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Epistles

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“To be known and read” by all. . . .

Dear Mr. Editor:

You shared our home for a few months in Walla Walla, Washington, when my father was pastor of the College church, and I was a fellow student. Since I can still recall your sense of humor, I thought I’d share a laugh with you and your *PD* readers. If you need a moral to justify printing my submission, try “honesty is the best policy”—when it is not overdone!

Herewith:

During a trial in a small Missouri town, the local prosecuting attorney called his first witness to the stand. She was sworn in and asked if she would tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help her God. The witness, well-dressed elderly lady, the grandmother type, was well spoken and poised. The prosecuting attorney approached her and asked, “Mrs. Jones, do you know me?”

She responded, “Why yes, I do know you, Mr. Williams. I’ve known you since your were a young boy, and frankly, you’ve been a big disappointment to me. You lie, cheat on your wife, manipulate people, and talk badly about them behind their

backs. You think you’re a big shot when you haven’t the sense to realize you never will amount to anything more than a two-bit paper-pushing shyster. Yes, I know you quite well.”

The lawyer was stunned. He couldn’t even think for a few minutes. Then, he slowly backed away from the witness, fearing the looks on the judge and jurors’ faces, not to mention the court reporter, who was documenting every word.

Not knowing what else to do, he pointed across the room and asked, “Mrs. Jones, do you know the defense attorney?”

She again replied, “Why, yes, I do. I’ve known Mr. Bradley since he was a youngster. He’s lazy, bigoted, and has a bad drinking problem. The man can’t build or keep a normal relationship with anyone, and his law practice is one of the worst in the entire state. Not to mention he has cheated on his wife with three women. Yes, I know him.”

The defense attorney almost fainted, and was seen slipping downward in his chair, looking at the floor. Laughter, mixed with gasps, convulsed the courtroom.

At this point, the judge pounded his gavel, and finally silenced the courtroom. He called both coun-

selors to the bench, and in a very quiet voice said, “If either of you morons asks her if she knows me, you’re going to jail!”

Irmin Burke
 Middletown, California

• Thank you, indeed! I can assure our readers that I know you very well. In fact, I remember. . . —R.R.H.

Dear Hegstad (I should say Roland) but I love the sound of Hegstad!

Just received *PD* and was curious as to the meaning of “Newman” on the inside back cover. Who is this Newman that tells us that ATS is on the move? I don’t like my name being taken in vain (Smile)!

On a more serious note: I read through the ATS constitution and values, especially on Ellen White. I notice that their statement is actually softer than the statement in the 27 Fundamental Beliefs. Here is what I would like to see. Are we playing Hans Christian Anderson’s Emperor With No Clothes with Ellen White? In reality, do we care what she says anymore?

Here are several examples:

1. At a spring meeting of the Gen-

eral Conference Executive Committee, we voted after much travail to take hospital administrators off the denominational wage scale, contrary to the explicit counsel of Ellen White. Later, Bob Spangler and I wrote two articles in *Ministry* pointing that out.

2. About 25 years ago, we decided to use tithe for paying up to 30 percent of the elementary teachers’ salary, even though there are explicit, unambiguous statements from Ellen White that, important as education is, not one penny of tithe is to be spent on teachers’ salaries.

3. Ellen White explicitly says that minister’s wives should be paid out of tithe when they help their husbands, even if not in a formal way. But we reject that counsel.

4. Larry Kirkpatrick has a 100-page-plus document on his Website www.greatcontroversy.org, which he has sent to the General Conference against competitive sports in our schools, especially interleague play. He uses a lot of quotes from Ellen White. She is very clear in this area, but we ignore her.

5. Ellen White says we should not use any tithe money for colporteurs, but a percent from every conference goes into a colporteur fund.

I could give you many more

examples, whether it is the use of fiction in our schools, to how tithe is spent, but the above will give you the idea. So, the \$64,000 question: Do we follow Ellen White when it is convenient and ignore her when it is not? Was she given really for the 19th century, and has little relevance for the 21st? After all, she does not help us on abortion, gay marriage, pollution, nuclear warfare, black and white conferences, the proliferation of the mass media into TV, DVD, computers, the Internet, etc.

Would anyone at ATS or *PD* be willing to tackle this delicate subject honestly, frankly, and openly, or do we all continue to play the Emperor's Clothes game?

Yours for truth, clarity, and honesty

Your obedient servant (however you want to take that, smile)

David Newman

Laurel, Maryland

• My former fellow editor (of *Ministry* magazine) asks hard questions. On the hospital pay scale: In one of my last votes in the General Conference, I emphatically opposed taking hospital administrators off the denominational pay scale. I believe some of the shameful excesses in that area are the result of the mis-

guided vote. We reconfigured them to secular businesses rather than church ministries. Still, keep in mind the many administrators and other workers who had no voice in the vote, or voted as you and I did, who continue to treasure their calling to the ministry of medicine.

An incident: A few years ago, I spent a few days in an Adventist hospital. A nurse asked me whether she could pray for me, an initiative I much appreciated. She told me she was the wife of a Lutheran minister and worked for less wages than she could have gotten at a nearby secular hospital because she was proud to be part of a hospital that emphasized spiritual values. Though I had several other nurses who were Adventists, she was the only one who prayed for me. I thank God for the Adventist nurses and doctors who do pray for patients.

As to the 30 percent of tithe for elementary teachers: I believe that was based on the rationale that the amount of time they spend teaching religion is 30 percent. I make no judgment on the practice or on paying ministers' wives. I'm inviting the General Conference treasurer to respond to your letter in the next issue.—R.R.H.