1895; Manuscript 18, 1896

6. E.G. White, Letter to C.P. Bollman, June 18, 1895; Letter 16, 1895

7. E.G. White, "To the General Conference and Our Publishing Institutions," May 24, 1898; Manuscript 66, 1898

need. Let each work in the line which God may indicate to him by His Holy Spirit. The soul is accountable to God alone. Who can say how many avenues of light have been closed by arrangements which the Lord has not advised nor instituted?

The Lord does not ask permission of those in responsible positions when He wishes to use certain ones as His agents for the promulgation of truth. But He will use whom He will use. He will pass by men who have not followed His counsel, men who feel capable and sufficient to work in their own wisdom; and He will use others who are thought by these supposedly wise ones to be wholly incompetent. Many who have some talent think that they are necessary to the cause of God. Let them beware lest they stretch themselves beyond their measure, and the Lord shall leave them to their own ways, to be filled with their own doings. None are to exercise their human authority to bind minds and souls of their fellow-men. They are not to devise and put in practice methods and plans to bring every individual under their jurisdiction.

Those who know the truth are to be worked by the Holy Spirit, and not themselves to try to work the Spirit. If the cords are drawn much tighter, if the rules are made much finer, if men continue to bind their fellow-laborers closer and closer to the commandments of men, many will be stirred by the Spirit of God to break every shackle, and assert their liberty in Christ Jesus.... If men will not come to the terms made by the leading workers, they will not entertain them, they do not care what results may follow their injustice. With them it is rule or ruin. God has not appointed any man to do such work. And no human being shall be permitted to prescribe my liberty or intrench upon the perfect freedom of my brethren, without hearing my voice lifted in protest against it.⁸

OK, first off, *note the date!* This statement comes from a particular era, when a particular set of conditions existed. This is *not* a one-size-fits-all statement, so any attempt to make it such is misguided. This picture is *not* applicable to the “heart of the work” at all times. Only *if*, and only *to the extent* that, the same or substantially similar conditions exist does this counsel have any bearing. Current application is not the point of consideration. The point of this statement, and the others to follow, is simply to show that when it comes to the risk of “unlawful orders” coming from the “heart of the work,” the area of most frequent concern was the attempt to override matters of conscience.

With that in mind, consider a few details from those four paragraphs: The issue, from the very beginning, is that “God has not appointed any man... conscience for another.” It was at the “centers of the work” that this concern had arisen. The picture painted is a gradual progression, going from objectionable, to worse, to some unidentified point at which church members would be “stirred by the Spirit of God to break every shackle.”

Of course, human nature being human nature still, it’s not hard to imagine that some misguided souls would complain that the cords were too tight, and

8. *Review and Herald*, July 23, 1895

the rules too fine, even if all was as it should be. It's unlikely Ellen White would be found "lifting her voice" in "protest against" anything in that case. And that points us to the core issue: where is the line that divides proper rules from "too fine" rules? Ellen White speaks of "those in responsible positions," but what are they responsible for? And what tools or powers do they have available by which to carry out that responsibility?

3. *Break Every Yoke*

These next quotations give us some indications:

The principles of the character of God were the foundation of the education constantly kept before the heavenly angels. These principles were goodness, mercy, and love. Self-evidencing light was to be recognized and freely accepted by all who occupied positions of trust and power. They must accept God's principles, and, through the presentation of truth and righteousness, convince all who were in His service. This was the only power to be used. Force must never come in. All who thought that their position gave them power to command their fellow beings, and control conscience, must be deprived of their position; for this is not God's plan.⁹

In the experience of God's people there have been yokes bound upon the churches that God never ordained—yokes that have greatly marred the experience, and have offended the Lord God of Israel. Because a man carries responsibilities in the church, he is not given liberty to rule the mind and judgment of others with whom the Lord is working. The Lord wants every soul in His service to understand what is the kind of work required of him. "Is not this the fast that I have chosen," He says, "to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?"¹⁰

It may not be apparent just now, but Ellen White's inclusion of Isaiah 58 in this last quotation is just one of many fascinating interconnections that exist in this whole matter. We'll have reason to remember this point later on.

It is not in the order of God that any man, or any class of men, should assume that God has made them conscience for their brethren, or put forth their finite hand in a patronizing manner to control the Lord's delegated workers, thus endangering the safety of the Lord's heritage as well as their own, and retarding the work of God. God does not confine Himself to one man, or to a set of men, through whom to accomplish His work; but says of all, "Ye are laborers together with God."¹¹

9. *Review and Herald*, September 7, 1897

10. *Review and Herald*, March 18, 1909

11. E.G. White, Letter to J.E. and Emma White, February 18, 1895; Letter 119, 1895

The fact that a man has been selected to be the president of a conference, does not mean that he shall have authority to rule over his fellow workmen. This is after the practice of Rome, and it cannot be tolerated, for it restricts religious liberty, and the man is led to place himself where God alone should be.¹²

4. *After the Practice of Rome*

There is, in that last statement, an indication of the seriousness of the kind of over-reaching authority that the devil sought to encourage at the very “heart of the work.” That “after the practice of Rome” comment deserves a little thought. Given the prophetic significance of the “man of sin,” and the devil’s end-time use of the counterfeit religious power he represents, it’s safe to say that just about *anything* “after the practice of Rome” that is found within the practice of God’s remnant church is a serious problem. Understandably—and *correctly!*—Adventists recoil at the thought of being identified in any way with the papal system. And yet, this kind of terminology shows up repeatedly in Ellen White’s discussion of these “heart of the work” issues.

God has not laid upon any living man the burden of jealously guarding the movements of His fellow men, for this would restrict his intelligent freedom. In following a course of this kind, men are pursuing a similar course to that of the Roman Catholics who center in the pope every power of the church, and ascribe to him authority to act as God, so that those below him in station lay every plan at his feet, that he may prescribe the rules for men and women in every minutia of life.¹³

The Book Committee has been following in the tread of the paths of Rome. When Professor Prescott’s matter was condemned, and refused publication, I said to myself, This committee needs the converting power of God upon their own hearts, that they may comprehend their duty. They do not know themselves. Their ideas are not to control the ideas of another. From the light which the Lord has given for the managers of the Book Committee they do not know what they should condemn or what approve. They know not the workings of God. It is not such men as these who are to work the minds of God’s heritage. The Holy Spirit must do this work. It is because of their separation from God that men have misunderstood and failed to comprehend the fact that they are not to rule their fellow men.

It is not for these men to condemn or control the productions of those whom God is using as His lightbearers to the world.... A train of circumstances has placed them where their actions are not reliable, and the cause of God would advance far better if its important matters were not brought before them.... The work would go forward more perfectly if their counsel were omitted.¹⁴

12. E.G. White, Letter to the Ministers of the Australian Conference,” November 11, 1894; Letter 53, 1894

13. E.G. White, Letter to the Ministers of the Australian Conference,” November 11, 1894; Letter 53, 1894

14. E.G. White, “The Book Committee,” October 26, 1898; Manuscript 148, 1898

Again, we see the same constellation of concerns: Those occupying a position of authority, placed there to serve God's cause, had somehow gotten confused as to what was the appropriate boundary of their jurisdiction. We may well believe that their intention was to serve God's cause—in this case, perhaps to *protect* God's cause. It seems likely that they honestly believed "Professor Prescott's matter" was in some way a threat to God's work, and so they condemned it, and "refused publication." Their presumed good intentions made little difference in the Lord's sight, and the judgment was that "their ideas are not to control the ideas of another." Put just a bit more bluntly, that meant that "they are not to rule their fellow men."

These issues of mistaken authority and the trampling of personal liberties—especially in their own work for the Lord—are at the core of what Ellen White referred to as "pursuing a similar course to that of the Roman Catholics," and "following in the tread of the paths of Rome." No, Ellen White is *not* classing the Adventist church as "Babylon." She is warning that the devil will do all in his power to circumscribe Adventist believers' religious liberties, even through potentially sincere but misguided practices within the church. Tracing that error to its root, she plainly labels all such as "the policies of the papacy."

We are engaged in an important and an essential work. We must carry on an aggressive warfare. We are to stand for the true Protestant principles; for the policies of the papacy will edge their way into every place possible, to proscribe liberty of conscience.¹⁵

We are to impress on every soul newly come to the faith that our work is aggressive. We are to carry out the principles of Protestantism. Popery is represented all around us, and unless every eye is single to the glory of God, this enormous system of popery will be interwoven with our faith and practice. Just as far as any of its deluded principles and practices shall insinuate themselves into our religious management and organizations, we are disabled and weakened, and hindered from doing our first work in personal reformation of character; for the principles of the papacy are directly opposed to religious freedom, and wherever they are cherished, an effort is made to control the conscience.¹⁶

The danger is that this "enormous system of popery" has become the norm. Not that the whole world is Roman Catholic, but the whole world is very much used to living in a system in which "those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them." (Mark 10:42) That the devil would do all in his power to "insinuate" those "deluded principles and practices... into our religious management and organizations" should surprise no one.

15. E.G. White, Letter to J.A. Burden, November 25, 1908; Letter 332, 1908

16. E.G. White, "Faithfulness in the Work of God," March 12, 1899; Manuscript 25, 1899

And “just as far as” he succeeds in that, we are “disabled and weakened” by the loss of “religious freedom” that comes through every “effort... to control the conscience.” But there’s more at stake. In the extreme, should those “policies of the papacy” become too “tight,” “many will be stirred by the Spirit of God to break every shackle.”

5. *Unforeseen Consequences*

Fortunately, nothing quite like that has happened on a denomination-wide scale, at least so far. But there are lesser effects, short of the full extreme. “Just as far as” the devil succeeds, the risk is felt first more like this:

The people have lost confidence in the management at the center of the work, and they have every reason for doing this. But if the men who cherished the principles that led to disaster could see the result of their wrong course of action, if they would humble their hearts before God, confessing their sins, the Lord would pardon their transgression and forgive their sin.¹⁷

True to character, God doesn’t simply pronounce judgment on those who have erred; He also holds out an invitation to repentance and reformation. Forgiveness is possible with our God!

But what would that look like? When the “management at the center of the work” fell into this error, how were they to correct it? Should they have run a notice on the back page of the *Review and Herald*? What would “confessing their sins” have looked like in actual practice? If I steal someone’s money, and then repent... what does that look like? Well, no mystery there: I make restitution, I give him his money back. That’s fairly simple. Very humiliating, but simple nonetheless.

But what to do when religious liberty has been stolen? Give it back, of course. But the funny thing about that kind of stealing is that it’s not a physical thing. It can’t just be handed back to its rightful owner. And, as we’ll see, the theft of liberty is generally done (perhaps even unconsciously) through the withholding of information. All it takes is to leave some of the complexities of institutional management unexplained to the responsible parties chosen to exercise their collective judgment on the issues facing God’s church. It may seem like the easier approach, but when the people find out that they have been kept “out of the loop,” you can see why they might lose “confidence in the management at the center of the work.” To restore that requires openness and honesty.

17. E.G. White, Letter to I.H. Evans, December 22, 1897; Letter 7a, 1897

6. *In Secret I Have Said Nothing*

The work and ministry of Christ contrasted sharply with the plotting of the Sanhedrin. Jesus taught openly in the streets, in the fields, in the synagogues, and in the temple. True, there were things He didn't say, because His hearers were not ready to deal with all that He knew, but He was faithful to provide all the information that was needed for them to serve God to the best of their ability. This is a habit we should make our own, but there is a frequent temptation to "manage" the flow of information, even among those who have every right to know.

In the General Conference the counsels of God have been set aside, and the counsels and wisdom of men have been relied upon. God has seen this, and He is displeased. The General Conference—what is it? What does it comprehend? Is it a General Conference, or is it something wrapped up and called by that name?

[Interrupting the quotation here, just to note Ellen White's question about the General Conference. We have spoken of the "General Conference" for so long that the term has largely lost its original meaning. From its early roots back in the Millerite movement, the term simply meant a "general" (as opposed to "special" or "limited") "conference" (defined as "a formal meeting for discussion"). In other words, a general conference was an opportunity for anyone interested in a particular topic or line of work, to come together in a formal manner to discuss the whole matter. The point of her question is clarified as the quotation continues.]

With the exception of a limited number, the people who ought to know are not intelligent in regard to its workings. A few have managed matters according to their own judgment, and the people at large know scarcely anything of what is being done at the heart of the work, only as it is represented by the men who have not set the Lord ever before them.

As I was made to understand something of the management of the work in this great center, it was all that I could bear. My spirit was pained within me, for I had lost confidence in that which I had ever presented before the people as the voice of God to His children. It has not been the voice of God. There has been a lording power exercised over God's heritage in decisions which were not dictated by the Spirit of God. Unconsecrated men who were brought in connection with the work have exercised their own wisdom, and have woven into the work their own unconverted peculiarities. Their own principles have been counterworking the principles of truth and righteousness. We cannot therefore present before the people that the voice of the General Conference in its decisions must move and control them; for its propositions and decisions cannot be accepted. They are not in the right line of progress. God is dropped out of their councils.

If “the people at large”—“the people who ought to know”—“know scarcely anything of what is being done at the heart of the work,” what needs to happen is obvious. The statement continues:

When the very heart of the work is diseased, its action must be uncertain, fitful, unreliable. It is time we had an investigation before as many people as possible. All who are helping to sustain the work should get together and understand its inward workings.¹⁸

One common method of withholding information from delegates and decision-makers is to control who is actually in attendance, and who has the privilege of presenting, at any given gathering for counsel. It would be unrealistic to operate the denomination as a full democracy where every member had to be polled before a decision could be made, but under the Holy Spirit’s guidance at the General Conference session of 1901, our system of chosen representatives was established to address that challenge. As a result, there is already a built-in limitation of discussion. Among those who are appropriately chosen as the delegated decision makers of the church, though, everything should be “as transparent as the sunlight.”¹⁹

In the councils some members have introduced principles which God has condemned. When opposed in their suggestions and devisings, they resented it. Those who would not second the propositions made were not wanted, although it was their duty to be present and to share in the deliberations and decisions. But their presence was disagreeable to the men who wished to carry things their own way.²⁰

There are men connected with the Lord’s work and institutions in Battle Creek who would not be corrupted. But they knew that if their voice should be heard calling things by their right names, they would soon for some pretense be left out of the councils. So Joseph and Nicodemus were appointed to do some apparently important work, that they might not be present at the mock trial of Christ. Some have felt great anxiety to carry out their own methods, and it was not pleasant to have others present who would oppose their measures.²¹

This idea of passing a motion by means of eliminating those who would vote against it is not new, of course. It’s just that the deceitful tactic has been registered as a sin against all who have ever practiced it!

Pharisees and Sadducees were more nearly united than ever before. Divided hitherto, they became one in their opposition to Christ. Nicodemus and Joseph had, in for-

18. E.G. White, Letter to the General Conference and Our Publishing Institutions,” May 24, 1898; Manuscript 66, 1898

19. *Mount of Blessing*, 68

20. E.G. White, Letter to Conference Presidents and Counselors, August 1896; Letter 24a, 1896

21. E.G. White, “Hearing,” 1894; Manuscript 26, 1899

mer councils, prevented the condemnation of Jesus, and for this reason they were not now summoned.²²

It may seem a stretch to consider the practice of Pharisees and Sadducees as possible examples of concern within God's Remnant, but, sadly, the warning is one which should be considered. Writing to the General Conference president at the time, Ellen White had this to say about measures to "control the conversation" on the hot button issue of the law in Galatians:

I want to see no Pharisaism among us. The matter now has been brought so fully before the people by yourself as well as Dr. Waggoner, that it must be met fairly and squarely in open discussion. I see no other way, and if this cannot be done without a spirit of Pharisaism, then let us stop publishing these matters and learn more fully lessons in the school of Christ.

I believe now that nothing can be done but open discussion. You circulated your pamphlet; now it is only fair that Dr. Waggoner should have just as fair a chance as you have had. We must work as Christians.²³

It was this position of Ellen White that set the agenda for the famous 1888 General Conference session held in Minneapolis. A century and more later, the repercussions are still discussed (and, sadly, argued over). That conference is easily the most studied, written about, and contentious in Seventh-day Adventist history. We may well ask if it was wise to insist on dealing with the issues "fairly and squarely in open discussion." If that was a great idea, why did it produce so much controversy?

No matter what position one holds on the fine points of theology embraced in that whole episode, it is hard to escape the conclusion that the problems came, not from the openness of debate, but from a failure to "work as Christians." Does anyone really think that God's cause would have been advanced had the General Conference president successfully de-platformed those who were presenting "the third angel's message in verity"?²⁴

When men think that it is a good plan to exclude the people who believe the truth from having any special, expressed voice in matters concerning the management and working of the cause, they make a great mistake. It is the people's interest and money that largely sustain the work, and as the work advances step by step, the people should be enlightened, for they are part and parcel of the work in all its movements, and in no case should their judgment be ignored. You may say, "They have not a correct understanding of the work." But when and how can they become intelligent on these matters if the work is not opened up to them?²⁵

22. *Desire of Ages*, 538

23. E.G. White, Letter to G.I. Butler and Uriah Smith, April 5, 1887; Letter 13, 1887

24. *Review and Herald*, April 1, 1890

25. E.G. White, Letter to the Ministers of the Australian Conference," November 11, 1894; Letter 53, 1894

Darkness is best dispelled by light. Religious liberty thrives on understanding. Any effort to withhold information, to prevent consideration, to limit discussion, of that which materially affects the health of God's church is to be avoided. When it is not, confidence erodes, and if pushed to the extreme, "the Spirit of God" will stir up many "to break every shackle, and assert their liberty in Christ Jesus." God has given them a right to know, a right to speak, and that which God bestows must never be surrendered carelessly to the control of those who do not understand that.

7. *Be Clothed With Humility*

Should such a re-claiming of true liberty ever become a necessity for the healing of God's church, it would be a time of great danger. Not that true liberty is dangerous, but human nature is human nature still, and nothing but the Holy Spirit could ever keep the spirits of His people truly Christlike when they find that they have been played as simple-minded chumps by those who "exercised" "a lording power... over God's heritage" in the official decision-making process.

If "the men who cherished the principles that led to disaster" need to "humble their hearts before God," then certainly those who will be tempted to hold a grudge against those who "done them wrong" will have a desperate need for humility and a forgiving spirit. Humanly speaking, the odds of all that coming together, of both "sides" suddenly displaying the character of Christ to a degree seldom seen in human history... the odds are vanishingly small. Surely all involved would need to be praying. Humility, patience, self-control—none of these are naturally present in the human heart. But consider what would be at stake!

The 1901 General Conference session has been noted as the occasion which did much to set things right at the "heart of the work." It was never an assured victory; in fact, there was no one who could have told you in advance what "victory" would even look like. At the beginning of the conference, Ellen White would speak of the great need, but was forced to say, "just how it is to be accomplished I can not say."²⁶

Three weeks later, she could rejoice at what had transpired:

Wrongs—serious wrongs—have been committed in Battle Creek. I did not know how we would get along at this meeting. The Lord gave me instruction regarding this. I was referred to an incident in the life of the prophet Elisha....

She read the familiar story of Elisha leading the blinded Syrian army to Samaria, and of the eager reaction of the king of Israel: "My father, shall I kill them? Shall I kill them?" But he answered, 'You shall not kill them. Would you

26. *General Conference Bulletin*, April 3, 1901

kill those whom you have taken captive with your sword and your bow? Set food and water before them, that they may eat and drink and go to their master.”²⁷

God presented this to me, and I did not know what it meant. I did not understand it. I pondered over it, and then, as the lesson was fulfilled, I began to grasp its meaning. I do not know that I would ever have seen the significance had it not been fulfilled right here. Who do you suppose has been among us since this Conference began? Who has kept away the objectionable features that generally appear in such a meeting? Who has walked up and down the aisles of this Tabernacle?—The God of heaven and His angels. And they did not come here to tear you in pieces, but to give you right and peaceable minds. They have been among us to work the works of God, to keep back the powers of darkness, that the work God designed should be done should not be hindered. The angels of God have been working among us.

That’s a great report to come out of a General Conference session, isn’t it? But why? What made it such a success? We would be foolish indeed to rejoice in a victory without learning the lesson of how it was won.

If any people have reason to praise God, we have. Angels of God have been at work here. The Lord knew our needs, and sent us food which has given spiritual strength and light, showing us how we should work. We have been trying to organize the work on right lines. The Lord has sent His angels to minister unto us who are heirs of salvation, telling us how to carry the work forward.

The goal was to get “organized” on “right lines,” and angelic instruction carried the day! But what was the lesson? What did “the God of heaven and His angels” impress on minds and hearts? Ellen White continues:

Remember that there is a much better way to get along than to have controversy.... Your brother may not have just the same manners and ways of speech as you have, but God does not require this of him. He may be able to reach a class that you can not reach. The very word which you wish he had not spoken may be the word which will bring conviction to hearts. Christ has made none of you church tinkers.²⁸

We don’t see a lot of tinkers these days (except maybe the church variety), so it’s worth the trouble to look into that word. It’s an old Irish name for a craftsman who repaired metal household items, most specifically pots and pans. The word itself comes from the sound made in the mending process, as the workman’s little hammer went *tink, tink, tink*, to smooth out the dents and bulges of a valued but battle-scarred utensil. And Ellen White says God hasn’t asked any of us to try fixing His church that way.

27. 2 Kings 6:21–22

28. *General Conference Bulletin*, April 25, 1901

So what's the lesson here? What was the secret that the angels were trying to teach us in 1901? How did they "keep back the powers of darkness"? How *should* we "carry the work forward" in order to "organize the work on right lines"?

Well, for starters, we should stop trying to kill our enemies—and perhaps especially so when the Lord delivers them blind and defenseless into our control. Why? Because "there is a much better way to get along than to have controversy." Because that's what "right and peaceable minds" do. Because "*tink, tink, tink*" may work on pots, but it's more apt to annoy people than it is to help. Because others may not work the same way as you; but that may be exactly as God would have it.

Somehow, through the influence and instruction of angels, God managed to teach us something about all that back in 1901. It's a hard lesson to learn, but it turns out that micro-managing the church is not a part of any earthly job description. Yes, strong leadership is needed! But only within the confines God has defined. When we begin to legislate and command and control and punish beyond what God has defined, when we exalt our own ideas or the ideas of earth's great philosophers or the ideas of worldly businessmen or scientists or the leaders of fallen churches—when we do any or all of that, we're headed for controversy. We've crossed the line from real leadership into "the tread of the paths of Rome."

Somehow... to some degree... we learned something of all that back in 1901. Hallelujah!

But it didn't last. It was fading away within eight months.

In December of that year, Ellen White wrote a letter to Percy Magan. It begins with one of the greatest opening lines in the history of letter writing, so let's look at that in passing before we get to the famous warning that is our primary interest. Magan and his brother in arms, Edward Sutherland, were struggling to establish the new Emmanuel Missionary College near Berrien Springs, Michigan. It wasn't easy. Their ideas of what "proper education" (the title of Ellen White's very first testimony on the subject) really meant were dramatically different from nearly all that had been seen before. Not everyone was impressed. Lots of people at all levels of the church's membership and administration had their own ideas on the topic, and the tinkering tendency was showing up again. But conquering new ground for God has never been easy, and Ellen White knew that the good professor needed a lesson in the basics of Christian warfare. Hence, the opening line:

Dear Brother Magan,

Your letter from Chicago received yesterday. I am very sorry that circumstances have taken the shape that they have, but why are you so faithless?

That may not be what we think of as encouragement, but encouragement doesn't always mean making people feel good about themselves. "Affirmation" and the fostering of "healthy self-esteem" is much more pleasant, but it isn't always the best approach for serious warfare. Drill sergeants know this, though they often have a different balance in all that than God does.

The struggling workers at EMC—and all God's church—were heading into a battle of incalculable importance, and God wanted to get their attention.

Brethren Sutherland and Magan, God is testing your faith, but let not your faith fail. Cling to the promises, with full faith in the One back of the promise.

They were not alone in this experience: Ellen White confided, "I have been having a severe test of my faith." The importance of faith was a recurring theme as she continued to write:

My brethren, have faith in a living, all-pitiful, and loving Saviour. I have words given me for you and Brother Sutherland, "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God.... Behold, all they that were incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded: they shall be as nothing; and they that strive with thee shall perish."

The two educators had been overworking. They were about to drop, and Ellen White told them that they had to recognize some of the limitations of humanity. There are burdens that God alone can carry:

How can finite man carry the burdens of responsibility for this time? [God's] people have been far behind. Human agencies under the divine planning may recover something of what is lost because the people who had great light did not have corresponding piety, sanctification, and zeal in working out God's specified plans. They have lost to their own disadvantage what they might have gained to the advancement of the truth if they had carried out the plans and will of God. Man cannot possibly stretch over that gulf that has been made by workers who have not been following the divine Leader.

And then, eight months after rejoicing at the outcome of the 1901 General Conference session, in this letter to two weary reformers, Ellen White wrote this famous warning:

We may have to remain here in this world because of insubordination many more years as did the children of Israel; but for Christ's sake, His people should not add sin to sin by charging God with the consequence of their own wrong course of action.²⁹

A century and more later, the interpretation seems obvious. But who was insubordinate? As usual, there was more than enough "blame" to spread around. Clearly, everyone fell short of the mark, J.H. Kellogg chief among them, with

29. E.G. White, Letter to P.T. Magan, December 7, 1901; Letter 184, 1901

his desire for control and teaching of pantheism. The General Conference brethren to a lesser degree, with their sometimes too-eager desire to put Kellogg in his place. Human nature is human nature still. Another thirteen months would pass—less than two years from the *Hallelujah!* days at the end of the General Conference session. While there were no doubt some successes along the way, the opportunity of 1901 slipped through our fingers, forever lost with the passing of time and the hardening of hearts.

The result of the last General Conference has been the greatest, the most terrible sorrow of my life. No change was made. The spirit that should have been brought into the whole work as the result of that meeting was not brought in because men did not receive the testimonies of the Spirit of God. As they went to their several fields of labor, they did not walk in the light that the Lord had flashed upon their pathway, but carried into their work the wrong principles that had been prevailing in the work at Battle Creek.

The Lord has marked every movement made by the leading men in our institutions and conferences.³⁰

It has very understandably been inviting to place all the blame for this on Dr. Kellogg, but while he certainly ruled as a “benevolent dictator” over a number of “institutions,” he was certainly not welcomed as a “leading man” in our “conferences.”

8. *Justification by... What?*

It would be well, just now, to consider a reasonable question which is likely to perplex at least some readers. Though it might easily be worded in any number of ways, the basic issue is the distinction between “inappropriate leadership” and “strong leadership.” Anyone who reads history (or watches movies, for that matter) has run into the leadership dilemma of the good guy who absolutely needs to get something done... but has to bend the rules just a bit to make it happen in a timely manner.

Is that “strong leadership”? Maybe...? as long as the final result works out well? Stop!

Go back and paraphrase that “Maybe...” sentence. You’ve heard those words before. You know where they come from. In case any question remains, here are some snippets of descriptive commentary:

In this world the leading maxim is, ‘The end justifies the means;’ and this may be traced in every department of business. It has a controlling influence... wherever the Spirit of Christ is not the ruling principle.³¹

30. E.G. White, Letter to Judge Jesse Arthur, January 14, 1903; Letter 17, 1903

31. *Testimonies*, vol. 5, 561

They reason that the end justifies the means. They virtually crucify the law of the Father, as the Jews crucified Christ.³²

But what does “bending the rules” look like in administrative circles? We’re not talking about embezzlement or fraud—financial audits generally protect against that sort of thing. But what are the areas of potential concern identified by the Spirit of Prophecy in this arena?

There are three items that Ellen White mentions repeatedly. The first—consolidating authority to oneself by working in secret, withholding information, and denying appropriate parties the right to address important issues—we have already seen.

The second commonly mentioned mistake is a tactic sometimes referred to as “railroading” policy decisions. For clarity sake, let’s note that “railroading” (as used here) means: “to push through hastily or without due consideration.” Such practices are closely related to—and might be played out in conjunction with—the withholding of information just discussed. The proper approach, of course, is for the voice and concerns of all who are affected by a policy to be heard and considered in the decision-making process, for appropriate time to be allowed for prayer and reflection before any proposal is accepted or rejected.

Men of stubborn, iron-like will, both in and out of the office, were confederating together, determined to drive certain measures through in accordance with their own judgment. I said to them: ‘You cannot do this.... It will be as great a sin in the sight of God as was the sin of Uzzah when he put forth his hand to steady the ark....

Let none of the workers exalt themselves, and seek to carry through their ideas without the sanction and co-operation of the people of God. They will not succeed, for God will not permit it.... Neither should you call together a certain chosen number who think as you do, and who will say ‘Amen’ to all that you propose, while others are excluded, who you think will not be in harmony. I was shown that there was great danger of doing this.³³

The eyes which once wept over impenitent Jerusalem—for their impenitence, their ignorance of God and of Jesus Christ, their Redeemer—were bent upon the great heart of the work in Battle Creek. They were in great peril through forming a confederacy, but they knew it not.... Men of stubborn, unbending, iron will were exercising their own traits of character to drive things through on their own judgment.³⁴

The third category is just the “illogical extension” of the previously noted practices. Whenever inappropriate authority is controlled by misguided men, it is naturally used to control others.

32. *Testimonies*, vol. 3, 213

33. *Special Testimonies*, Series A, No. 2b, 108–110

34. *Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, 917

Men are to speak and write, not under a man's inspiration, but according to the dictates of the Holy Spirit. This dictation on the part of human agents to God's delegated workers is an offense to God. Those who are handling the subject of religious liberty, must in no case educate themselves in the practice of religious intolerance, even on a small scale.³⁵

Men, fallible men, are not to think it is their prerogative to control, to mark out, or to prescribe the labors of their fellow men. When God works upon the human instrumentality, let men be very careful how they intermeddle; for in its process, the work of God is divine. The work of God has often been hindered by men considering that they had power to say, "Go here" or "Go there," "Do this" or "Do that," without consulting the individual himself, or respecting his convictions as a laborer together with God. God has promised His presence to every believer; and let those who are in positions of authority—presidents of conferences and board councils, and everyone who has to do with the human mind—respect the individuality of mind and conscience. These workers are in co-partnership with Jesus Christ, and you may interpose yourself so as to interfere with God's plans, for the human agent is under His special authority and dictation.³⁶

You belong to God, soul, body, and spirit. Your mind belongs to God, and your talents belong to Him also. No one has a right to control another's mind, and judge for another, prescribing what is his duty. There are certain rights that belong to every individual, in doing God's service. No man has any more right to take these rights from us than to take life itself. God has given us freedom to think, and it is our privilege to follow our impressions of duty. We are only human beings, and one human being has no jurisdiction over the conscience of any other human being.³⁷

A man-ruling power came gradually into our ranks. Men were appointed to be rulers over their fellow men—men whose ways were not the ways of the Lord and whose works were not His works. God has never decreed that man should thus be made amenable to his fellow man, or that one brother should dictate to another concerning individual duty. He has never bidden any man accept the words and experience of a fellow worker and to follow the judgment of a man-ruling power.³⁸

The reader may be pardoned at this point if all this seems depressing. It is depressing, but it is not God's plan that His people remain beat down by the devil's triumphs. Jesus Himself intended that His disciples' "joy may be full"! Indeed, "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning." (Psalms 30:5) It's just that morning comes when the light of truth arises, so that which obstructs the Lord's plans must be put out of the way.

35. E.G. White, Letter to the Ministers of the Australian Conference, November 11, 1894; Letter 53, 1894

36. E.G. White, Letter to J.E. and Emma White, February 18, 1895; Letter 119, 1895

37. E.G. White, Letter to J.E. and Emma White, February 17, 1895; Letter 92, 1895

38. E.G. White, Letter to Elder Knox, January 21, 1908; Letter 54, 1908

Still, as a sort of parenthetical note of good cheer, and in defense of noble men who deserve better than to be remembered only for their weaknesses, let us note the record of three successive General Conference presidents whose stories intertwine with all that we have considered. Elder G.I. Butler served in that position—for the second time—from 1880–1888; his successor was Elder O.A. Olsen, 1888–1897; and next was Elder G.A. Irwin, 1897–1901. Each of these men stumbled at times, as Inspiration faithfully records:

Elder Butler, we think, has been in the office three years too long, and now all humility and lowliness of mind have departed from him. He thinks his position gives him such power that his voice is infallible. To get this off from the minds of our brethren has been a difficult matter. His case will be difficult to handle, but we trust in God.³⁹

Do not overlook those last five words! Trust in God is needed when we consider the cases of our brethren just as surely as when we consider our own guilty souls!

[To Elder Olsen] A net has been spread to involve the Conference, a net that the people know not of, and that very few suspect the existence of. The condition of things is binding your hands and hindering the work. The crisis will soon be reached. The state of things is not fully revealed to me, but this much I know: to a great degree, the management of finances has been conducted on wrong principles. While all is supposed [believed] to be prosperous, there is peril.

You have connected with you men who have no living connection with God. You fear to exercise your judgment, lest there should be an explosion. This is why I feel so sad.⁴⁰

Brother Olsen, you know of the things whereof I speak, and can see the reason of my request. Give your messengers time to look for themselves. Bear in mind that the messengers of God are not to go forth bitted and bridled. God does not do any of this compelling work, and He does not want that men should do it. He has promised to give us grace and strength if we will ask for it.⁴¹

From the beginnings of his work as president of the General Conference, Elder Olsen's policy has been a mistake. Instead of upholding that which he knew to be according to the law of God, instead of standing firmly as a faithful guardian for those holy trusts which would keep the great heart of the work pure, at any apparent expense or financial loss, he has tried to occupy a position on both sides. He has not been altogether in harmony with the men I have referred to, but so much so that Satan has stolen a march upon him. Unconsciously he has been ensnared, and his principles of integrity and purity have been corrupted. God has been dishonored, and His Spirit has been grieved.⁴²

39. E.G. White, Letter to Mary White, November 4, 1888; Letter 82, 1888

40. E.G. White, Letter to O.A. Olsen, May 1, 1895; Letter 57, 1895

41. E.G. White, Letter to O.A. Olsen, June 20, 1895; Letter 64, 1895

42. E.G. White, Letter to the Men who occupy Responsible Positions in the Work, July 1, 1896; Letter 4, 1896

My brother [Elder Olsen], after the reproof has come to you, you have represented that the voice of the Conference was a power to be respected as the voice of God. Why did you entrench yourself as president of the General Conference behind the sacredness of power in the General Conference, when you and your associates had forfeited, as verily as did Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, all right to the claim?⁴³

In reference to your [Elder Irwin] position, you have not done that which the president of the General Conference should do to set this matter in order, and God will not remove His censure from the conference until clean work is made and everything has been done that can be done to make full restitution. God is dishonored and the work has languished for years because of selfishness and robbery of the Southern field.⁴⁴

Now, this recitation of human shortcomings hardly sounds like a note of good cheer. Failure to follow the Holy Spirit's leading, failure to reflect the character of Christ, is always tragic. But God's hand is not shortened. He still has means by which blessing may come. Following the terms of these three Elders, at the General Conference session of 1901, Ellen White summed up the disappointment of the era, but *just as Jesus did at His crucifixion*, she sought to excuse as far as possible the mistakes made:

In reference to our Conference, it is repeated o'er and o'er and o'er again that it is the voice of God, and therefore everything must be referred to the Conference, and have the Conference's voice in regard to permission or restriction, or what shall be and what shall not be done in the various fields....

We have heard enough, abundance about, Everything must go around in the regular lines.⁴⁵ When we see the regular lines are impressed and purified and refined, and the God of the Heavens' mold is upon the regular lines, then it is our business to establish the regular lines. But when we see that message after message that God has given has been taken and accepted, but no change—just the same as it was before, then we know that there is new blood that must be brought into the regular lines. The managers of the regular lines, they must have an entire change, an entire new organization, and to have a Committee that shall take in not merely a half a dozen that is to be a ruling and a controlling power....

And the management, it is becoming confused in itself—not that any one means to be wrong or to do wrong; but the principle is wrong, and the principles have become so mixed and so foreign from what God's principles are....

The situation was grim, nevertheless, Ellen White didn't try to blame individuals who might justly have borne responsibility. No, she attributed much if not all of the disaster to "confusion," the distortion of "principles." Confusion, of

43. E.G. White, Letter to O.A. Olsen, April 1898; Letter 194, 1898

44. E.G. White, Letter to G.A. Irwin, January 1900; Letter 210, 1900

45. This expression, "the regular lines," might generally be defined more fully as "the regular lines of administrative management." We will encounter a similar, but distinct, expression some pages from now. It will be helpful to recognize and keep in mind both the similarities and the differences between the two.

course, is one of the devil's more effective weapons, the very hallmark of his own kingdom of Babylon. Confusion in church administrative circles is never an asset.

9. *Redemption Is Real*

But here's the good news in all of this, and it should not be lost sight of. Not only did Ellen White seek to excuse the erring as much as possible, but none of those three General Conference presidents were cast aside from the Lord's work. Certainly, they faced challenges and disappointments, and it required both time and the demonstration of their sincere desire to serve the Lord in order to fully restore confidence. But largely through Ellen White's solicitude, all three were held back from the discouragement or wounded pride that might easily have led them to shun contact with their brethren or even seek separation from the church. Elders Olsen and Irwin again filled important positions in church leadership, but perhaps the clearest, most encouraging evidence of this kind of personal recovery is a heart-warming comment Ellen White made concerning Elder Butler. It had been fourteen years since he had held office at the General Conference. Much of that time had been spent in relative obscurity, caring for his invalid wife. Those years provided time for reflection, and the Lord certainly never cast the Elder aside. Ellen White would write:

Elder Butler is strong in physical and spiritual health. The Lord has proved and tested and tried him, as He did Job and as He did Moses. I see in Elder Butler one who has humbled his soul before God. He has another spirit than the Elder Butler of younger years. He has been learning his lesson at the feet of Jesus.⁴⁶

Praise the Lord! There is great cause for hope in the service of God. That's the good news which the Lord engineered over time, but when the issues needed to be addressed in 1901 that good news was yet to be worked out, and so Ellen White's speech at that time continued to press the urgency of the immediate need.

To have this Conference pass on and close up as the Conferences have done, with the same manipulating, with the very same tone and the same order—God forbid! God forbid, brethren....

God wants us to arouse. God wants us to take hold of this work—every human agency, and He wants us to work for time and for eternity. The treading over and over and over and over the same ground—here are our large churches, and they ought to be turning out men, educating and training and disciplining; and there ought to be those who should connect with the responsibilities, that shall go out into fields to carry the message, and the barren fields that have been, oh, so barren, more especially in the Southern field, that is scarcely touched, notwithstanding the message has come

46. E.G. White, Letter to Brother and Sister Keck, May 1902; Letter 77, 1902

from God for the last, I might say—well, I do not know how many years—it is quite a number of years, and these things have been told. Our standstill has got to come to an end; but yet every Conference, it is woven after the very same pattern. It is the very same loom that carries it, and finally it will come to naught.

Now God wants a change, and it is high time, it is high time that there were ability that should connect with the Conference, with the General Conference, right here in its sitting—not wait till it is done, and then find—not wait till it is all done and over with, and then gather up the forces to see what can be done. We want to know what can be done right here, what can be done right now, and what power and intellect that there is that shall be brought into this work, and that they shall unite their powers and take hold of it intelligently, and that God can work with them. Now this is what we want, and we want that every institution that bears a responsibility bears a voice in the working of this cause which they have a decided interest in....

And we want men that shall stand just as true as the compass to the pole; and God will test these men, and unless they can show a better idea of what principle is, what sanctified and heavenly and Christlike principle is, why then they will have to be changed, and try another. But God is going to have a change. He wants us to know what it means to work on the principles of Heaven. He wants officers to know what it means for every one to stand in his lot and in his place, and every soul that has had the responsibility, that he should have been a guardian, that he should have been a shepherd, that he should have had patience.⁴⁷

It is that “greatest want of the world” that is needed in God’s church. When it is lacking, a change is in order. It may even be necessary to “try another.” The goal is the controlling power of “sanctified and heavenly and Christlike principle” in the church. While *every* “Christlike principle” is to be cherished “on earth as it is in heaven,” within the confines of the present discussion two stand out. The principle of *honesty* will banish every trace of deception that darkens human plans and hearts, and the principle of *humility* will imbue God’s church with the grace that abandons all claims of monopoly. The church is God’s chosen tool in a special sense. Like the disciples in Christ’s day, it stands in a closer relationship to Him than any others, and yet in humility it is to welcome the efforts of all, even those who “cast out demons” in Christ’s name, but “do not follow with us.”⁴⁸ Surely there are demons enough for all, and even these workers are worthy of their wages.⁴⁹

47. E.G. White, “Talk: I would prefer not to speak today,” April 1, 1901; Manuscript 43d, 1901

48. Mark 9:38

49. Though on this point it should be noted that the “wages” Jesus spoke of amounted to room and board! It’s also not a bad idea—before making any claims of this promise—to look over the job description: “Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs among wolves. Carry neither money bag, knapsack, nor sandals; and greet no one along the road. But whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’ And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest on it; if not, it will return to you. And remain in the

The church is still the church militant. She is not yet “Clear as the sun, Awesome as an army with banners,”⁵⁰ but “God’s purposes know no haste and no delay.”⁵¹ As Ellen White put it, “We are not the least discouraged. We trust in the Lord God of Israel. The truth will triumph and we mean to triumph with it.”⁵²

And yet “trust in the Lord” does not rule out the need for human involvement. Jonathan and a single armor bearer trusted in the Lord and triumphed with Him, but they did so with swords over in the Philistine garrison, not sitting under a pomegranate tree with six hundred men like the king.⁵³ This matter of “trying another” “officer” of the church is the delegated responsibility of certain individuals. Upon the General Conference Committee and the delegates at each General Conference session rests the solemn duty to adjust matters “at the head of the work.”

There is no need to doubt, to be fearful that the work will not succeed. God is at the head of the work, and He will set everything in order. If matters need adjusting at the head of the work, God will attend to that, and work to right every wrong. Let us have faith that God is going to carry the noble ship which bears the people of God safely into port.⁵⁴

It is in mercy that the Lord assigns responsibility to His workers. Workers may fail, and the Lord is still merciful. He presents every inducement He can, and His patience is typically so great as to perplex those who, like Jeremiah, are led to question, “Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why are those happy who deal so treacherously?”⁵⁵ But let all be warned that there are limits.

After the loss of the General Conference’s “voice of God” status in the 1890s; after the reorganization of 1901 and the “greatest, the most terrible sorrow” of the failed reformation that was its outcome; then came the fires of 1902. The Sanitarium was lost on February 18, and the Review and Herald publishing house on December 30. And yet there were those who refused to see God’s hand in it all. In response, Ellen White gave a warning which, thankfully, has not yet seen fulfillment. Praise the Lord for mercy, and praise the Lord for leaders who will not “go right on” when wrongs exist.

Brethren, God is in earnest with us. I want to tell you that if after the warnings given in these burnings, the leaders of our people go right on, just as they have done in

same house, eating and drinking such things as they give, for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not go from house to house.” Luke 10:3–7

50. Song of Solomon 6:10

51. *Desire of Ages*, 32

52. *Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, 183

53. 1 Samuel 14:1–15

54. *Review and Herald*, September 20, 1892

55. Jeremiah 12:1

the past, exalting themselves, God will take the bodies next. Just as surely as He lives, He will speak to them in language that they cannot fail to understand.⁵⁶

10. *In the Trenches*

At the very beginning of this present discussion, the phrases “sanctified insubordination” and “unlawful order” were used to introduce the topic. It should be pointed out clearly that neither of these phrases appear anywhere in Ellen White’s writings. “Millennium” never appears in the Bible, either, so that’s not an automatic disqualifier. But so far we have only looked at conditions and practices which have existed in the past, not actual cases of justified “insubordination.” What about those poor soldiers down in the trenches, the privates at the bottom of the command structure? Did they ever have to refuse unlawful orders?

Truth be told, the Adventist church can be grateful that there aren’t many such examples. But the few specific examples teach some important lessons. That said, it will require a little review of some basic denominational history in order to take a balanced view of those examples. We’ll start with this:

As our numbers increased, it was evident that without some form of organization, there would be great confusion, and the work would not be carried forward successfully. To provide for the support of the ministry, for carrying the work in new fields, for protecting both the churches and the ministry from unworthy members, for holding church property, for the publication of the truth through the press, and for many other objects, organization was indispensable....

We had a hard struggle in establishing organization. Notwithstanding that the Lord gave testimony after testimony upon this point, the opposition was strong, and it had to be met again and again.⁵⁷

After the “passing of the time” in 1844, the remnants of the Millerite movement were shattered and scattered. Add in the emerging truths of the Sabbath, the Sanctuary, and the Spirit of Prophecy, and the number of believers who held to all that was small indeed. Organization was a pipe dream. These believers were strong, independent-minded folk. You don’t take up new and unpopular truths if you’re anything else. And that strength, that independence was good. Up to a point....

But in time, “our numbers increased, [and] it was evident that... some form of organization” was needed. That finally happened in 1863—nearly nineteen years after October 22, 1844. Nineteen years. And James and Ellen White lived

56. E.G. White, “Talk: Words of Counsel,” March 26, 1903; Manuscript 11, 1903

57. *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, January 29, 1893

through every disorganized twist and turn of them. The point is simple: Ellen White knew the value of an organized church. It was important to her. And it's important that we understand her commitment to its preservation. If we don't see the value of organization, if we don't see Ellen White's interest in maintaining what had cost so much effort to achieve, we will miss the magnitude of this next statement.

I was confirmed in all I had stated in Minneapolis that a reformation must go through the churches. Reforms must be made, for spiritual weakness and blindness were upon the people who had been blessed with great light and precious opportunities and privileges. As reformers they had come out of the denominational churches, but they now act a part similar to that which the churches acted. We hoped that there would not be the necessity for another coming out. While we will endeavor to keep the "unity of the Spirit" in the bonds of peace, we will not with pen or voice cease to protest against bigotry.⁵⁸

This comment, speaking of the brethren (located principally in Battle Creek) who opposed the message brought to the 1888 General Conference session by Jones and Waggoner, is a stark departure from her normal position. She describes these opposing brethren as "reformers" who had "come out of the denominational churches." In those years, there weren't many second-generation Adventists. Most members had indeed "come out" of some other church. But a change had come in the experience of some, and they were now acting much like the fallen churches they had left.

But the most arresting comment is, "We hoped that there would not be the necessity for another coming out." The meaning of "coming out" is too clear to question. She asserts her dedication to unity, but even in that context makes it unquestionably subordinate to continuing her "protest against bigotry."

11. Clear... But Unusual

This statement is an outlier. In fact, when it was first published⁵⁹, the White Estate inserted an explanatory note that says:

This is the only known statement from the pen of Ellen White indicating that she might have lost confidence in the Seventh-day Adventist church organization. The doubt which she expressed here was never repeated during the remaining twenty-six years of her life.

That's an accurate assessment, but there is more to the story. In 1888, there were actually two series of meetings held in Minneapolis, one right after the

58. E.G. White, "Experience Following the Minneapolis Conference," late June 1889; Manuscript 30, 1889

59. *Last Day Events*, 48

other. First was a ten-day Ministerial Institute, and then there was the General Conference Session.

The controversy over Elder Waggoner's teaching erupted early, during the Ministerial Institute. On the last day of those meetings, Ellen White made a strongly worded public statement in one of her sermons that seems to indicate at least something similar to her later "coming out" comment. Here's what she said:

Now, this is the last ministers' meeting we will have unless you wish to meet together yourselves. If the ministers will not receive the light, I want to give the people a chance; perhaps they may receive it.⁶⁰

This is not quite the same as the "another coming out" statement she made several months later, but it's unusual enough in its own right. It seems that she was almost "threatening," if you wish, to by-pass the organizational structure of the church. To go around the unreceptive ministers in an effort to reach the rank-and-file church members.

In fact, that's pretty much what she did. For about a year and a half after the Minneapolis General Conference, Ellen White traveled from place to place with Jones and Waggoner and held meetings for the people, all the while dealing with the opposition of some of the leading lights of Battle Creek.

Ellen White valued organization, no question about it. So to be seen as pulling away from the ministry as a class had to have been a "big deal" for her. But the issues she saw coming out of Jones and Waggoner's teaching were evidently significant enough that she unhesitatingly took that route. That's important to note. It provides a sense of scale and perspective to the discussion that sometimes gets lost in the theology.

This comment made at Minneapolis is just an indicator of the stresses that were already piling up at that time, the same stresses which led to her "another coming out" statement some months later. And, as the White Estate said, there is no other "coming out statement" recorded in the rest of her life.

12. *Come Up To The Work*

But it turns out that, though she never again spoke of "another coming out," there *was* another situation in which she spoke of by-passing—not only ministers—but even conference presidents!

There is enough wealth in your conference to carry forward this work successfully; and shall the prince of darkness be left in undisputed possession of our great cities be-

60. *Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, 152

cause it costs something to sustain missions? Let those who would follow Christ fully come up to the work, even if it be over the heads of ministers and president.⁶¹

The topic is the failure of some leaders to take up and encourage “medical missionary work” in the large cities within their conference. And here’s another statement, in which Ellen White first addresses the leaders, and then the rank-and-file church members—

If you feel no interest in the work that is going forward, if you will not encourage medical missionary work in the churches, it will be done without your consent; for it is the work of God, and it must be done. My brethren and sisters, take your position on the Lord’s side and be earnest, active, courageous co-workers with Christ, laboring with Him to seek and save the lost.⁶²

A subtle indication of the gravity of this issue can be seen in the command to “take your position on the Lord’s side.” Do you recognize the phrase? It comes from Exodus 32:26. That’s what Moses said when he came into the camp and interrupted the celebration around the Golden Calf. It was the tribe of Levi which responded to His call, and—at Moses direction—they then proceeded to kill about 3,000 of the idolaters. Now, Ellen White wasn’t promoting homicide, but she clearly placed Medical Missionary Work as a high priority. Incidentally, some of that importance comes from its connection to religious liberty. Isaiah 58 puts caring for the hungry, the homeless, and the naked on the same plane as loosing the bonds of wickedness and breaking every yoke.

That comment, just quoted from volume 8 of the *Testimonies*, is an adaptation of a letter to specific individuals. Here’s how the original went:

If you feel no interest in the work that is going forward, if you will not encourage medical missionaries to work in the churches, they will do it without your consent, for this work must and will be done. Brother Smith [long-time editor of the *Review and Herald*], Brother Durland [Michigan Conference president, 1897–1898], Brother Evans [Michigan Conference president, 1891–1897], Brother Irwin [General Conference president, 1897–1901], in the name of the Lord, I call upon you to take your position on the Lord’s side. Do not be found fighting against God.⁶³

In this original version, the contrast between supporting medical missionary work and opposing it, is explicit. It’s the difference between being on the Lord’s side, and fighting against God.

So we’ve found two different issues—the message of Righteousness by Faith, and the support of Medical Missionary work—both of which are sufficiently important that God’s people are justified in pushing forward even if Church

61. *Testimonies*, vol. 5, 369

62. *Testimonies*, vol. 8, 75

63. E.G. White, Letter to Brethren, June 6, 1898; Letter 51, 1898

officials oppose them. And yet, if one is willing to accept some equivalency between “Righteousness by Faith” and “the gospel,” these aren’t two different issues at all; they’re the same thing.

The work that the Great Teacher did in connection with His disciples is the example we are to follow in our medical missionary work....

It is only by an unselfish interest in those in need of help that we can give a practical demonstration of the truths of the gospel....

Much more than mere sermonizing is included in preaching the gospel. The ignorant are to be enlightened; the discouraged are to be uplifted; the sick are to be healed....

Do medical missionary work. Thus you will gain access to the hearts of the people. The way will be prepared for more decided proclamation of the truth. You will find that relieving their physical suffering gives you opportunity to minister to their spiritual needs.

The Lord will give you success in this work; for the gospel is the power of God unto salvation when it is interwoven with the practical life, when it is lived and practiced. The union of Christlike work for the body and Christlike work for the soul is the true interpretation of the gospel.⁶⁴

Notice especially that final sentence. The union of those two elements, far too commonly kept separate, is not just “an interpretation”; no, it is “*the true interpretation of the gospel.*” In confirmation of this unique importance, is the result of splitting those two elements:

My brethren, the Lord calls for unity, for oneness. We are to be one in the faith. I want to tell you that when the gospel ministers and the medical missionary workers are not united, there is placed on our churches the worst evil that can be placed there. Our medical missionaries ought to be interested in the work of our conferences, and our conference workers ought to be as much interested in the work of our medical missionaries.⁶⁵

The difference between “the true interpretation of the gospel” and “the worst evil” that can be “placed on our churches” is vast. Faced with an issue of that magnitude, the inspired counsel clarifies the choice between preserving the *form* of church organization and preserving the *purpose* of church organization. The loss of the form is a tragedy; the loss of the purpose is fatal. If faced with that choice, believers who “follow Christ fully [will] come up to the work, even if it be over the heads of ministers and president.”

In plain English, organizational cancellation of “the true interpretation of the gospel” is an unlawful order.

64. *Review and Herald*, March 4, 1902

65. E.G. White, “Talk: The Foundation of Our Faith,” May 18, 1904; Manuscript 46-1904

Now, a healthy word of warning is in order just here, because even medical missionary workers have “human nature still.” The inspired instruction is not one-sided. “Our medical missionaries ought to be interested in the work of our conferences.” God gives no license for unlimited priority or preference to be given to everything claiming the “medical missionary” title. Indeed, this was at the very root of Dr. Kellogg’s personal failing.

13. *The Cattle on a Thousand Hills*

It is a natural—and arguably beneficial—human trait to desire simplicity in the decision-making process. Who does not prefer a clear road map to a complicated one? Occam’s Razor is rightly famous for its functional value.

Sometimes, though, life is complicated. There is such a thing as irreducible complexity, and its influence is felt far beyond the creation/evolution discussion. There are some matters of church finance which fall into this arena, and which suffer at times from the natural desire for a quick, simple, and decisive conclusion.

Perhaps more than any other aspect of this broad constellation of “sanctified insubordination,” the very specific matter of tithing is affected in this way. The topic often appears straight forward and so clear as to leave no room for discussion, let alone variance. By and large, this has not been a problem, for reasons which will become apparent shortly. But complexity lurks in the details.

An excellent introduction to this topic may be found in Arthur White’s wonderful biography of his grandmother. Beginning on page 389 of the fifth volume are two subsections which tell the story of perhaps the key event. “Tithe Money and Its Use” and “How and Why Ellen White Dispensed Tithe Funds” present a good overview.

In short, some church members in Colorado gave a donation to a traveling “agent” of the church’s work in the southern United States. *Some* of the money was tithe. *All* of the donation was used to pay “approved laborers who were engaged in regular denominational work.”

This should have been an entirely unremarkable incident, but....

The action was irregular on the part of the agent who received the money, and the church that paid it to him. This action was considered by the officers of the Colorado Conference to be not only irregular but wrong and censurable. The matter became known to Sister White, and from Mountain View she wrote a letter to the conference president, dated January 22, 1905.⁶⁶

This letter to Elder Watson has become something of a contentious matter, with assertions being made as to its meaning and intent that, frankly, have been

66. A.L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Early Elmshaven Years*, Volume 5, 394

strained from multiple angles for a variety of motives. Ellen White's main point seems clear, as evidenced in her opening and closing comments:

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 the most discouraging field in the world, the more sensible you will be...

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 their example.⁶⁷

Her message is simple: "Be smart; keep quiet." The rest of the tale hangs on the reason she gave for holding one's peace: "lest many more shall follow their example."

We might well ask why "many" would ever consider such a thing, and therein lies the compounding factor of the whole situation. And, as the reader may have surmised, the issues involved touch on the question of "lawful orders" and "sanctified insubordination." Much has been written on this point in the past, with many efforts at "proof-texting" or "proof-quoting" for two main positions.

1. The effort to preserve tithe funds as sacred to the support of the recognized ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, including the inviolable right of the organized Adventist church to administer those funds, and
2. The effort to show that tithe funds may be appropriately administered in a wider variety of ways, for a wider variety of purposes, and by a wider variety of administrative authorities.

The historical facts of the case are important, so "proof-quoting" isn't all bad. But in order to harmonize all the available evidence, something more nuanced than the two positions above is necessary. To do that, of course, will require the consideration of a considerable amount of history. This is a risky proposition, for the simple reason that going over the whole story is a time consuming process, and that human desire for "simplicity in the decision-making process" is likely to kick in before the process can be completed. Perhaps now is a good time to recall that "the patience of the saints" is a virtue highly regarded in Scripture.

14. *Why Would Many More Follow Their Example?*

One valid concern was the issue of timing. Specifically, how long would it take to get a donation to its point of intended service. The "agent" provided a quick and easy way to get the cash where it was supposed to go, but more on that in a while. Unfortunately, the marquee issue was "misappropriation of funds." To make sense of all this, it helps to understand the lay of the land.

67. E.G. White, Letter to G.F. Watson, January 22, 1905; Letter 267, 1905

The southern United States was neglected by the Adventist church for a long time. This had led Ellen White to write extensively on the topic, encouraging aggressive work in the region. Ellen White's son, James Edson White, played a significant role in pioneering "the southern work," with one of his more significant contributions being the establishment of the Southern Missionary Society in mid-1895. For whatever reasons, details about the SMS are scarce, but Arthur White provides a good general picture:

The Southern Missionary Society [was] an organization... that was recognized by the General Conference as the agency largely responsible for the work of the church among the blacks. This was almost entirely a self-supporting work, carried on with approval of church leaders and with minimal financial assistance.⁶⁸

Faced with the reality of "minimal financial assistance," the Society's "basis for financial support of the work" was the sale of books written by Edson White.⁶⁹ This "step-child status" in which the SMS had to largely pay its own way was a constant source of friction, with both groups feeling the stress. Unsurprisingly, money was central to many of the concerns.

Especially after the reorganization of the church's structure in 1901, the General Conference sought to improve its relationship with the Southern Missionary Society. (Prior to reorganization, the record was "a very poor one," such that "God has been greatly dishonored,"⁷⁰ but for our purposes we will be focusing on the later, significantly happier, time period.) Along with mission fields in "Canada, Mexico, Central and South America, the West Indies, Great Britain, Scandinavia, Russia, the Balkan States, Germania, the Latin field, the Orient, Africa, India, China, Japan, Korea, Polynesia, etc."⁷¹, the Southern Missionary Society was allotted a budget each year. Everyone was fine with that much, all around.

15. So... What's the Problem?

The sand in the gears of the working relationship came from the effort to provide the needed funds beyond the annual allotment. As mentioned, much of this came from the sale of *The Gospel Primer*, a simple book used to simultaneously teach reading and Bible stories. Among the black community of the South—still struggling to overcome the effects of slavery—this little book was a godsend. In Battle Creek, however, it was seen in a different light.

68. A.L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Early Elmshaven Years*, Volume 5, 39

69. A.L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Early Elmshaven Years*, Volume 5, 41

70. E.G. White, Letter to A.G. Daniells, June 5, 1901; Letter 59, 1901

71. A.G. Daniels, Letter to W.C. White, March 10, 1905

The success of *Gospel Primer* chafed the men whose hearts have not been connected with God. They could not possibly let God work through His own instrumentalities to plant His standard in a field that has been almost entirely neglected. By every plausible device, Satan has worked to discourage the ones who entered that field. Determined effort has been made to retard the work and bind the workmen. When the Lord opened the way for the sale of *Gospel Primer*, and before one step was openly [taken] to kill it, I was shown that it would be done, because there are those connected with the institutions who do not keep the way of the Lord.⁷²

In giving Edson White \$8 a week to work in a field where poverty and distress are on every hand—and he has nothing besides this to depend on to relieve the situation—do you feel that you are doing a liberal thing? How does this compare with the \$30 a week paid right in Battle Creek, where there are no special sacrifices to make, and paid to those who had no such work to do? Not one word of complaint has come to me from Edson in regard to his wages, only he told me he was terribly disappointed by the action taken at the conference to buy the *Gospel Primer*.⁷³

Did the Lord counsel you [“Brethren Connected with the Review and Herald Office”] to devise the various means that have been devised to work and control human minds? No, I tell you, no. Did your devising in regard to the *Gospel Primer* meet the approval of God? No; the principle upon which you acted was wrong. Individual service is to be rendered to God, not to be controlled by any one man or set of men. Movements have been made that mean much in their outworking. Men who are serving where they should not be have sent an example that is leavening the conferences. The presidents of conferences are being imbued with a spirit to rule, to require men to bow to their judgment; if any refuse, the course pursued toward them is such as to fill heaven with indignation.⁷⁴

There is much more to this aspect of the story, but suffice it to say that issues of finance were being intertwined with the denial of religious liberty. Note the date—the three letters just quoted are all from 1895. For the six years following, the working relationship between the General Conference and the Southern Missionary Society had some “highs” and a fair number of “lows.” Ellen White had words of counsel during this time:

The neglect of the men in responsible positions to heed the appeals that have been made for the Southern Field, and closing their senses so that they should not do the very work of God that they should do, left the burden upon the workers to feel free to go anywhere, in any part of the American field, and call directly upon the people and ask them to help—their means not to pass through any office or society. Also those who are workers in these destitute fields, if those who are as stewards over the works

72. E.G. White, Letter to the Men in Responsible Positions in Battle Creek, September 1895; Letter 4, 1895

73. E.G. White, Letter to Brethren in Responsible Positions in America, July 24, 1895; Letter 5, 1895

74. E.G. White, Letter to Brethren Connected with the Review and Herald, November 8, 1898; Letter 122, 1895

which should demand their interest and their help neglect their responsibility—then those who understand the necessities of the field have a perfect right to bring their case before the hearts of those who are not sealed and solicit help. I am sorry to have to say this, but the Lord's work in His vineyard must be done. And if the men in responsible positions make no special effort to prepare the way for the workers, they must devise and plan to prepare their own way.⁷⁵

Things improved somewhat with the 1901 reorganization, but this was the messy background on which the donation from Colorado was played out in 1905. Once, before that time, and once again shortly after, donations had been sent to the General Conference for the SMS, but hadn't been delivered. This led to "concerns" (read, "complaints") from the SMS. Apparently some of those presenting these "concerns" managed to spread them quite widely. (Don't say you weren't warned: "Human nature is human nature still.")

Elder W.C. White—more than most of the church's administrative corp—shared his mother's deep interest in the Southern Work, and so he like many others heard these complaints. Unlike many others, he tried to do something constructive about the situation, and he exerted an influence on both sides of the divide.

Since actually doing something constructive seems like a good idea, we may well ask what his secret was, how did he go about this? In simple English, he worked to get the two parties together. "Sit down, talk, straighten things out, figure out how to do better!"

This lengthy excerpt from one of his letters to the Secretary of the Southern Missionary Society paints the picture:

I have just received your letter of November 22, in which you speak again of the matter about which you have written so frequently during the last few months. That is, the possibility of the Southern Missionary Society's failing to receive monies that have been given for its work, and which are transmitted through the regular channels.

You are well aware, Brother Bollman, that I have protested against an influence being brought to bear upon our people to make them feel that they were doing wrong if they send money direct to the Southern Missionary Society, the Madison School, and similar enterprises. I have not stood with those who urged that everything go through the regular channels.

But really, I cannot see any reason to criticize any individual, church, or Conference, that prefers to forward their donations through the regular channels.

I have no sympathy nor patience with complaints or suspicions expressed regarding this matter. And if it should become known to our brethren of the California Conference Committee or at the Sanitarium church that Brother Rogers is pouring in complaints to you regarding this matter, it would stand materially in the way of future

75. E.G. White, Letter to Brethren Irwin and Haskell, September 12, 1899; Letter 219, 1899

donations to your Society. Brother Bollman, I want you to look this thing square in the face, and analyze it carefully; because I believe that in these ungrounded suspicions and complaints made by Brother Rogers, you may learn a useful lesson regarding the suspicions and complaints which you express so freely regarding the General Conference and Southern Union Conference administration. I speak plainly, not because I want to hurt you, but because I want you to see that there is danger of your hurting the precious work that you are giving your life to build up.

When I pressed upon Elder Daniells the arguments that you have pressed so continuously upon my attention, that there were cases where the diversion of funds had been proved, and this was an intimation that it had been done in many other cases, he tells me that there are only two instances where it has been discovered that errors were made. One is the Morton gift of five or six years ago; the other the Nebraska gift which has occasioned so much painful correspondence this summer; and he protests that these two instances do not furnish sufficient ground for the continual suspicion and accusation that comes from your office.

I speak clearly about that, because as you know I have been urging for months that you and the officers of the General Conference should meet and come to some understanding that would remove the occasion for accusation and suspicion.

If, as you say in your last letter to me, "We have met so many experiences of this kind that we can not feel sure that this will not be so," you should tabulate these experiences, and bring out your proof, and submit them in writing for consideration at the council to be held over these matters before the next meeting of your Union Conference.⁷⁶

16. *And, Another Thing...*

There is another aspect to this Southern Missionary Society donation quandary. Mention has been made of the admittedly "minimal financial assistance" that the General Conference provided the Society through an annual allotment. The idea is simple enough, but deceptively so. Not that it was intentionally deceptive. No, it's just that there were complexities hidden in it all.

When the General Conference said they were going to send the SMS \$2,400 in 1904, that was given as a projection, a budget. Which is *not* to say that they had the money in hand. From the anticipated income of the year, they aimed to provide \$2,400 to the SMS. What caused contention, though, was that if a \$400 donation, earmarked for the SMS came in to the General Conference, it would be passed on to the Society, but also deducted from the annual allocation. In other words, the GC now only needed \$2,000 to meet the annual funding target.

It's really easy to see how perspectives might not align. From the General Conference side of things, they were fulfilling their announced goal of sending

76. W.C. White, Letter to C.A. Bollman, November 27, 1907

\$2,400. From the SMS point of view, they were being robbed of a \$400 donation. The challenge, though, was simply that the General Conference only had just so much money that came in every year. *All* income to the GC came in the form of donations. Some from Conferences and Union Conferences, some from individuals. If everything came in, pre-specified for particular projects, there simply wouldn't be enough in the "general fund" to cover more than a fraction of the projected allotments. To them, it made sense. To the SMS, it looked like highway robbery.

Writing to Edson White, Elder Daniells explained all this in detail. It would be surprising if Edson learned anything new in that process, but sometimes it's worth the effort to spell everything out clearly. According to Daniells' figures for 1904, the Southern Union Conference was allotted \$7,500 and the SMS was listed at \$2,400. The GC also paid the salaries and expenses of four key workers—George Butler, Brother and Sister Haskell, and Edson White, which came to an additional \$3,633.11; if divided out evenly that meant that each of the four workers cost \$908 for the year. If that was close to the average support needed for ministerial workers, then the \$2,500 allotted to the SMS was about enough to support three ministers, never mind office expenses and the like.⁷⁷

A few years earlier, the Iowa Conference, by way of contrast, had "between seventy and one hundred ministers and conference laborers."⁷⁸

(It should be mentioned here that these figures are quite tentative. Information from more than a century ago is fragmented, and especially so—to something of an extreme—in the case of the Southern Missionary Society. This is likely because, as Arthur White noted, the Society "was almost entirely a self-supporting work." Because it operated as what might today be described as a "supporting ministry," it's likely that the Society's record keeping and the other elements of historical documentation were never incorporated fully into the denominational system of things.)

17. What!?! There Are Two Sides to the Story!?!

Elder W.C. White hadn't sounded very impressed with lots of complaints about two mistakes over a five-year span. At the same time, he had problems with the tendency of church administrators to try to solve problems by legislating them away. That effort had come primarily through the "doctrine" of the "regular channels." A few more excerpts from Willie White's personal corre-

77. Letter, A.G. Daniells to J.E. White, March 10, 1905

78. Letter, A.G. Daniells to Ellen White, June 2, 1902

spondence help us see that side of the situation. It's worth noting that this first letter was written prior to the reorganization in 1901:

The point to which I wish to call your particular attention is this question of the regular way and the regular channels. When God sends a man to do a special work in a new field, and gives him wisdom to pioneer that work successfully, and makes him the successful leader and teacher, when He blesses the man and his work, does not God thus make him a regular channel, and are not his ways the regular ways? Please consider carefully what the Testimonies have said regarding the wrong of our endeavoring to put all our benevolences through one channel. Read what has been written about the evils of our brethren attempting to manage the work in distant fields and work of varied character through two or three boards, made up largely of the same men.

Then study the experience of the General Conference during the last three or four years in its management of the Southern field. Note the feebleness, the insufficiency, the indifference, and tell me frankly if you can conscientiously say that the regular way and the regular channel for the management of the work in Mississippi was through the General Conference Association, the General Conference Committee, or the superintendent of district number two. I tell you, my brother, the Lord is always making new channels. When the old ones become full up or are clogged, He makes new channels, and whenever He makes a new channel, it is regular. This is gospel truth, and I beg of you to study it until you can stand beside Brethren Irwin and Haskell in its maintenance before our people. If we reject this principle, we place ourselves beside the Jews who refused to recognize Paul because he was not numbered among the twelve apostles whom Jesus first chose.⁷⁹

Of course, any time we read W.C. White's opinions, we should remember that though he *was* the son of a prophet, he wasn't the prophet! He never claimed the kind or degree of inspiration God had given his mother. In fact, as this next quotation shows, he had his own share of lessons to learn and rebukes to process:

Mother's mind was prepared to do business outside of the regular channels by a long series of circumstances in which the instruction was repeatedly given her that there had been growing up at Battle Creek a controlling power which was not for the best interest of our cause and work. In 1890 and 1891, before we went to Australia, she was instructed time and time again that there was an unrighteous power of control exercised by men connected with [the] Review and Herald [publishing house] and the general managing work which was swaying the work away from right principles, and that it might be necessary for her to take the printing and publication of her books away from [the] Review and Herald, and give it to some other agency.

79. Letter, W.C. White to C.H. Jones, August 15, 1899

Three or four times Mother presented this matter to Edson and myself, asking us if we would stand by her in following this instruction. Edson was busy with his own book business; I was busy with the work of the Foreign Mission board. Neither of us could see how that the change could be made without controversy and misunderstanding. We saw no agency in the field through which the work could be done, and we plead with Mother to let matters rest as they were, believing that there would be a reformation regarding the management which was not right.

A few months before we left Australia to return to America in 1899 or 1900, it was revealed to Mother, in connection with many other things relating to the work at Battle Creek, that if Edson and I had taken our position by her side with faith and patient confidence, that God would have opened to our minds right plans of work and that agencies would have been provided for the publication of her works; that this movement on our part would have opened the eyes of our people to the unrighteous conditions existing at the Review and Herald, and that a movement would have then been set on foot which would have done very much to prevent the evil conditions which afterward developed in Battle Creek. Of course, this was a very serious revelation to me, and it has done much to lead me to feel that I had a responsibility to use all the influence I have to labor for the establishment of other centers of influence and to counteract the centralizing, dictatorial power which has prevailed so long at Battle Creek.⁸⁰

Stop a moment and let that sink in. W.C. just said that much, perhaps all, of the “febleness, the insufficiency, the indifference” that had grown up in Battle Creek—the very stuff that had led to the “no longer the voice of God” situation—all of that might have been prevented if he and his brother had exercised more “faith and patient confidence” in God. Lessons like that were not the kind of thing Elder White could brush off lightly. But what could he do *now*?

18. We Always Get Older; Sometimes We Get Wiser

Elder White wasn't blind. In fact, his past experience had prepared him to provide wise counsel in such situations as this. Indeed, just months before, his mother (who *was* blessed with that higher level of inspiration) had written this:

Recently the Lord has again opened before me the relation of W.C. White to the work of the Lord. Said my Instructor, “I will put My Spirit upon him and fit him for your counselor. I will make him a man of clear conceptions. He shall act as a wise counselor in council meetings. He will not be ruled by selfish considerations. He shall be your helper, associated with you, to present the light that shall be given.”⁸¹

And so Willie was prepared to recognize the beginnings of the same kind of “unrighteous power of control” when it was “exercised by men connected

80. Letter, W.C. White to Board of Trustees of Review and Herald, June 19, 1903

81. E.G. White, Letter to White, October 6, 1906; Letter 311, 1906

with... the general managing” of God’s work. Indeed, that sort of “unrighteous power of control” is one of the most frequently replayed tragedies in all of sacred history, and it had been a nearly continual brush fire even in the Remnant Church. The warnings against “placing man where God should be” are legion in his mother’s writings. Perhaps because of personal experience, maybe because of his mother’s instruction on the point, probably some of both, Elder White recognized that little deviations in such matters are dangerous far beyond what they appear. As had happened in the Christianity of the early centuries, it could happen again, even within the Remnant:

Rome began by enjoining what God had not forbidden, and she ended by forbidding what He had explicitly enjoined.⁸²

However he might have learned the lesson, he was a kindly “straight shooter” with even his closest associates. This next letter is to Elder I.H. Evans, the General Conference Treasurer:

It seems to me, Brother Evans, that you stand where Rehoboam stood. He represented the chosen family appointed of God to rule the chosen nation of the earth. He was surrounded by everything that was regular, that was sacred in the eyes of the people, and he was appealed to to correct certain evils. If he had humbled himself to the work and given it the attention which it deserved, he could have preserved a united nation. But he preferred to believe that the reverence of the people for the institutions which he represented was so strong that they would stand by the royal family without any assurance that evils would be investigated and corrected. It is my desire and purpose to stand by the regular channels and in order that we may understand each other when we use this term, I think we must admit that a stagnant pool is not a channel, and when our state treasurers, for any reason, permit money that is needed in important enterprises to rest idle in their banks, that they are acting irregularly and they cease to be regular channels. Secondly, there may be more than one regular channel, and the term ‘regular channel’ does not necessarily mean the most round-about and time killing method that can be adopted.

For the majority of our people who have small contributions, the cost convenient method is to pay their money to the church treasurer and let it pass to the state treasurer, the Union Conference treasurer, the General Conference treasurer, and from him to the enterprise for which it was given.

For persons of means, making large donations or even small donations, from business men who are accustomed to sending money by bank draft or post-office order to parties with whom they are doing business, I believe it is just as regular a channel for them to send their remittance direct to the treasurer of the enterprise that they wish to help or the treasurer of the Union Conference in which that enterprise is operated.

82. *Great Controversy*, 289

When people ask me about making remittances to the Huntsville school or Takoma Park Sanitarium or the Avondale Press, I say to them, You can send a draft direct to the treasurer of the institution, or if you prefer you can send a draft to the treasurer of the Union Conference in which the institution is located; or if you prefer, you can pay it to your church treasurer and let him forward it with other moneys going the same way. The latter plan will take a little more time. By either plan it will surely reach the enterprise you wish to be benefited.

Now my claim is that these are regular channels, but I see a sentiment growing that there is danger of censure from the minister or the Conference officers if the gift does not go the longest and slowest route.

The gift made by one of our brethren in the North for a southern institution, which required nine months to reach its destination, might have reached them in two weeks and would have been of service during eight months and two weeks, and I wish to ask you if it would have been a violation of correct methods if the party making the gift had chosen to send it direct.

There was more than one way to get from Egypt to Canaan. By one route the journey could have been made in less than forty days, but a route was chosen which took much longer. Were they not both regular?⁸³

This may all seem like quite a fuss to be made over not that much money. And it was! That was the point Elder White had made to Bollman. Two mistakes in five years was “unfortunate,” not “unforgivable.” There was no need to upset the whole apple cart.

But on Evans’ side of the discussion, White urged that there needed to be some flexibility, too. There will always be some difference between one person and the next, one circumstance and the next. Hence the danger of elevating “general policy” to the status of “unbending law.”

Elders White and Evans were good friends. They—along with A.G. Daniells and W.W. Prescott—had taken the heat and weathered the storm of Kellogg’s “alpha apostasy” for the last five years or so. Indeed, they were still in the midst of it, with constant machinations going on in Battle Creek as the “Sanitarium faction” maneuvered to gain legal control and ownership of the Dime Tabernacle. Kellogg himself was still a church member; he wouldn’t be—*couldn’t be*—disfellowshipped for another nine months.

There were others, of course, but these four men had stood together through the worst of it all. Elder White did not think Elder Evans was a bad man... he just cared enough that he would speak up to try and help him avoid making a bad decision. And Evans wasn’t offended! Apparently, it was possible to say challenging things without destroying respect and Christian brotherhood. In

83. Letter, W.C. White to I.H. Evans, February 19, 1907

fact, Evans' reply to White's letter deserves a hearing, because it can teach us something, too.

19. "What if Everyone Does That?"

Dear Brother,

I am in receipt also of your kind communication bearing date of February 19, and have read the same with much interest....

I am of the opinion that the present organized plan of carrying on the work is complete enough in its details, providing the machinery is kept in motion. There are instances, undoubtedly, when money has been slow in reaching the specific place for which it has been contributed, yet I doubt if this evil is to be compared to what would result if everybody was turned loose to make remittances to whatever enterprises they might choose, and do that which seemed to appeal to them at the moment when they were giving. I can see great harm coming, were each of us to operate in harmony with your suggestions. From the stand point of your communication, I am unable to understand how there could be any equitable distribution of funds, and it would seem to me that those who cried the loudest and made the greatest noise would be the ones who would receive the largest amount of help, while those who were walking humbly before God, conscientiously trying to do their best, would often times pass through severe suffering for want of assistance....

At the present time, should everyone feel inclined to make their contributions as they pleased, sending direct, there would be no check on the amounts that any party would be receiving, and many would plunge headlong into extravagant expenses, others would be calling for help for suffering institutions and work, and in a few years our work would be in a state of paralyzed disintegration and confusion.

If there are cases such as you cite, of business men who desire to send the money direct, of course, they are at liberty to do so. The same is true of parties who will not pay their tithe to the church to which they belong, so that it may pass through the State and Union Conference treasuries, yet this is not the plan we have advocated, nor the thing we have ever thought was for the best. Nevertheless, there are exceptions to the general rules, and we cannot draw the lines too tight lest harm result.

Surely, I have no disposition whatever to occupy the position of a "Rehoboam" in the cause of God. I only have a desire to see this cause advance, and to see everything carried on in harmony with what is God's plan. Personally, I have no choice, whether the funds go through the General Conference treasury, or through any other treasury. If I were in Halifax, or in Abyssinia, I should hold to the same position that I hold now. I long believed in that plan before I ever had anything to do with the management of the general affairs of the denomination. And yet, I am sure there are times when funds lie dormant for some time, when it would be better had they been hurried through, yet I consider this evil the lesser of the two. However, if our general men feel differently,

and think that it should be generally adopted, that funds should be sent wherever the party giving desire to send them direct, it is their privilege to speak, and I shall certainly cooperate with whatever plans are laid for the advancement of the work.⁸⁴

Elder Evans had a point! Several points, actually. If the funding for every Adventist project or mission field or even conference were to be stripped of all over-arching coordination, it would be absolute chaos! Those who figured out how to run the public relations machine would be *very* well funded, and everyone else would be running to the bookstore to get a copy of *How to Win Friends and Influence People*.

Evans' natural reaction was to fear the extreme position away from what he could control. Fair enough... but was anyone advocating that extreme? Interestingly, he was clearly reasonable enough to understand that there would be exceptions: "business men who desire to send the money direct... [and] parties who will not pay their tithe to the church to which they belong." And, to his credit, he had actually been reading the counsel of the Spirit of Prophecy: "there are exceptions to the general rules, and we cannot draw the lines too tight lest harm result."

Elder White was trying to get both sides to recognize that there was a middle ground that was viable. Not that anyone needed to define that middle ground and make it the new "law of the Medes and the Persians which cannot be changed." Keep the "regular channels"! But tolerate exceptions. Aim for a timely transfer of funds! But keep a sense of scale if something falls through the cracks every few years.

As Willie White had said, "for the majority of our people who have small contributions, the cost convenient method is to pay their money to the church treasurer." He was obviously correct. Who is going to make a special trip to the bank and pay extra to send \$5 to the mission field of their choice? Just drop it in the offering plate and be done with it. This is just one of the perks that come with membership in the Adventist Church.

Consider the plight of the good-hearted soul down the street at the local congregationalist Baptist church. First of all, his church likely has no vision that extends beyond the church walls, or perhaps the local neighborhood. OK, so much for "Go ye into all the world."

But even if his is a "Missionary Church" that supports a good work in Bangladesh or maybe Tajikistan or Uruguay, who is going to get his offering money over there? Well, hopefully there's a volunteer to do that... or maybe the pastor takes care of it (in between calls at all hours of the day and night asking for his towing service company to get a car out of the ditch).

84. Letter, I.H. Evans to W.C. White, March 14, 1907

No, Adventists have it easy. The “regular channels” are great! Until they aren’t.

And the natural reaction to things that “aren’t great” is just not to use them. Church members all have varying levels of insight into what goes on “behind the scenes” of denominational operations. Perhaps less defensibly—but unarguably true—members all have varying levels of patience and toleration for anything they see as counterproductive. Then the questions come back to haunt us: What if Evans’ worst case fears came true? What if church members all just began sending their money wherever they felt like sending it? How do you keep the “regular channels” as the default option?

But how could that be? What could possibly make the “regular channels” anything *other* than great? Well, we’ve already discussed the issues of inflexible enforcement, and stigmatizing church members who face special circumstances. But that only affects a small percentage of Adventists. Can’t the “regular channels” still be great for everyone else?

Of course... and they likely will still be. The minority may feel like their freedom has been compromised, or they may simply do what they want to do without publicizing it, but that’s not enough to generate any widespread concern. But the devil has a secret weapon: it’s called “apostasy.”

20. *It’s a Long, Sad Story*

This, too, was an issue with which the Adventist leadership back then was familiar. And therein lies another tale, best told in the words of the General Conference president, A.G. Daniells. Writing for counsel from Elder White and his mother, Daniells had this to say:

Dear Brother:

I have a very perplexing question that I have felt impressed for days to place before you and your mother. Today I received a communication which causes me to place this matter before you without any further delay.

I refer to the attitude of Elder E.E. Franke. which he is taking toward Elder Haskell and other ministers in the Greater New York Conference. I feel that I must have counsel from you and your mother, and you will bear with me while I place before you the situation as I have personally become acquainted with it. When I landed in New York from Australia three years ago, the brethren were having a great trial with Elder Franke. He was in war with Elder Place, the President of the Conference. Immediately on leaving the boat I was taken direct to the church, where a wretched church quarrel was being carried on. I saw enough during the day to show me plainly that Elder Franke possessed a terrible spirit; that with him it was rule or ruin. This made me feel

that he was a dangerous man, and that unless he changed his attitude entirely, he was unworthy of holding credentials from this denomination as a minister of Jesus Christ.

A year later I attended the New Jersey Conference held at Trenton. Elder Jayne did his best to help Elder Franke, and also to give me a better opinion of him. Elder Franke invited me to his home to stay, and treated me very kindly; and, further, he manifested a brotherly spirit. His attitude was so different from what I had seen before that I felt very hopeful that he would entirely reform.

Elder Daniells went on at considerable length, tracing circumstances down to his time of writing the letter. It's comforting to see that he hits both the highs and the lows of Elder Franke's experience, but, sadly, the trend was downward. We'll skip forward to Daniells' immediate concern:

Now Elder Cottrell has talked with me very fully over this matter, and insists that the General Conference must come to the aid of the Greater New York Conference. He says that when they meet they will have a terrible time, and that it will be impossible for them to control or manage Brother Franke without strong help from the General Conference. All the members of the Conference Committee feel the same way. It certainly looks as though decided steps will have to be taken to give Elder Franke to understand his place.

I will give you an incident that illustrates a great deal of the difficulty they have to meet. When I was in Greater New York last summer two members of the church came to me and stated that they could not feel free to pay their tithes into the Conference, knowing what they did regarding the use Elder Franke made of the tithes. They said that the Conference was paying Elder Franke \$15 a week, and his wife \$4 a week. Besides this they were advancing him \$100 a month for advertising his meetings. They had looked the matter up the best they could, and it was impossible to find anything in the way of advertising that would cost one-half of that amount. And further Elder Franke never gave any account whatever of this \$100 per month advanced to him for the advertising. They claimed that he ought to do as other ministers did; that is, present an itemized statement to the Conference Committee of his advertising expenses, and draw the amount necessary to meet the bills.

These members told me that they had considerable money saved up in the bank that they would be willing to give to Elder Haskell for his mission, or to Elder Cottrell to place in the Union Conference, but that the way the money was handled by Elder Franke they would not pay it into the local Conference.

I told them that I did not believe the Conference advanced advertising money to Brother Franke on the terms they stated; but when I talked with Elder Cottrell I found that these persons had stated the matter correctly. Elder Cottrell says that this is the way the Conference has dealt with Franke for a long time. He has demanded this, and to save a rupture, the Conference has submitted, although not a member of the Committee felt that it was right.

In addition to all this, at this same time Elder Franke made a call upon the Conference for \$300 to help meet his expenses. Elder Cottrell could not consent to this, and told Elder Franke so. This created a perfect storm, and Elder Franke accused Elder Cottrell of being influenced by Elder Haskell, and he promised by everything good and bad that he would write Elder Haskell up in the New York papers, and show that while he was begging for funds, he had \$1500 in the New York banks. In fact he made terrible threats about how he would publish documents that would drive Brother and Sister Haskell out of New York City.

Now, Brother White, I want you to advise me regarding this case. To let it run on means that those who have the management of the work in that Conference must violate their judgment of what is right. They must hold up their hands as a man does to a highway robber, and say that they will surrender. It gives Elder Franke a domination over the ministers and the Conference Committee that no man has a right to assume. To oppose him means war until he finds that he is not the master of the situation. The New York Conference Committee say they are prepared to take their stand for what is right if they can be supported by the General Conference Committee. I believe the General Conference Committee is prepared to take its stand with the New York Conference Committee in this matter. But I know that your mother has been in correspondence with Elder Franke, and has some clear knowledge of his attitude. I do not want to do anything rashly. I do not want to counter-work any efforts she is making to save the man; but as far as any of us are able to judge, we shall either have to take our stand or simply fall down and let him walk over the lot.⁸⁵

It was prudent of Elder Daniells to inquire especially as to any involvement that Ellen White had had with Elder Franke. We have no idea how much Elder Daniells might have been aware of her efforts, but by the time he wrote to W.C., Sister White had written nearly forty letters directly to, or mentioning, Elder Franke. She was not one to give up easily on any church member.

21. *For Why Should You Die?*

A few days after Elder Daniells' letter arrived at Elmshaven, Ellen White responded to "Dear Brethren Daniells and Prescott." We have room only for excerpts:

It has been clearly laid out before me that Elder Franke is not fitted to take charge of churches. He is not a thorough health reformer. His habits of living are not right. At times he sits up nearly all night preparing the maps and charts that he uses in his meetings. These are of great advantage to him in impressing the truth on the minds of his hearers, but the strain under which he places himself in night work and study is an injury to him.

Elder Haskell and Elder Franke could have been a wonderful power for good in New York City. But they failed to unite and draw together.

85. Letter, A.G. Daniells to W.C. White, September 28, 1903

Elder Franke is impulsive, and he often treats church members as if they were school children. Then when his authority is questioned, he loses control of himself, and a tornado of angry words falls from his lips. Afterward he is sorry for this explosion of feeling. But such experiences shake the confidence of his brethren in him as a man who is led and controlled by the Holy Spirit....

Light was given me that Elder Franke was especially fitted to labor for unbelievers in our large cities. He could labor with success in speaking to them and bringing the truths of the Scripture before them. The truth does not languish on his lips. I was shown that he could stir the ungodly, as but few could do, but that in doing this, the church members are so wrought up that he can do them but little good.

After laboring heroically to win souls to the truth, he will for a short time work earnestly for those who are interested. He will be patient with them and will help them, if they will do as he wishes them to do. But it is at this stage of the work that he needs the help that Elder Haskell and his wife are specially fitted to give. They could labor wisely to instruct those who are interested, carrying them forward until they were established in the faith. But Elder Franke has not been willing to unite with Elder Haskell in this way. He wanted to have the entire charge of those who through his efforts have become interested in the truth....

The old, experienced teachers, who have been in the work from the beginning, are especially fitted to carry the work forward from point to point. But they cannot do this alone. They must have helpers. The Lord would have His workers unite their efforts, as the workmen do in the building of a house. Elder Franke has his line of work, but there are other parts that he must leave to others.⁸⁶

Still, the difficulties continued, and neither Ellen White nor the leaders involved could delay events that were beyond their control. Matters came to a head at meetings in Massachusetts and New York. Daniells' letter is... *colorful*, but at twelve typewritten pages it is much too long for inclusion here. By way of summary: Elder Franke publicly attacked the Haskells in a "social meeting," claiming that Haskell "had received enormous sums of money in donations," and demanding that their financial records be audited; he classed all his detractors on the Conference committee as a "self-constituted smelling and spying committee" and announced his intention to expose them.

When Elder Daniells formally protested Franke's "exceedingly offensive" language, the group reaction to Daniells' comments was favorable, so Elder Franke "immediately arose when I sat down, and apologized for what he said; but when he had finished that apology, he spoke of me in my official capacity about as offensively as he had spoken of" all the rest. Elder Daniells writes:

I again arose, and told the chairman that I must protest against such language even when used regarding myself. Not because the statements themselves hurt me, but

86. E.G. White, Letter to Brethren Daniells and Prescott, October 9, 1903; Letter 227, 1903

because it was beneath the dignity of the chairman or a convention to permit such ungentlemanly and unChristian remarks to be made. Again the delegates responded, not by any clapping of hands, nor by any loud demonstrations, but by as it were a great heaving of their breasts, and a firm clear look in their faces.

At the close of the service, I saw Elder Franke, and told him that I was his friend and brother, but I wanted him to understand that while I was in that Conference, I should not allow an occasion to pass without entering my solemn protest against such unbecoming language.... We settled the matter up together, and he promised there that he would try to do right, and wanted me to not forsake him. We shook hands over the matter.

But the next day he broke out in other ways.

The "other ways" took the form of accusations of illegal activity on the part of another church member who had just been nominated as a member of the Conference committee. Daniells "immediately" called in all the relevant parties, and "In three minutes the charge... was met and entirely refuted, and Franke had to apologize."

There were more fireworks, as Elder Franke was determined to retain his position on the Conference committee.

But the brethren could not think it was right. They would not hear to it, and left him off. They said that during the past year it had been row after row for hours in committee, and they could not make such an arrangement for another year. So he was left off from the Conference Committee. At the same time it was plainly stated in public that every man would stand by his evangelistic work if he would push that as a true Christian minister ought to.⁸⁷

Ah yes... the patience of the saints! Sadly, there was no permanent reformation on the part of Elder Franke, and he ended up drifting off to associate (for as long as they could put up with each other) with other discontented souls.

22. *Enough Clouds! Where's the Silver Lining?*

There was a reason for all that dreary recounting, because Elder Daniells' observations coming out of it all speak to two vitals question asked some while ago. One of these was, "What could possibly make the 'regular channels' anything other than great?" The brief answer given earlier was, "apostasy," but that way of expressing the idea is distorted by its brevity. The issue is not so much apostasy (everyone knows that happens); the issue is administrative inaction in the face of apostasy. Here's what the General Conference president had to say on the topic:

Although this meeting was exceedingly taxing, yet it was an excellent meeting. We gained a wonderful victory. I can not tell you what a change came over the leading

87. Letter, A.G. Daniells to W.C. White, December 13, 1903

men of the Conference. They had really almost come to feel that the general Conference Committee, and your mother as well, were either afraid of Elder Franke or simply winked at and countenanced his wrong course. They had about made up their minds that there was no such thing as discipline and government and justice in our administration. I do not say that they had fallen to this, but they stood in great doubt. But when Brother Cottrell and I took our stand firmly and calmly and held it right through to the end, their hopes revived, and they were made happy. Brother Chaffee has written me since the Conference that that meeting has saved him from terrible perplexity and doubt.

But, you say, none of this has anything to do with the larger question of the “regular channels.” No, Daniells said nothing about them in that paragraph, but it turned out that Elder Franke, himself, had some pretty extravagant spending habits, and had badgered the Conference into covering his personal expenses to the tune of about four times those of any “normal” minister. And money is uniquely quantifiable. One might discuss a minister’s “humility” or “preaching ability” or just about any other quality that’s important to the calling, and find that it’s really hard to pin it down to a precise measurement. But money? It always comes with numbers attached. As Elder Daniells said:

These things are becoming well known here in the East, and our people feel that they must protest against the spending of the tithes in that manner. And I am sure I can not look at it in any other light.... I tell you, it is not right, and we can not retain the confidence of the people and stand in defense of such action.

He [Franke] has entirely lost the confidence of our brethren and sisters in New York in his business integrity. They know of many cases of crooked dealing on his part, and it is only because he draws his tithe from the Atlantic Union Conference that many people in the Greater New York Conference pay their tithe into their local Conference treasury. But they naturally ask how it is that the higher body can know and tolerate the things that common church members consider entirely wrong. I have talked this matter over fully with Elder Cottrell, and he looks at it as I do, but does not know what to do. We all dread to take a step that will mean more war, yet we can not see how we can refuse to take a step to correct flagrant wrongs that are growing worse and worse.⁸⁸

But there was another question asked earlier. That was, “How do you keep the ‘regular channels’ as the default option?”

This is huge! Keeping those “regular channels” as the default is the only way to reap the full benefit of the wise, godly, well-informed denominational oversight that our heaven-inspired organizational structure was designed to provide. This is obvious to anyone working in an administrative position. What isn’t always so obvious is that the primary threat to those benefits is not the lack of member

88. Letter, A.G. Daniells to W.C. White, December 13, 1903

confidence. The primary threat is any loss of the godly wisdom that is to direct the whole apparatus of the church. Lack of member confidence is *secondary*. It is the natural and predictable *effect* that comes from a preventable and remediable *cause*. What's more, that lack of confidence is to serve as the early warning system that something may be amiss at the heart of the work.

It was this system that Ellen White encouraged when she advised:

Some have been dissatisfied and have said: "I will not longer pay my tithe; for I have no confidence in the way things are managed at the heart of the work." But will you rob God because you think the management of the work is not right? Make your complaint, plainly and openly, in the right spirit, to the proper ones. Send in your petitions for things to be adjusted and set in order; but do not withdraw from the work of God, and prove unfaithful, because others are not doing right.⁸⁹

Her goal is obvious: preserve both funding and the godly function of the church's organizational structure. Will the system ever work infallibly? Has *anything* involving sinful human beings *ever* worked infallibly? Some members will fail to "send in their petitions"; some will share their petitions with everyone *but* "the proper ones"; some will express their petitions as they should, but fail to gain a sincere and appreciative reaction from church administration.

Then what? In every case, the individual church members will "carry out their own convictions of duty."⁹⁰ "Convictions right," or "convictions wrong," that's what's going to happen. They may understand their duty to be nothing more than placing the money in the offering plate; they may understand their duty to be spreading their dissatisfaction to all who will listen; they may understand their duty to be using the financing of whatever "alternative channel" best shares their own dreams and aspirations for God's church. To aggressively fight this reality (like the Colorado Conference president had been inclined to do) is a fool's errand. Not only is it counterproductive (Remember? "Be smart; keep quiet.... lest many more shall follow their example"), but efforts of that kind can too readily cross the line into forbidden methods:

Systematic benevolence should not be made systematic compulsion. It is free-will offerings that are acceptable to God.⁹¹

But there really is a silver lining! It turns out that God and His church have a secret weapon, too. It's called "open, transparent, administrative integrity."

89. *Testimonies*, vol. 9, 249

90. *Desire of Ages*, 616

91. *Review and Herald*, December 15, 1874

23. Integrity Matters

Integrity within the church is a two-edged sword, holding all, from the entire structure of “church administration” down to every humble member in the pews to account. In this light, there is a point to be made about tithes: it belongs to God, to be used for the purposes He has specified, and you (no matter who you are) will one day meet the record of your stewardship.

You who have been withholding your means from the cause of God, read the book of Malachi, and see what is spoken there in regard to tithes and offerings. Cannot you see that it is not best under any circumstances to withhold your tithes and offerings because you are not in harmony with everything that your brethren do? The tithes and offerings are not the property of any man, but are to be used in doing a certain work for God; unworthy ministers may receive some of the means thus raised; but dare any one, because of this, withhold from the treasury and brave the curse of God? I dare not. I pay my tithe gladly and freely, saying, as did David, “Of thine own have we given thee.”⁹²

There are many other such statements from the Spirit of Prophecy, but, really, it’s all said in a single verse: “Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this,” says the LORD of hosts, “if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it.”⁹³

Many arguably sincere Christians do not see this verse as specifically applicable to them, today. Presumably the Lord has pity on their blindness; still they nonetheless miss the blessing of watching the Lord fulfill His promise of blessing. But no arguably sincere Seventh-day Adventist should be confused on this. The obligation/opportunity to return the Lord’s portion of our increase is plainly explained in the Spirit of Prophecy, and deserves to be plainly explained in Bible studies and sermons. Any failure to obey the word of God is, well... it’s a failure. And it should be corrected.

But the command in Malachi contains two elements. The first is the “bringing,” and the second is fulfilling the perfectly logical purpose that necessitates the bringing. To bring the tithes, but to fail to use them to provide “food” in God’s house is, well... it’s a failure. And it should be corrected.

That’s what integrity does.

Unlike money, integrity doesn’t come in readily quantifiable units. Simply put, that’s a guarantee that everyone who forms an opinion of the integrity of an individual or an organization will have a different spin on the matter.

92. E.G. White, “The Work in Michigan,” August 10, 1890; Manuscript 3, 1890

93. Malachi 3:10

In the early 1900s the perceptions of integrity that impacted the use of the “regular channels” had to do with the timeliness of delivery, and the faithfulness of the ministry supported by the tithes. “Slow” and “rudely dishonest” polled poorly among the members of the church. So much so, that in each case there were some members who chose not to pay their tithe through the “regular channels.” Interestingly, in none of the accounts which mention this were those members criticized. Perhaps it was clear to the officers of the denomination that they were not “withholding” their tithe. They were simply using what W.C. White called “a new channel.” “And whenever He makes a new channel, it is regular. This is gospel truth.”⁹⁴

This “God makes a new channel” concept deserves some thought. It will likely sound odd to modern ears, but it’s what we see in the book of Acts. Consider the time line: Saul is confronted by Christ on the road to Damascus in Acts chapter nine. God tells Ananias that this man is “a chosen vessel of Mine,” but no one else knows that. After some time, in which he “confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ,” the threat of murder led to his night time escape over the wall in a basket. He went to Jerusalem, but the saints “were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple.” Barnabas steps in, takes Saul “to the apostles,” and tells them “how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.”

“So he was with them at Jerusalem, coming in and going out. And he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Hellenists, but they attempted to kill him. When the brethren found out, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him out to Tarsus.”⁹⁵

It’s kind of a classic story: a brand new convert speaks boldly and gets into trouble! How many of those stories have you heard? So the saints save his life a couple times and ship him back home where he won’t be in quite so much danger. It all makes sense.

Saul disappears for the rest of chapter nine, all of chapter ten, and most of eleven. By this time, Barnabas (“a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith”) is in Antioch. Prompted by the Holy Spirit, one might assume, he heads to Tarsus to find Saul, and brings him back. The prophet Agabus predicts a famine, so the saints send an offering back to Jerusalem, and entrust the funds to Barnabas and Saul.

Chapter twelve is all about Peter, but in thirteen “the Holy Spirit said, ‘Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’”

94. Letter, W.C White to C.H. Jones, August 15, 1899

95. Acts 9:28–30

Ordination at the hands of the Elders was the earthly recognition of the “new channel” God had chosen.

W.C. White’s contention that “whenever He makes a new channel, it is regular,” is best seen as an encouragement for the church to recognize what God has already done. Arthur White’s description of the workers who received the donation from Colorado as “approved laborers... engaged in regular denominational work” is accurate, though perhaps not clear to our common understanding today. We have become accustomed to think of “regular workers” as invariably employed directly by the church. Perhaps this was the thinking of the Colorado Conference president. “They aren’t employees. They aren’t in the ‘regular channel.’” Elder White took a broader view of the matter.

24. And Then We Were Tested...

On May 8, 1907, a Dr. Charles E. Stewart of Battle Creek sent to Ellen White’s office at Sanitarium, California, a 23-page compilation of questions and charges that were presented as a request for clarification, but served more to cast doubt on the Spirit of Prophecy. In October of the same year the material was bound into a small book and published, apparently in Battle Creek.

Because “Butter Wrapper Blue” ink was used on the cover of the book, it came to be commonly known as “the blue book.” The ink was a distinctive color because of its unusual chemical makeup, formulated to avoid running when exposed to the oil contained in butter. It was this ink which gave rise to brands such as “Blue Bonnet Butter.” Reportedly, the printer had some of the specialty ink available at a discount, and the bargain proved persuasive.

At some later date the “blue book” was republished without the blue ink by another of Ellen White’s critics, E.S. Ballenger of Riverside, California, but the name stuck with it.

One of Stewart’s claims was that Ellen White’s counsels and practices in regard to tithing were not consistent, in that she did not always follow or enforce a single fixed approach. He quoted her 1905 letter to the Colorado Conference president, in which she had commended a few women for directing their tithe to “the most needy and the most discouraging field in the world,” rather than through the regular channels of the denomination.

Dr. Stewart ignored the letter’s clear and repeatedly stated intent to calmly address an isolated incident, instead implying that Ellen White was hypocritically covering up the matter when she wrote to the conference president involved, saying “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 their example.”

Stewart was clearly hoping that “if people generally knew that you distributed your own tithe, and commended some others to do likewise, they would feel that it was their privilege to do the same, and by so doing would make it impossible to carry on a large ‘denominational machine.’”⁹⁶

In other words, Stewart was trying to bring about Elder Evans’ worst nightmare.

25. *The Prelude*

Stewart’s book didn’t appear in a vacuum. A bit more than a year before, A.T. Jones had wandered through a similar process. A long letter (38 pages) of complaint to A.G. Daniells,⁹⁷ followed up in early April by an expanded version of the same being published under the title of *Some History, Some Experience, and Some Facts*. His account was soon circulating around Battle Creek and beyond. Jones had a lot of respect and name recognition in the church, and his writing could be convincing if that’s all one had to go on. The appropriate response? Well, that was a question.

When the damage done by Jones’ misrepresentations was fairly local and somewhat contained, the hope was that the issue could be addressed by simply providing key individuals with the documentation needed to refute his arguments. But denominational leaders in Washington, DC, soon became convinced that more was needed. Elder Daniells describes the process:

I need hardly tell you that we have endeavored to do a thorough work in our review. In the first place we assigned parts to different individuals.... [Elders Prescott, Thompson, Irwin, Colcord, Evans, and Daniells] Then we brought our manuscripts together, and read them over, and then placed them all in the hands of an editorial committee consisting of myself, Elder Colcord, and Elder Thompson. We went through all these MSS with great care, eliminating everything that we thought was not proper, and adding what seemed to us to be necessary. When we had got the matter into pages, Professor Prescott gave them a searching reading, pointing out everything that seemed to him should not appear. We have worked very hard to make this review above fair, just criticism. If there is any untrue statement in it, we do not know it. I had to use the shears a good deal on the adjectives that some of the brethren used in dealing with Brother Jones’s articles. It may be that we have been too personal, and too positive, though I hardly think we have when we consider the manner in which he has written.

96. Letter, C.E. Stewart to W.C. White, May 8, 1907

97. Letter, A.T. Jones to A.G. Daniells, dated January 26, 1906; but note that it wasn’t mailed until February 13, 1906

From the Inquiries that are coming to us, we are persuaded that we are not a day too soon in bringing out this review.⁹⁸

The resulting document, a 97-page booklet with the imposing title, *A Statement Refuting Charges Made By A.T. Jones Against the Spirit of Prophecy and the Plan of Organization of the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination*, was published in May. Impressively, the whole review process, the editing, and the printing, were all completed in about a month. The evidence provided in this way fairly quickly rendered Jones' arguments unconvincing to all but those who were determined to believe them. When a clear, comprehensive presentation of the truth doesn't persuade, there's nothing more to be offered. This, it should be noted, is a universal principle, extending through the entirety of the great controversy.

26. *What to Do Now?*

But all *that* was in 1906, and Stewart's letter to Willie White was in 1907. In his letter, the doctor gave Ellen White thirty days to respond, or he would make the matter public. Did he think that was realistic? Or was he just being obnoxious? Who knows?

After about three weeks, Elder White responded to the doctor, acknowledging receipt of his letter and the accompanying document. He was polite, but Stewart certainly never had reason to think his literary efforts were warmly received. Willie explained that his mother was pressed just then with preparations for a coming camp meeting and other matters of importance. Beyond that, though, she wouldn't be taking up the details of his letter because:

that portion of the document addressed to her, which takes the form of an attack upon her integrity and her work, she will refer to her brethren to answer, because for many years she has been instructed that it is not any part of her legitimate work to answer the numerous and violent attacks which have been made upon her by her critics and the enemies of her work.⁹⁹

Who were these "brethren"? Whose job was this? As it turned out, only time would tell. Elder White's initial suggestion went like this:

It is a great pity for us to be obliged to take time to answer these things just now when we want to give our time and strength to the advancement of important missionary enterprises. But I suppose this matter will need to be answered, and it is my conviction that the General Conference Committee should consider that this battle is theirs, not Mother's or mine, and that they should select the men to make a study of

98. Letter, A.G. Daniells to W.C. White, May 17, 1906

99. Letter, W.C. White to C.E. Stewart, June 9, 1907

their criticisms and attacks and to answer in a wise way. I am willing to help; Mother's secretaries will be ready to help, but we do not believe it would be for the best interests of the general work for us to take up this burden alone. We need a portion of our time for other work, and we believe that there are persons who are better fitted to prepare for publication facts in the case, than I or any of Mother's helpers....

It seems to me that we ought not to be satisfied with the answering of these attacks, but that we ought to gather together incidents which will encourage faith on the part of our people, and publish them. The Scriptures say: "When the enemy comes in like a flood, then the Lord will lift up a standard against him." We must make this attack of the enemy the occasion for an advance move which will give our own people more foundation for confidence than they have ever had before. Therefore I think that the General Conference Committee should select one or two able men to take up the study of these problems with us and to prepare for publication the answers to these attacks and much additional matter which will enlighten our people regarding the foundation principles of this issue.¹⁰⁰

In response, Daniells agreed:

I have just received your letter written May 20.... While it is as you say a great pity that we are obliged to turn away from the great work pressing so heavily upon us to deal with this opposition, yet for the sake of thousands of people who are ignorant of the facts in the case, it is necessary for us to do it.

Now, I agree with you fully that this burden should not fall upon your mother. I believe the General Conference officers should take this up and answer these things themselves, with the material you will be able to furnish us.

There's no doubt the intention was sincere... but life is seldom uncomplicated. Daniells wasn't naive; he knew from the very start that there was one big challenge:

We must get at this work as soon as possible.... The greatest difficulty I find is the lack of time to get to this. I am so fearfully pressed by our brethren to go here and there, and do so many things, that it seems impossible to get time to do this necessary work.¹⁰¹

"Fearfully pressed" may sound a little melodramatic, but consider his summer schedule that year (bear in mind that he was on a ship in the middle of the Atlantic ocean when he wrote this letter, and that the rest of the travel in all this would be by train—or something moving at the speed of a horse!):

I ought to notify you that I am advised by the General Conference Committee to visit the Pacific Coast the latter part of July and first of August. I received an invitation while in Europe to attend a medical convention to be held in the Southern California Conference. All our plans are laid for me to do this. I will attend the Young Peo-

100. Letter, W.C. White to A.G. Daniells, May 20, 1907

101. Letter, A.G. Daniells to W.C. White, June 24, 1907

ple's convention in Ohio, July 10–16. Then I will start west by the way of Portland. I will spend one day at Bozeman, Montana, one day at Walla Walla, a couple of days at Portland, and then run down to St. Helena and Mountain View on my way to Los Angeles. I shall endeavor to have Dr. Ruble go with me. After the medical convention in California, I will have to hasten back to attend the Kansas, Colorado, and Nebraska camp meetings. I shall write you more about this after reaching the office.¹⁰²

“After reaching the office,” though, was not going to happen until the end of September! Indeed, when reading the accounts of the church's administrative officers, perhaps the most amazing thing is how much they managed to plan, coordinate, and accomplish without telephone, email, instant messaging, zoom meetings, automobiles, or airlines. We, today, should be very humble in our judgment of these men!

Elder Daniells considered the response to Stewart's accusations a “necessary work.” He well knew that it fell on the shoulders of the General Conference Committee to make it happen. But when would they actually be together to work on the project? Certainly not within Stewart's laughable thirty days.

More than a century later, it is difficult to reconstruct the travels of all the General Conference Committee members. The movements of prominent individuals, like Daniells and Prescott, can often be determined from their letters but beyond Daniells' summer schedule above, there is little to work with during this time period. Another good source for such information is Arthur White's meticulous biography of his grandmother. In this case, though, there is nothing to help us because the topic of Stewart's letter and subsequent book are not discussed.

Dr. Stewart wrote letters to Elder White on the 10th and 24th of June; he seems to have been a little frustrated with being ignored. In the second of these letters, he wrote:

It is now about a month and a half since I sent you a letter to be given to your mother if you thought best, but up to the present time, I have heard nothing from you with reference to the matter...

At least four men have come to me and have offered to pay the expenses of having it printed, but I have told them that I will not print it, and that I will not consent to having it printed.¹⁰³

He apparently changed his mind on this point by October. Meanwhile, W.C. White and A.G. Daniells were fighting against their schedules. The same day Stewart wrote to W.C., Daniells did as well:

102. Letter, A.G. Daniells to “Brethren White and Palmer,” June 3, 1907

103. Letter, C.E. Stewart to W.C. White, June 24, 1907

I feel that I must make you a visit before we attempt to bring out a reply to further criticisms of the Battle Creek opposition.¹⁰⁴

Great idea! But when? Willie wanted to know—

Can not you plan to spend some time with us here in St. Helena early in August? You have had the most experience in meeting these propositions.... Brother Crisler and others in Mother's office can help you to collect material that will be useful, and you can take this material to Washington for publication where you will have the benefit of the criticism and counsel of your fellow laborers.¹⁰⁵

As soon as we receive your letter giving an outline of your answer to the questions raised by the Battle Creek physicians in the letter sent out by Dr. Stewart, we will study it diligently and gather material which you may wish to use in connection with it.¹⁰⁶

The staff at Elmshaven were waiting for the General Conference Committee to take the lead, but, realistically, how could they when Daniells was gone till the end of September? Well... what if he wasn't? That carefully planned summer schedule ran into problems, and his whole trip out west got dropped, so... no visit to Elmshaven after all. But at least he would be back at headquarters on the east coast. Daniells wrote from Ohio: "I am very sorry that I can not visit you at this time. I am also sorry that I have been unable to send you the statement regarding the Stewart letter that I promised sometime ago."

Now I am going back to [Washington, DC].... This will give me time to do some necessary study and writing relating to organization, and to the testimonies. While I can quite understand that you will feel disappointed and almost conclude that I have not given the situation at your end of the line proper consideration, yet I know that you will appreciate the perplexities with which I am obliged to deal, and will make proper allowance for my seeming vacillation. When I get into such a fearfully hard grind, as I passed through after returning from Europe this time, I am forcibly reminded of my limitations.¹⁰⁷

Daniells had about three weeks in DC, then shipped out to Kansas to quell a rebellion in which "Some of the leading ministers have been in sympathy with A.T. Jones and his associates in Battle Creek; they have been radical and fanatical on other matters, and have brought division and trouble into the Kansas Conference.... These local elements thought it was their opportunity to get control of the affairs of the Conference."¹⁰⁸

104. Letter, A.G. Daniells to W.C. White, June 24, 1907

105. Letter, W.C. White to A.G. Daniells, June 27, 1907

106. Letter, W.C. White to A.G. Daniells, July 5, 1907

107. Letter, A.G. Daniells to W.C. White, July 19, 1907

108. Letter, A.G. Daniells to W.C. White, September 5, 1907

Elder White continued practicing the patience of the saints: “What are your plans regarding a visit here? When shall we work together, preparing an answer to the Stewart letter? When shall we have a chance to counsel about a hundred and one important matters?”¹⁰⁹ And again, a week and a half later:

We are occasionally informed that Dr. Stewart and his associates are preparing to print their broad-side. It is my belief that some quick work on our part now would take half the strength out of it. We must have your counsel. I know you have matters of immense importance at Washington, but I do not believe there is anything more important than what I have just mentioned.¹¹⁰

But the “quick work” simply couldn’t be arranged, and finally the word came from Battle Creek: “The letter which Dr. Stewart has so long been threatening to publish, has at last been issued.”¹¹¹

Perhaps Dr. Stewart expected the church to crumble before his eyes. Needless to say, it didn’t. The blue book was “compelling” to those who were already convinced, and rattled some others who had little other information to work from. Much of what he had written was based on belabored “logic,” flimsy evidence, and snide insinuation. After a lifetime of church involvement, Ellen White had a well-deserved reputation, and Stewart found that it wasn’t that easy to convince people to abandon their confidence in her. Perhaps, too, the church members’ “immune systems” had been strengthened in the process of fighting off A.T. Jones’ earlier attack, and it was easier this time to foresee the “crisis” dying out.

27. Can We Just Ignore This?

Indeed, this was a major conclusion of the late-to-the-battle deliberations back at church headquarters:

It was felt that a considerable part of the pamphlet would not demand any attention whatever, as it would not have any weight with those who could distinguish between an honest effort to seek light and those who are hunting for opportunity to make charges against Sister White and her work.¹¹²

But jumping to that later conclusion misses some key parts of our story, so let’s back up to the end of November, 1907. Elder Daniells is writing to Elder White, because a perfectly predictable problem was plaguing the president. He had seen it coming....

109. Letter, W.C. White to A.G. Daniells, September 26, 1907

110. Letter, W.C. White to A.G. Daniells, October 4, 1907

111. Letter, M.N. Campbell to W.C. White, October 21, 1907

112. E.G. White Estate Document File 213

I am sending you an extract from a letter I have just received from a sister in Clyde, Ohio. This is a sample of what we are having to meet in different parts of the field. It is just what I felt sure would result from the circulation of the communication your mother wrote regarding the tithes.

What? Had A.G. Daniells joined the ranks of the Ellen White critics? No, of course not. It's just that the confusion she had sought to avoid when she wrote to the Colorado conference president "regarding the tithes" sent to the SMS, was showing up in letters from church members like Sister Clyde. The "circulation of the communication"—directly contrary to Ellen White's wish that no one "give publicity to this matter"—was courtesy of the blue book, of course. As noted previously, one of Stewart's main goals was to bring about the General Conference treasurer's worst nightmare. Understandably, the treasurer's nightmare was not going to sit well with the president, either!

We should be careful not to read too much into a single comment, but Daniells goes on to comment on the need to correct the "extreme position these people are taking concerning" that letter to Colorado. There is no doubt that Stewart's suggestion that a proper understanding of the letter would make it "impossible to carry on a large 'denominational machine'" was far from Ellen White's intent. That's an "extreme position," for sure. But there's a subtle detail in Elder Daniells' comment that is worth noticing. First, he quotes from Ellen White and then offers some thoughts of his own:

The minister should, by precept and example, teach the people to regard the tithe as sacred. He should not feel that he can retain and apply it according to his own judgment, because he is a minister. It is not his. He is not at liberty to devote to himself whatever he thinks is his due. Let him not give his influence to any plans for diverting from their legitimate use the tithes and offerings dedicated to God. Let them be placed in His treasury, and held sacred for God's service as He has appointed.¹¹³

"This is only one of the many statements that can be produced to show where the tithe should be paid, and for what it should be used."

"I believe that something should be done to counteract the wrong influence that will be exerted by those who are taking an extreme position concerning the Testimony quoted in the blue book by the Battle Creek people. What counsel have you to give regarding this? I suppose we shall have to deal with this in replying to the blue book. I send you this extract to give you some idea of the pernicious influence already at work in various quarters.¹¹⁴

It is indeed a fine detail to notice, but what Elder Daniells describes as showing "where the tithe should be *paid*," is actually describing where it is to be

113. *Review and Herald*, November 10, 1896

114. Letter, A.G. Daniells to W.C. White, November 29, 1907

“held sacred for God’s service.” How it gets there, which “channel” is to be used, is not spelled out. A fine detail, to be sure, but one which had been vexatious in the recent past, and which the brethren would need to “deal with... in replying to the blue book.”

Through the end of November 1907, the list of responsible brethren actively corresponding about some sort of formal reply to Stewart’s attack was small: Elders White and Daniells. Surely they must have spoken to others, but it doesn’t show up in the more than eight hundred personal letters from the time period that were reviewed. That was about to change.

It is often cynically said that “money talks,” and humanity has certainly given plenty of cause for such cynicism, but money is important for even the most noble of endeavors. Perhaps it was the tithe-related fallout of the blue book that spurred activity, perhaps not. In any case, Elder W.W. Prescott entered the picture two days later with a letter to Elder White:

Brother Daniells has told us something... of his talks with you about... the recent blue book put out from Battle Creek; but we have been so hard pressed on every hand that we have not yet had time to deal with the matter seriously.

Last evening we had a council of the General Conference Committee, continuing nearly three hours, in which we considered this blue book and the recent book which Moses Kellogg and John Kolvoord have put out from Battle Creek, attacking the interpretation of the little horn and the 2300 days of Daniel 8.¹¹⁵

Somewhat confusingly, the General Conference Committee minutes do not reflect this. Rather than an evening meeting November 30, they record morning meetings on November 28 and December 1, with no mention of any blue book discussion in either case. Perhaps the meeting Prescott spoke of was an informal gathering.

Four weeks later, Elder White was traveling, but wrote back home to Clarence Crisler: “I think you should do what you can to get material ready for Elders Daniells and Prescott to use in the answer to Dr. Stewart’s pamphlet.”¹¹⁶

Crisler—as busy as everyone else—wrote back in early January. After listing off a string of projects, reports, and crises—all of which demanded attention—he wrote: “This brings us to the 10th of January. The following week is the time I hope to spend on the Stewart pamphlet, gathering material, etc. I can not see, now, how this can be gotten at any sooner.”¹¹⁷

That timing wasn’t all bad, since Elder White wasn’t home anyway. “The last of October I went to Southern California... hoping to be home in three weeks. I

115. Letter, W.W. Prescott to W.C. White, December 1, 1907

116. Letter, W.C. White to C.C. Crisler, December 28, 1907

117. Letter, C.C. Crisler to W.C. White, January 3, 1908

reached home in just three months.” That was the 24th of January. Did he get a little downtime with his family? Maybe, but not much. Within a day or two at the most, “Elders Daniells and Prescott were with us a couple of days; then we went to Mountain View and spent a couple of days together. Then Prof. Prescott spent five days with us here in the office, studying MSS and publishing problems.”¹¹⁸

And that was that. That was the time they managed to squeeze in to “work together, preparing an answer to the Stewart letter... [and] counsel about a hundred and one important matters?”¹¹⁹ When Prescott finally made it home to the east coast about the middle of February, he wrote to Elder White: “I shall take early opportunity to lay before the brethren the results of our work relating to the Blue Book, etc.”¹²⁰

Beyond February of 1908 the trail goes cold. If that seems anticlimactic, if readers are left wondering how all this chronology could possibly be important enough to wade through as we have... well, that’s fair. But there is a reason.

The only apparent official product of this whole process is now known as WDF (E.G. White Estate Document File) 213, a collection of six documents which record plans that were discussed in regard to the charges made in the blue book. None of these documents is dated or attributed to any particular person or group, though a careful examination sheds considerable light on that question.

A cursive title at the top of the first, and the five handwritten pages which make up the second document, are clearly by Elder White (judging from the handwriting). The third document bears three short notations which appear to be by Elder Daniells, and multiple references in the typewritten content—“tell W.C.W.,” “Refer this to W.C.W.” etc.—make it clear that Elder White was not present on that occasion.

The fourth document, “Facts Regarding the Dates and the Distribution of MSS. Used in the Compilation of Series B, No. 6,” is precisely the sort of information that would have been requested from one of the secretaries at Elmshaven. The fifth document, “Revised List—Questions Remaining Unanswered Regarding the Testimonies,” is exactly that: a tedious collection of Stewart’s most trivial quibbles.

Only the sixth document carries an air of finality, beginning with the title page heading: “Memorandum of Plans Agreed Upon in Dealing with the ‘Blue Book.’” One may be justified in assuming this to be the endpoint of the discussion, and this is where the notion of a formal response to the blue book as a whole was dismissed:

118. Letter, W.C. White to E.H. Gates, February 26, 1908

119. Letter, W.C. White to A.G. Daniells, 9/26/1907

120. Letter, W.W. Prescott to W.C. White, February 21, 1908

It was felt that a considerable part of [the blue book] would not demand any attention whatever, as it would not have any weight with those who could distinguish between an honest effort to seek light and those who are hunting for opportunity to make charges against Sister White and her work.

Just six remaining points that “needed attention” were listed off, and the suggestion was made that these items be addressed separately, to be printed up “in separate form, either as printed leaflets or circular letters, as might be deemed best, for circulation where the circumstances indicated that there was a necessity for such information as they will contain.” To the best of anyone’s knowledge now, however, this was never done. Of those six points, arguing about what was said when in regard to rebuilding the San after the fire, seems like last century’s news, and “the question of the use of milk, eggs, and butter,” while still sometimes passionately discussed, is a pretty well defined dietary preference, with advocates on both sides of the divide generally living in peace with the others. Thus two of Stewart’s most problematic complaints simply lack the energy to register on the Richter scale, today.

But the church’s position on “the use of medicine,” the claim that Ellen White was a “plagiarist,” restrictive contracts which prevent effective evangelism, and “the proper use of the tithe” have all been hot topic issues in recent years. In late 1907, the increasingly public actions and attitudes of Dr. Stewart, Dr. Kellogg, and their compatriots made it seem unnecessary to publish a response to Stewart’s book. It is true, of course, that the most effective way to discredit error and those who advocate it, it is to let them do so themselves. Nevertheless, the decision to leave the matter unaddressed left those four “loose ends” flapping in the wind. It is easy to wish that the work of defending Ellen White and the Spirit of Prophecy had been carried to as full and rapid a completion as had been the defense of the “Plan of Organization of the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination,” but the end result of nearly nine months of deliberations was essentially silence. It worked, at the time, but the results are visible today.

The “plagiarism” issue consumed an excess of time, attention, and money for a number of years a few decades back, and the question of the church’s stance on “medicine”—in an era of rapidly expanding technological and genetic options—continues to stir debate, but those questions will not be our focus now. Similarly, unpublicized, unexplained, and little-understood contracts and alliances with organizations such as the United Nations and the World Health Organization—with the concomitant reliance on government funding and consequent forbidding of “proselytization,” as well as the potential of those organizations’ own publicly

downplayed mystical influences intruding into church policy—have raised eyebrows and inquiries more recently.

But the historical record of the early 1900s most directly addresses what is now a “lost-in-the-mists-of-time” position that the defenders of Ellen White, the members of the General Conference Committee, “agreed upon” in relation to tithe. That final item of this final document sketches out the intended response to Stewart’s tithe-related accusation. It is by far the lengthiest of the six items, and—judging from the large sweeping hand-drawn “brace” curve on the page—it apparently caught someone’s eye at some point. This is what it says:

6. As to the proper use of the tithe: The outline of a statement on this subject which was agreed upon was briefly this: To give extracts from Sister White’s writings as to the tithe and its use; to show that her testimony and her own usual practice was in favor of paying the tithe into the regularly designated treasury, to be used under the counsel of the committees appointed for such purposes; to show further from her writings that when those who have charge of the expenditure of the tithe so far fail in the discharge of their duty that the regularly organized channels for the distribution of tithe become hindrances to its proper use, then in order to carry out the divine plan that the tithe should be expended in the wisest manner for the furtherance of the work, individuals have the right to pay their tithes direct to the needy fields; but that this involves a considerable degree of personal responsibility, which must be assumed by those who decide to follow this plan. It was thought that this matter could be handled in a way to show that the departure from the regular plans was authorized only when the regular plans failed to be carried out by those in positions of responsibility.”

To modern-day Adventists, this has an unusual ring to it, but to those who know the history it is obviously just a more formal statement of what Elder White had been advocating for several years. That he was the primary architect of the statement is obvious, even without noting that the third document had specified: “Tithe—to whom should it be paid: Refer this to W.C. White. Very important.” We’ve seen these thoughts before; they would not have been new to anyone in Elder White’s circle of influence.

It is important to note the wording of the assignment W.C. was given. The question was not, “for what should tithe be used?” That was never the question (though Stewart would certainly have been happy to modify the Lord’s instruction on that point). The question was, clearly, the matter of “channels,” and the distribution of tithe under the distressed circumstances which might arise should “those who have charge of the expenditure of the tithe so far fail in the discharge of their duty that the regularly organized channels for the distribution of tithe become hindrances to its proper use.” Far better to prevent such

an occurrence, but it had happened in the recent past, and some contingency plan was obviously warranted.

It should be noted that the suggested “contingency provision” in that paragraph speaks of individuals sending money direct to “needy fields.” The most natural understanding of that phrase—at least at the time it was written—would take it as a reference to places like the “Southern field,” which had been chronically neglected for many years. This was, of course, what had happened in the case Stewart had cited, with those funds going to the Southern Missionary Society, but not through the “regular channels.”

It should be pointed out, though, that when Arthur White described the Southern Missionary Society as “almost entirely a self-supporting work, carried on with approval of church leaders and with minimal financial assistance,” he used a term that was unknown at the time the SMS was established. The prominence of “self-supporting” or “independent” Adventist work—meaning organizations and institutions seeking to further the work of the church, but not owned and legally controlled by the church—was yet future.

Perhaps because of the chronically challenging working relationship between the Southern Missionary Society and the General Conference, that sort of hybrid approach was not even considered when Ellen White guided E.A. Sutherland and P.T. Magan in the founding of the Nashville Agricultural and Normal Institute—colloquially known as “Madison College.” This beginning of “self-supporting work” was nine years after the founding of the SMS, and made Madison even more of a novelty than the SMS.

That Ellen White served as a member of Madison’s board of directors—something she never did for any other organization—encourages us that such “independent” work can be used of God, but certainly is not a guarantee that all such work is appropriate. Similarly, while the establishment of independent work gives no indication that the “regular channels” had been rejected, neither is it safe to assume that they could never “fail in the discharge of their duty.”

28. It’s Biblical!

The common sense approach in their response to Stewart seemed logical to A.G. Daniells, W.C. White, and the rest of the General Conference Committee. But today it runs into a challenge from the “doctrine” which has largely replaced that of the “regular channels.” At some point in the intervening century, that terminology was dropped. In its place it is now common to hear the more Biblical term, “the storehouse.”

Just as in Malachi chapter three, “the storehouse” is clearly to receive the tithes of God’s faithful, but opinions have varied as to the term’s modern significance. This is a sensitive area, and one to be considered with care, since it is easy to impose an arbitrarily established definition onto symbolic terms and phrases. The risk in such cases is commonly “proving too much,” or creating untenable contradictions. Anyone who insists on a very specific meaning for a given term, faces the challenge of “making it fit” in every usage.

There are only two places in the universe where we can place our treasures—in God’s storehouse or in Satan’s; and all that is not devoted to God’s service is counted on Satan’s side, and goes to strengthen his cause.¹²¹

Used loosely, this statement and others similar to it, have been said to mean that “the storehouse” is synonymous with the now outdated “regular channels.” In other words, if one’s tithe doesn’t go to the church, then it is in actuality an offering to Satan! Serious stuff, obviously.

But this is an example of the logical fallacy of proving too much. This inspired statement does not specify “tithe”; it speaks of all “our treasures.” If we insist that placing something in the “storehouse” always means a charitable donation to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, we are left with the significant moral problem of classing all other expenditures as an offering to Satan. Really? What about money spent on food, or clothes, or even an act of Christian kindness shared directly with one in need? Is Satan celebrating every time that happens?

Such a definition also poses the challenge of making inspired statements like the following teach an irreconcilable conflict between the duty to return a faithful tithe and the need to respond to the Lord’s moving upon the heart:

The people of God who have been raised up with a knowledge of the truth have become confused. They have lost their confidence in the General Conference because of the misappropriation of means, and the Lord does not move upon their hearts to pass in their means to the Conference.¹²²

A condition of things has been brought about that, unless God in mercy shall interpose, will work disaster to His cause. Inexperienced minds are being troubled at the outlook. For reasons that you can give, God is not moving upon the hearts of His people to supply the treasury.¹²³

It should be pointed out, as has been done before, that these statements both come from the especially troubled period of the 1890s. They are not one-size-fits-all, eternally-applicable statements. At that time, under the then-pre-

121. *Review and Herald*, December 24, 1903

122. E.G. White, “Remarks at a Special Meeting Held in the Avondale School Chapel,” July 25, 1899; Manuscript 103a, 1899

123. E.G. White, “The Danger of Self-Sufficiency in God’s Work,” May 30, 1895; Manuscript 18, 1896

vailing circumstances, God was “not moving upon the hearts of His people to supply the treasury.” In context, there is no doubt but that the “treasury” mentioned here is the church in both local and General Conference. (As this was prior to the 1901 reorganization of the church’s corporate structure, there were no union conferences, nor world divisions, which came later still.)

If God was not moving hearts, it is an open question as to the wisdom of men trying to do what God declined to do. Fortunately, the most egregious abuses of the mid- to late-1890s were ended by the resignations from both church employment and church membership of A.R. Henry, Harmon Lindsay (the two treasurers to whom the 1896 manuscript above was written), and others of like mind. Much as in the book of Judges, the temporary circumstance passed, and God was once again pleased to prosper His church.

29. When Repairs Are Needed

The purpose of the tithe is fixed; the collection and distribution of the tithe is not. In a variety of ways and in a variety of stories, we see this principle illustrated in the Bible. The most pointed of these is found in 2 Kings 12, the story of King Jehoash and Jehoiada the high priest. While under the influence of the priest, the young king “did what was right in the sight of the Lord.” Nevertheless, when Jehoash instructed the priests as a group to collect the income from several different categories of offering and use the funds to “repair the damages of the temple” left over from long years of neglect, they failed. When the king checked up on the project, “the priests had not repaired the damages of the temple.”

His solution was simple: He told the priests, “do not take more money from your constituency, but deliver it for repairing the damages of the temple.” For whatever reason, the priests as a class chose to step away from the work. They “would neither receive more money from the people, nor repair the damages of the temple.”

All of which led Jehoiada (the priest, not the king) to famously place a “chest” with a “hole bored into its lid” in a prominent position “on the right side as one comes into the house of the Lord.” The funds of the worshippers which filled the chest were counted by “the king’s scribe and the high priest” and then given “into the hands of those who did the work, who had the oversight of the house of the Lord; and they paid it out to the carpenters and builders who worked on the house of the Lord, and to masons and stonecutters, and for buying timber and hewn stone, to repair the damage of the house of the Lord.”

As a final note, the Bible tells us that this arrangement was based on what appears to have been an assessment of the character displayed by those in-

volved: “they did not require an account from the men into whose hand they delivered the money to be paid to workmen, for they dealt faithfully.”

True, this account deals with “offerings,” not “tithes,” but the principle of function being more important than form or system is the same, and to classify tithe as somehow exempt from such considerations requires the establishment of something very akin to the Roman Catholic doctrines of “Holy Sacraments,” and the “Divine Right of Kings.”

Much like Elders White and Daniells, Jehoiada cared more for the functionality of the system than for the structure of the system. None of which is to say that the system was bad or to be disrespected. The work-around was a simple, rational response to a temporary circumstance in which “those who have charge of the expenditure of the tithe so far fail in the discharge of their duty that the regularly organized channels for the distribution of tithe [had] become hindrances to its proper use.”

This should not be surprising. Writing on a different topic, Ellen White would advise that “God wants us all to have common sense, and He wants us to reason from common sense. Circumstances alter conditions. Circumstances change the relation of things.”¹²⁴

In fact, even in the letter to the Colorado Conference president that Stewart quoted, she had written:

I send this matter to you so that you shall not make a mistake. Circumstances alter cases. I would not advise that any one 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.

The challenge, of course, is that circumstances not only change “the relation of things,” and “alter cases,” but circumstances themselves change. Should similar circumstances once again arise as existed in 1896, a similar assessment and course of action would be warranted. While we might desire the convenience of a hard, fast, black-and-white rule valid in all times and places, God doesn’t work that way. Opinions will vary.

Men are individually accountable to God, and each must act as God moves upon him, not as he is moved by the mind of another; for if this manner of labor is pursued, souls cannot be impressed and directed by the Spirit of the great I am. They will be kept under a restraint which allows no freedom of action or of choice.¹²⁵

124. *Selected Messages*, Book 3, 217

125. *Testimonies*, vol. 5, 725

God desires to bring men into direct relation with Himself. In all His dealings with human beings He recognizes the principle of personal responsibility. He seeks to encourage a sense of personal dependence and to impress the need of personal guidance.¹²⁶

This practical application of religious liberty principles is one of the more challenging aspects of the Christian life, for it is not natural to constantly look to the author and finisher of our faith in the midst of changing circumstances. Clearly, the Lord does not always lead all men down the same path. If He did, there would be no need for “personal dependence and... personal guidance.” And, it should be noted, a matter of “personal guidance” is likely not an appropriate topic for widespread public attention, let alone coercive action. As Ellen White said, there is wisdom in the “no comment” option for some topics. After all, Christians who believe God has personally guided them to adopt an exceptional course surely ought to believe that He can guide others as He needs. In all probability, the only time such an issue might profitably be shared is when voices are raised unadvisedly attacking such exceptional cases. As Ellen White assured the conference president, “No man should give notoriety to the fact that in special cases the tithe is used in that way.”

30. *When “New” Looks “Dangerous”*

Several pages back, Madison College was mentioned. As a “first-of-its-kind” enterprise, this school of Ellen White’s special care provides several lessons of value in this discussion. Basic to them all is simply that it existed as it did, a private enterprise. In other words, Madison College was not owned or controlled by any legal entity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Owned and controlled by Seventh-day Adventists, yes, but independent of the denomination as far as legal ties were concerned. True, Ellen White chose to serve on its Board of Directors, but that created no ties nor obligations to the church.

That’s an important point: every relationship comes with its own rights and responsibilities. In a world that seems to prioritize “control,” the word “independent” carries an almost negative connotation. If someone or something is “independent,” you can’t tell them what to do or what not to do. You can’t control them, and that seems like a risky thing. But “independent” also means that you don’t have any liability for their decisions and actions, nor do you have to support them. When E.A. Sutherland, P.T. Magan, and their fellow “independents” left Berrien Springs and moved to Tennessee, they all dropped off the denominational pay-roll.

126. *Ministry of Healing*, 242

Given that their stated purpose in all this was to train “missionary teachers” and “missionary farmers” to spread Seventh-day Adventism through the tragically neglected region of the “South,” it’s hard to see any downside for the church. It’s a bit like the Army suddenly finding out that there is also a Navy fighting on their side of the war. They both answer to the Commander-in-Chief, but the chain of command is not the same. That means the Army doesn’t have control of those ships, but neither do they get blamed if the Navy ends up in Davy Jones’ locker!

Still, every true patriot of the nation will be hoping that the two branches of the armed forces will work cooperatively, ideally in close coordination! The battleships should *not* be shelling the beach when the GI’s are running through the surf! That much seems obvious... but... who’s up there in those airplanes? The Air Force? Who is the *Air Force*? And what in the world is a *Marine*? Who’s in charge of all this?

Just follow the “buck,” because it’s going to end up at the desk of the Commander-in-Chief.

Still, you can imagine how there might be opportunity for some stress, some concern, and—sadly—even some conflict. Inter-agency turf wars are far too common in human governments, but there’s no need for that in the work of the church. We can learn a lesson on this from the second chapter of Ezekiel:

To the prophet the wheel within a wheel, the appearances of living creatures connected with them, all seemed intricate and unexplainable. But the hand of infinite wisdom is seen among the wheels, and perfect order is the result of its work. Every wheel works in perfect harmony with every other.¹²⁷

But let’s go back to Madison, because there are some key points that help illustrate this working relationship that God established. The first thing to understand was that it was all *new*, and clearly perplexing to some in administrative positions. How were they to relate to this school? They didn’t own the place; they didn’t pay the teachers; they hardly knew anything about it. So... maybe that was fine. “Not our issue. If we just look the other way, maybe it’ll all disappear.”

But Madison didn’t go away. And that one board member who lived out in California kept writing “testimonies” about helping the school. Well, any administrator worth his salt knows that you can’t make good decisions without good information, so they came up with an idea: if the Madison School would open their financial records to the General Conference, then it would be much, much easier to know how best to help.

127. E.G. White, Letter to O.A. Olsen, May 7, 1895; Letter 58, 1895

31. *On Being "Amenable"*

Was that just a not-well-thought-through idea, or were there ulterior motives? A century and more later, it's hard to tell. But given the environment at the time, it was a big issue. For the sake of understanding the importance of Ellen White's later instruction to the workers at Madison, let's sketch out that environment, starting with a few comments from Elder Stephen Haskell, a long-time church worker, and well acquainted with the Southern field. He wrote to Elder W.C. White:

It seems to me there is danger of neglecting those brethren on that Madison farm, or making it hard for them by not recognizing their work at all....

They are seeking to carry out the testimonies; they have paid a faithful tithe into the Southern Union Conference; they have given no outward evidences of rebellion or fault finding. Why should they not be recognized in some way? If you say it is because they are not wholly under the control of the General Conference, then let the General Conference relieve them... and not let them be left to work as they do without any recognition whatever.

You may say that it is none of my business. Well, in one sense it is not, for I have not a dollar invested in it as yet. But you know that your mother feels especially called to look after the poor and oppressed, and if the circumstances are such that they are oppressed, God will have a reckoning somewhere, sometime....

Brother Sutherland is a man of rare ability; Brother Magan also has ability; and Sister DeGraw has ability; and simply because they have their own ideas of your mother's testimonies on the educational question, that to my mind is no reason why they should be left to flounder and struggle along without help....

Now, I have written this to you that I may be clear before God. I think there is danger in the present administration.... In Bible times, you know, there were men true to David that were not true to principle; there were men true to principle that were not true, apparently in all things to David, the king. But God accepted those that were true to principle and rejected those that were true to David, the king, and were not true to principle.¹²⁸

Elder Haskell's pointed comments weren't likely aimed at Willie, who had already done much to help the group at Madison; they were more directed toward other members of the General Conference Committee who were genuinely confused, and somewhat put-off, by that question of ownership.

George Butler, former General Conference president, and at that time the president of the Southern Union Conference, offered his own perspective in a letter to Ellen White:

128. Letter, S.N. Haskell to W.C. White, October 3, 1906

I want to speak a little of the Madison School. It's having a very discouraging time, and I pity the poor souls from the bottom of my soul....

Brother Sutherland has been sick for weeks, up to Dr. Paulson's Sanitarium. He is threatened with a nervous prostration collapse.... Brother Magan had to come back to the farm, though he was not in very good health himself, and work very hard to save their crops.... He said they had had an income of only \$13.00 per month each since they came south; said they found it very hard to make ends meet. Their cases came up in the General Conference Councils, i.e. of those going out trying to raise money outside of the regular channels.... Some leading men expressed themselves very strongly against the course they were pursuing, Elder Farnsworth especially, was very emphatic in saying he proposed that what money he had to pay should go through the regular channels, and he believed that all should do that way. Others talked similarly, and it was plain to be seen that most of the congregation looked with no favor upon their course in going around soliciting, without being authorized to do so by the leading brethren.... It was evident that most all were opposed to their going out to raise money out of the "regular channels." And it seems very clear to my mind that unless something is said by yourself, very plainly on this point, that the field will be very largely closed up so that it will be very difficult for them to raise money sufficient to keep their enterprise from going under.¹²⁹

There is much more that might be cited to paint a picture of the "environment" surrounding the Madison School, but that should be enough, because Butler's letter brings us right up to the time of the previously mentioned "request for financial information." When Haskell got word of it, he was... well, *unimpressed*. He immediately shared his thoughts with Ellen White:

We enclose to you that which we received this morning. I suppose you know your name is on the Board as one of the Incorporators of that Madison School, and you can speak for yourself in reference to the enclosed. But to my mind it would be the greatest folly in the world to get out a statement of the money borrowed and used in that Madison School. It would be an injustice to outside parties and to our brethren who have requested that such a statement should not be printed.

The Bible has some illustrations where wisdom is in keeping still. The truth is that while God has blessed them there, influences have been started against them; and letters been circulated, which I have in my possession, advising students not to go to that School. God has been with them and now for them to make a statement, or report, to a committee, when no committee, only their own Board [today we would write, "except their own Board"] has encouraged them, is a mistake.

These are my sentiments concerning the matter, and I believe that you will see it in this light; and with the present light that I have I could in no way consent to it. In fact, I should feel that Icabod was written upon that school, should they,

129. Letter, G.I. Butler to E.G. White, October 20, 1906

under the existing circumstances, having promised many of the donors not to, expose their gifts and donations....

I sent a telegram today to them at Madison, saying, "Keep your own books to yourselves." It is open for any of their friends to see but let them not allow their enemies to take advantage of the school. That school has been established by your counsel and anything that would prevent the purpose of God being carried out would be unworthy of the sacred trust God has committed to them.¹³⁰

The tone of Haskell's letter may be surprising. Why was he so worked up?

The reason is wrapped up in one word: "expose." The school had promised not to "expose" their donors' "gifts and donations." It may have been exaggerated; it may have been wholly imaginary; but there was a very real fear on the part of the donors that their kindness to Madison would be punished by the church. Hence the need to keep those records private, even if requested by the General Conference.

Well, that was Haskell's take on the issue. What about Ellen White? What Haskell didn't know when he wrote his letter was that she was six days ahead of him. Had she gotten the request before him? Maybe, but, then, she *was* known to receive information from a source not available to most. Almost a week before Haskell had written to her, she had penned a letter "To the workers at the Madison School":

I write to you to be sure to bear in mind at this time that silence is eloquence. To open up all matters concerning the beginning of your work at Madison would not be wisdom. I have just received a letter regarding your work, but I cannot now deal with it as I wish. I wish to say to you, Be as wise as serpents and as harmless as doves. Some will depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils. It will not be well for you to open to everybody all things concerning the work in Nashville and in Madison. There are those who are associated with us, and who occupy positions of trust, who may not stand the test. It will not be safe to try to make all understand everything. Those things that are of a private character you should not make public. Let them be kept within the knowledge of your special few.¹³¹

Nearly a year later, Ellen White would refer back to this time period, giving a more complete picture of her reasons for the counsel she gave:

When my advice was asked in reference to the Madison school, I said, Remain as you are. There is danger in binding every working agency under the dictation of the conference. The Lord did not design that this should be. The circumstances were such that the burden-bearers in the Madison school could not bind up their work with the conference. I knew their situation; and when many of the leading men in our conferences ignored them because they did not place their school under conference dictation,

130. Letter, S.N. Haskell to E.G. White, November 21, 1906

131. E.G. White, Letter to Workers at the Madison School, November 15, 1906; Letter 358, 1906

I was shown that they would not be helped by making themselves amenable to the conference. They had better remain as led by God, amenable to Him, to work out His plans. But this matter need not be blazed abroad.¹³²

Note that last sentence. We've seen the idea before. Sometimes there are exceptions to the general rule. Sometimes the Commander-in-Chief authorizes what today's vernacular would call "black ops units," groups working outside the normal chain of command. Why? Because the very chain of command, which is used so efficiently in most situations, can actually be a hindrance in special cases. In those circumstances, the special forces simply cannot place themselves under the command of uncomprehending officers of the regular sort.

Imagine a sergeant and a platoon of privates encountering a small group of special ops commandos. The latter aren't in regular uniform. There are no visible tokens of rank. But if that sergeant is savvy to the ways of the military, he should see enough clues to know that it's a bad idea for him to try pulling rank, and an even worse idea for him and his men to use force. If he's smart, he doesn't ask a lot of questions, and he's sure not going to be broadcasting complaints to the whole army that these guys didn't obey his orders!

Madison was one of those "black ops"; the sisters in Colorado were another. There are good reasons for valid exceptions; that's what makes them valid! But exceptions *aren't* the new model for everything to follow.¹³³ At the same time Ellen White was supporting Madison, she was working to establish the College of Medical Evangelists in Loma Linda. She never suggested that CME should pattern after Madison, and she never insisted that Madison pattern after any other Adventist school. Why would she?

The work that the laborers have accomplished at Madison has done more to give a correct knowledge of what an all-round education means than any other school that has been established by Seventh-day Adventists in America. The Lord has given these teachers in the South an education that is of highest value, and it is a training that God would be pleased to have all our youth receive.¹³⁴

Madison was an exception, and should ideally have been acknowledged and supported as such by the church at large, including the General Conference. Treating a step-child like a step-child creates a lot more drama and attracts a lot more attention than treating all the children the same. Yes, the idea of supporting an institution over which the church had no direct control, was... *odd*. It was new. It was awkward. But still, it was *right*. Writing to the General Con-

132. E.G. White, Letter to A.G. Daniells and I.H. Evans," September 23, 1907; Letter 314, 1907

133. Nor should such exceptions be considered "elite" as they are in the military context. Within God's church, even when operational independence is called for, the foundational principles are always "you are all brethren," and "let each esteem others better than himself."

134. E.G. White, Letter to J.E and Emma White, May 26, 1908; Letter 168, 1908

ference president and treasurer, Ellen White tried to lay it out in ways they could relate to:

You may ask, What is needed? I answer. It is encouragement....

It is your privilege, Brother Daniells, and the privilege of those who have wide influence in the work, to let these brethren understand that they have your confidence and encouragement in the work they are bravely doing.... The brethren who have influence should do all in their power to hold up the hands of these workers by encouraging and supporting the work of the Madison school. Means should be appropriated to the needs of the work in Madison, that the labors of the teachers may not be so hard in the future.¹³⁵

For the sake of absolute clarity, note that in that last sentence, “means” means “money.” Financial support. To an organization that’s not in the normal chain of command? Yes, strange as it may seem.

32. *Wrapping Up*

Since this discussion has touched on matters of both church order and finance, it is fitting to close by noting that claims of personal divine guidance should never be corrupted to serve the purpose of personal benefit. Nor should the “usual” structures of the church be lost sight of by anyone called to serve in unusual ways. Those seeking to serve God will not be found tearing down His church, and His church—if true to the spirit of Christ—will not be found attacking those who have been called outside the “regular channels.” One’s relationship to God’s church is not the place for a casual, dismissive attitude. If you are blessed with experience, or knowledge, or any advantage given you by God, His church needs what you have to offer. “His church is to be taught. Enfeebled and defective though it is, it is the object of His supreme regard.”¹³⁶

Ellen White had good reasons for her “usual practice” of “paying the tithe into the regularly designated treasury, to be used under the counsel of the committees appointed for such purposes.” That system offers great efficiency and benefit. When directed by trustworthy officers of the church, it provides opportunity for far greater balance in the distribution of funds. Individual church members are seldom aware of the total picture of God’s church, and might innocently fail to supply a pressing need of which they know nothing, or have their minds blinded to the importance of mundane needs by the heart-touching portrayal of special cases.

Still, special cases sometimes arise, and there were good reasons for Madison College to remain “led by God, amenable to Him.” That is *not* insubordination.

135. E.G. White, Letter to A.G. Daniells, January 19, 1907; Letter 118, 1907

136. E.G. White, Letter to D. Paulson, W. Sadler, A.T. Jones, and E.J. Waggoner, August 1, 1904; Letter 279, 1904

Nor is it to be divorced from God's church; it is to serve God's church, and—sometimes—it is to be sustained by the gifts of God's church, from both individual members and the “regular channels” who may be called to support as an act of Christian kindness that which they cannot (and *should* not) control.

But that's the exception! There were good reasons for establishing the College of Medical Evangelists as a denominationally owned institution. The school would need the support of the whole church, and the whole church needed the expanded vision of a simple lifestyle based “gospel-medical missionary evangelism” that God designed to develop there. And when the General Conference funding for CME was made conditional upon their raising \$30,000 first, it was Madison that saved them.¹³⁷

Within God's church, when it's functioning well, finances seem to come under a familiar set of conditions: “For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.”¹³⁸

God's church is to be united. This unity is threatened most dramatically by those who would attack it directly, calling it heretical or even labeling it “Babylon.” But this unity is threatened just as surely by any who would abandon the true principles of religious liberty and employ instead the coercive “policies of the papacy,” refusing to recognize the “new channels” of God's choosing. It's a narrow path; one which will necessitate the discarding of wagons, luggage, horses, shoes, and socks. It's a path which is set to disappear entirely, such that only the miraculous “hold from above” will suffice to the saving of any. May God guide His people.



137. *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists*, article: “Madison Institutions”

138. Luke 9:24

33. *Take-Aways*

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has been blessed with a divinely designed system of order and management. As a matter of personal stewardship, it rests with each of us to support, preserve, and—should it become necessary—to restore it to optimum functionality for the glory of God. To that end, perhaps the following “Take-away Items” from this discussion will be of value.

1. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is uniquely (though not exclusively) the arena of God’s work on earth today.
2. Loyalty is expected of every member, every minister, every administrator, and every institution within its ranks.
3. That loyalty is, first of all, to God, so every member in whatever capacity or station is fully authorized to refuse obedience to any truly unlawful order.
4. The devil naturally prefers to confuse the moral bearings of leaders over followers, and best of all those “at the heart of the work.”
5. Historically, it is not unheard of for false principles to be inadvertently woven into “our religious management and organizations.” Accordingly, we are warned that “unless every eye is single to the glory of God, this enormous system of popery will be interwoven with our faith and practice.”
6. When this has occurred in the past, great harm has come to God’s church, up to and including the General Conference’s temporary loss of “the voice of God.”
7. A failure to recognize, acknowledge, and remedy the “insinuation” of erroneous policy into God’s work ultimately and inevitably leads to “an effort... to control the conscience.”
8. Chronic failure to properly and transparently deal with concerns of religious liberty are particularly liable to produce a reaction. While false or inappropriate complaints of this nature are possible, care should be taken that circumstances not come to the point where “many will be stirred by the Spirit of God to break every shackle, and assert their liberty in Christ Jesus.”
9. Efforts to “control the conscience” (perhaps “bypass” is a more descriptive word) often come through efforts to restrict the appropriate distribution of information to properly qualified decision makers.
10. God’s suggested solution for many of the challenges that come “when the very heart of the work is diseased,” is to conduct “an investigation before as many people as possible. All who are helping to sustain the work should get together and understand its inward workings.”

11. Efforts made by “Men of stubborn, iron-like will... to drive certain measures through in accordance with their own judgment,” are “as great a sin in the sight of God as was the sin of Uzzah when he put forth his hand to steady the ark.”
12. Any effort to control the outcome of church deliberations by preemptively excluding the honest opinions of key workers is exceptionally objectionable.
13. Though the potential for misuse is as certain as human nature is corruptible, the heaven-inspired organizational structure of the Adventist church has the potential for great blessing. Though these blessings are not irrevocably inherent in the structure, our church organization is not to be under-valued or squandered through neglect or disobedience.
14. No matter the potential advantage of the organization, if forced to choose between the structure and the function for which the structure was created, the function is the greater of the two.
15. Since “Christlike work for the body and Christlike work for the soul is the true interpretation of the gospel,” we see in Ellen White’s life a reluctant willingness to step outside the organized structure of the church to facilitate both the spreading of “the third angel’s message in verity” and medical missionary work.
16. In moments of crisis, faithfulness to the function of the gospel may compel the believer to act, “even if it be over the heads of ministers and president.”
17. Because of the ease with which money is quantified, questions of monetary policy often appear far more objective than they are. Hidden within are a plethora of differing perspectives. The only real hope for reconciling conflicting viewpoints on such matters is patient, Christian dialog.
18. Firmly embedded in the midst of church monetary policy is the duty/privilege of all believers to return a faithful tithe of their increase to God in order to meet the requirement “that there may be food in My house.”
19. Efforts to exclusively link that obligation to specific methods of fulfilling that obligation have proven ineffective and problematic in past experience. Whether this is done under the name “regular channels” or “the storehouse” makes no difference.
20. While there is great advantage in the church’s capacity to provide worldwide oversight of funds, the “regular channels” (and the more contemporary “Conference storehouse”) are better promoted by demonstrating their superior performance rather than by credal mandates which place form above function.

21. Any disillusionment in regard to the normal channels through which tithe is paid, arising from even the perception of monetary mishandling or misrepresentation of Christian values by the ministry or administrative units of the denomination, is a warning that church administrators do well to consider.
22. Members with reasonable concerns in such matters—even if expressing an unwillingness to fund the “regular channels” as a result—are not to be shamed or ignored, neither are they to publicize their concerns. They are to be treated with Christian courtesy, quietly accommodated, and assured that their concerns are appreciated and will be considered, if need be, by their local church or properly delegated decision-makers at higher levels of denominational administration.
23. Should such concerns be falsely or unwisely raised, they should of course be rejected, but care is in order that this be done both kindly and wisely. The best procedure is complete transparency. If the member’s position is impractical, or illogical, or heretical, let it appear as such to all interested parties.
24. When circumstances prompt church members to work loyally, harmoniously, and yet independently from legal ownership by the denomination, such efforts are to be both supported and counseled in order to achieve the greatest good. They are best viewed as “proof-of-concept” experiments, or at least the “loyal competition.” Given the advantages of denominational integration and the higher levels of monetary support that comes with it, the sensible response is for the church to simply watch, learn, benefit from any demonstration of superior methodology, and then go to work to incorporate all that is helpful into the regular efforts and institutions of the denomination.
25. Not all “R&D projects” succeed. Church members may make mistakes, especially in independent enterprises. Care should be taken that simple “independence” not be branded as “rebellion.” Human nature is human nature still, and treating people as enemies is a good way to make them enemies. It is true that some ideas are just bad. They should be abandoned by those who proposed them, and avoided by the church. When possible, let this be achieved by winning minds and hearts rather than by the use of church discipline. But, when church discipline is needed—as it certainly will be in some cases—let it be entirely free from the coercive “policies of the papacy.”
26. “Independence” is to be respected. Demanding submission—or even confidential information—is inappropriate, and a perfect way to drive a wedge between agencies the Lord has designed to work in cooperation.

Epilogue

RESEARCHING and writing history is a fascinating way to spend one's time. The stories are endless, and the lessons nearly so. But now and then the issues of history take on unusual importance. There are many, many pertinent lessons for today—for *any* day, really, but most don't carry enough weight to be *urgent*. Needed, yes, but something to be worked in as life goes on. Now and then, though, an issue, a principle, a lesson from the past can resonate with the present in such a way that its application rises above the normal din of history, generating a worrying suspicion that the time to benefit from this particular instruction is limited. That opportunities lost, might not come again.

It has been so with this story. As the account emerged from the records of the past—think of it like pulling on a piece of yarn—the interconnections led from one issue to the next. Why? Because the issues are interconnected, just as the yarn in the skein is a single piece. Religious liberty, church administration, transparency, proper representation, funding, and the interrelationships of the different works and workers which the Lord has appointed to further the cause of His kingdom—all this is inescapably connected. This has been discussed already.

But, like the proverbial elephant in the room, there has all the while been another issue lurking in the pages of history. It has been mentioned, but only in passing: the “alpha apostasy” of the Kellogg era. What makes this of importance, of course, is the predicted “omega apostasy” we are warned will come at the very end of time. Books have been written on the subject, and this is not the place to repeat all that may be known there. Nor does it seem wise to confidently assert that “The omega is upon us!” Really? Who would claim to be so smart as to know that the devil can't possibly find a way to make things worse?

And yet, as an unplanned epilogue, perhaps it will not be out of place to superimpose over the story of the early 1900s that has already been told, some thoughts from W.C. White, written about twenty years later, lost sight of for nearly four decades, and then recalled at the request of the General Conference president.

In late 1971 or perhaps very early in 1972, Elder Robert Pierson, General Conference president at the time, wrote to the White Estate with a request that seems entirely appropriate for one in his position. The simplest way to tell the story is to quote Elder Arthur White's response:

Dear Brother Pierson:

You have asked if we have any further information concerning situations which called for E.G. White statements on the alpha and the omega. As I went into our files in response to your request, I found a statement written by my father, W.C. White, about 1935–1936.

In this statement by W.C. White, he tells how different ones over the years had pointed to varying sources of concern within the church and pronounced them “the omega.” He was not convinced, and it is safe to say that he was justified in having his doubts. Indeed, starting in his lifetime and extending far beyond, for nearly sixty years the prevailing concept held that the “alpha” and the “omega” were polar opposites (being at opposite ends of the Greek alphabet). There being no Spirit of Prophecy support for the idea, it finally died out in the 1990s, with the recognition that Ellen White always depicted the omega as simply the fully developed form of the alpha.

The statement by Elder W.C. White continues:

None of the matters brought before me as being the omega seemed to me to fit the case. It has always seemed to me that when the omega came it would bear two characteristics, somewhat similar to the alpha. The movement designated as the alpha, embraced a deep laid plan on the part of the great adversary of truth to introduce false doctrine which struck at the very vitals of Christian belief. It also embraced a persistent and strongly sustained effort to wrest the leadership of this people from the General Conference Committee and place it in the hands of other men.

With these things in mind, I cannot accept any movement that I have seen up to the present time as constituting the omega. When the omega does come, I shall expect to see something similar to the work of Dr. Kellogg and his associates when they labored so earnestly to undermine the confidence of all our people in the leadership of the General Conference.¹³⁹

The son of the prophet was not a prophet, and even his mother's warnings about the omega are sparse on detail. God does not publicly foretell that which

139. Arthur L. White to Robert H. Pierson, January 17, 1972

the devil is free to alter.¹⁴⁰ As Arthur White told Elder Pierson, “We have no other statements concerning the alpha and omega than the ones that appear in *Selected Messages*.” What do they say? What do we know *for sure* about the omega?

The omega will be of a most startling nature.¹⁴¹

The omega will follow, and will be received by those who are not willing to heed the warning God has given.¹⁴²

I knew that the omega would follow in a little while; and I trembled for our people.¹⁴³

When we speak of Kellogg’s apostasy today, our usual focus is on the pantheism, the mysticism, of his teachings. W.C. expected to see an effort to “wrest the leadership of this people from the General Conference Committee.” Ellen White spoke of it as startling.

In a time when “current events” are rapid enough to easily raise thoughts of “closing events”; when the “classic sins” of all history past are blending easily into the “prophetic sins” of the predicted future; when *Great Controversy* seems needed more than ever; and God’s church approaches a General Conference potentially as momentous as 1901—it would be well for the prayers of all saints to ascend, asking God that His church might be protected, corrected, and purified from all worldly influence, all unscriptural commitments and obligations that would compromise the “voice of God” to His people.

May God give wisdom to those who have the care of “the heart of the work.”



140. “The form of Satan’s working will be changed as the circumstances change. He adjusts himself readily to circumstances.” E.G. White, “Visit to Paris and Versaille, France,” October 1886; Manuscript 75, 1886

“Should I specify the particular temptations, Satan would shift his operations and prepare some temptation you are not expecting.” E.G. White, Letter to A.T. Jones, April 14, 1894; Letter 38, 1894

“In the future, Satan’s superstitions will assume new forms.” E.G. White, Letter to A.G. Daniells, November 1, 1903; Letter 238, 1903

“If [false teachers] do not succeed, because their way becomes hedged by warnings from God, they will change somewhat the features of their work, and the representations they have made, and bring out their plans again under a false showing.” E.G. White, “Lessons From the Past,” August 27, 1903; Manuscript 94, 1903

141. *Selected Messages*, Book 1, 197

142. *Selected Messages*, Book 1, 200

143. *Selected Messages*, Book 1, 203