

Chapter 33

Stephen Belden

[W. C. White Statement: “Sister White did not sympathize with those who took the ground that a person who had separated from a companion on other than scriptural ground, and married again, that this second marriage must be broken up if they were to be accepted or retained in an SDA church.

“Sister White fully recognized that these people in most cases had sinned, that some had sinned grievously, and that they should not be accepted into fellowship of our churches unless that sin was repented of. Sister White did not accept the contention that such repentance could not be genuine without breaking the new bond, and making an earnest effort to return to former companions. She recognized the fact that in most instances a reunion with the parties formerly connected with in marriage would be either impossible or exceedingly unprofitable. She also

recognized that the vows entered into in the second marriage called for such an action as was most merciful and kind to the contracting parties.

“She sometimes referred to the teaching of Paul, who having reached a certain point in his experience, said, ‘But I spare you.’ He knew there were existing conditions that people were living in relations resulting from sin. He also knew that Christ would accept their genuine repentance, and that in many cases it would make matters worse if existing relations were torn up to prepare a way for a reunion with the parties who were incompanionable, so Sister White used to say, ‘But I spare you.’

“Sister White’s next older sister, Sarah Harmon, was married to Stephen Belden and became the mother of five children. After her death, in pity for his children, he married a woman who had many years been a faithful servant in his household. Shortly after this, the measles visited the vicinity, and she with others had the measles in a severe form. The measles went to her brain, and

she became insane, and had to be taken to the asylum. Brother Belden struggled along for some time, trying to care for his five children, then for their sake married a very good, efficient woman. She helped him make a home and bring up his children, and was with him in Norfolk Island when he died. At various times, individuals where Brother Belden lived undertook to secure his exclusion from the church because he had married without separation from his wife on the charge of adultery. When appealed to in regard to this matter, Sister White said, ‘Let them alone.’”—W. C. White letter, February 21, 1927.]