

False Dreams and the Watson Letter By Steve Wohlberg

Some may bring up the “Watson Letter” (Letter 267, 2MR:99-100) in support of diverting tithes from the conference treasury to other ministries, as a person may see fit, but is that what God instructed us to do in the writings of Sister White? How do the instructions of the angel in Ernie Knoll’s dream compare with divinely inspired writings? Let us read on to answer these questions.

Ernie Knoll’s dream “Stand Fast” vs. 9T:249-250 and the “Watson Letter” (See full statements below)

1. In the dream by Ernie Knoll, the message is conveyed: If *any* tithes are being misappropriated, don’t pay your tithes to the conference. Said another way: **Situation:** If any tithes are being misappropriated.
Action to take: **don’t pay** your tithes to the conference.
2. Spirit of prophecy: **Situation:** If any tithes are being misappropriated.
Action to take: **do pay your tithes to the conference but do whatever can be done to correct the misappropriation.**
3. Ellen White is not our example, Jesus is. In fact, regarding her sending of tithe funds to the workers in the south, rather than endorsing the practice of sending the tithes to other than the conference, she said, “This was to be my special work, and I have done this in a number of cases. No man should give notoriety to the fact that in special cases the tithe is used in that way.” In other words, this was not to be an example for the members of our church, but was, in her words, a “**special case**” (emphasis added). (Reading on, we learn that it was a special case of people not trusting her counsel enough to give their tithes to the conference but to also correct the misappropriation of tithes).
4. Sister White made multiple statements within the Watson Letter specifically stating that this work was not to be publicized because it was not to be the practice of non-prophets to give their tithe to just anyone they felt like giving it to. For example:
 - a. “I have myself appropriated my tithe to the most needy cases brought to my notice. I have been instructed to do this; and as the money is not withheld from the Lord's treasury, it is not a matter that should be commented upon, for it will necessitate my making known these matters, which I do not desire to do, because it is not best.”
 - b. “If this matter is given publicity, it will create a knowledge which would better be left as it is. I do not care to give publicity to this work which the Lord has appointed me to do, and others to do.”
 - c. “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.”

5. Sister White clearly stated in the “Watson Letter” that the best thing is **not** for people to withhold their tithes from the conference and send them wherever they felt was best. However, because there were people whose faith was too weak to listen to the prophet and instead wanted to live by sight, tithe monies had been sent to Sister White. These people withheld their tithes from the conference and sent it instead to Sister White with the statement that either she send it where she knew it would be well used or else they would. God works with people where they are, and so Sister White sent it to the southern workers, but this is not what is best. Note her specific instruction:

“I send this matter to you so that you shall not make a mistake. Circumstances alter cases. I would not advise that anyone 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.”
6. The principle which can be derived from this is: No one should make a general statement to instruct others to send their tithes wherever they feel like sending them. Sister White never did, and she instructed others not to as well. God’s people should send their tithes to the conference and support other of God’s workers with their offerings.
7. In appropriating the tithes sent in to her, Sister White was acting the part of the church in accordance with what God specifically showed her.
8. Ellen White was not diverting tithe funds from the conference because of misappropriation. She sent tithes to the southern workers because they were insufficiently funded.
9. Similarly, rather than the statement about the “Watson Letter” endorsing the idea that whoever we believe is the treasury must be the treasury, Ellen White was not withholding money “from the Lord’s treasury” because she was sending the money to Seventh-day Adventist ministers, church workers who were not receiving sufficient funds to do the work they were called to do and to support their families. Does this mean that there is no place for giving of money to self-supporting, supportive ministries? Far from it. This is what offerings are for:

Let the work no longer be hedged up because the tithe has been diverted into various channels other than the one to which the Lord has said it should go. Provision is to be made for these other lines of work. They are to be sustained, but not from the tithe (9T:250).

EGW statements in their entirety:

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.

Read carefully the third chapter of Malachi and see what God says about the tithe. If our churches will take their stand upon the Lord's word and be faithful in paying their tithe into His treasury, more laborers will be encouraged to take up ministerial work. More men would give themselves to the ministry were they not told of the depleted treasury. There should be an abundant supply in the Lord's treasury, and there would be if selfish hearts and hands had not withheld the tithes or made use of them to support other lines of work.

God's reserved resources are to be used in no such haphazard way. The tithe is the Lord's, and those who meddle with it will be punished with the loss of their heavenly treasure unless they repent. Let the work no longer be hedged up because the tithe has been diverted into various channels other than the one to which the Lord has said it should go. Provision is to be made for these other lines of work. They are to be sustained, but not from the tithe. God has not changed; the tithe is still to be used for the support of the ministry. The opening of new fields requires more ministerial efficiency than we now have, and there must be means in the treasury. {9T 249-250}

Letter from Sister White to Elder G. F. Watson, President Colorado Conference:

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.

It has been presented to me for years that my tithe was to be appropriated by myself to aid the white and colored ministers who were neglected and did not receive sufficient properly to support their families. When my attention was called to aged ministers, white or black, it was my special duty to investigate into their necessities and supply their needs. This was to be my special work, and I have done this in a number of cases. No man should give notoriety to the fact that in special cases the tithe is used in that way.

In regard to the colored work in the South, that field has been and is still being robbed of the means that should come to the workers in that field. If there have been cases where our sisters have appropriated their tithe to the support of the ministers working for the colored people in the South, let every man, if he is wise, hold his peace.

I have myself appropriated my tithe to the most needy cases brought to my notice. I have been instructed to do this, and as the money is not withheld from the Lord's treasury, it is not a matter that should be commented upon, for it will

necessitate my making known these matters, which I do not desire to do, because it is not best.

Some cases have been kept before me for years, and I have supplied their needs from the tithe, as God has instructed me to do. And if any person shall say to me, Sister White, will you appropriate my tithe where you know it is most needed, I shall say, Yes, I will; and I have done so. I commend those sisters who have placed their tithe where it is most needed to help to do a work that is being left undone. If this matter is given publicity, it will create a knowledge which would better be left as it is. I do not care to give publicity to this work which the Lord has appointed me to do, and others to do.

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

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. --Letter 267 {2MR:99-100}

As we have seen above, through numerous evidences, God has answered prayers asking whether these dreams are from Him or not. God, in His mercy, has already revealed in the Bible and the Testimonies that they are deceptions of the devil.