

Preface

When this compilation was produced, it was not intended for general circulation. It was designed to assist church administrators and other ministers in their efforts to maintain high moral standards in the church, balancing mercy with justice in dealing with members involved in question table or immoral conduct. However, the book has proved so helpful, and the demand for it so widespread, that it is now being made generally available as part of the Christian Home Library series.

Readers will note that many of the letters in this volume were addressed to errant ministerial laborers. Since Ellen White corresponded largely with ministers and other gospel workers, this should come as no surprise. However, in spite of the faults and sins of those to whom she wrote, Ellen White had great confidence in the ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. At the age of 85 she sent two messages to be read to the General

Conference session of 1913. In the first message she assured the delegates,

“While I still feel the deepest anxiety over the attitude that some are taking toward important measures connected with the development of the cause of God in the earth, yet I have strong faith in the workers throughout the field, and believe that as they meet together and humble themselves before the Lord and consecrate themselves anew to his service, they will be enabled to do His will.”—Selected Messages 2:401, 402.

In her second and final message to the conference Ellen White declared:

“When in the night season I am unable to sleep, I lift my heart in prayer to God, and He strengthens me and gives me the assurance that He is with His ministering servants in the home field and in distant lands. I am encouraged and blessed as I realize that the God of Israel is still guiding His people, and that He will continue to be with them, even to the end.”—Selected Messages 2:406.

These expressions of confidence make clear that the moral problems dealt with in the letters quoted in this volume were not general or widespread. Nevertheless, since contemporary moral problems are similar to those of past decades, we believe that many letters written by Ellen White a century ago contain warnings and appeals that need to be heard today. Concerning the use of her letters, Ellen White said:

“I am endeavoring by the help of God to write letters that will be a help, not merely to those to whom they are addressed, but to many others who need them.”—Letter 79, 1905.

The present compilation is not designed to serve as a manual of rules for dealing with immorality, infidelity, or unscriptural divorce and remarriage. No manual could cover every possible moral irregularity. When W. C. White was asked for an authoritative statement from his mother that would serve as a standard by which to settle all cases of unscriptural marriage, he replied:

“After reading the documents I sent you today, you will say, well, he has not given me anything authoritative from Sister White that directly answers the question. But I think you will see from what I am sending you that it was Sister White’s intention that there should not go forth from her pen anything that could be used as a law or a rule dealing with these questions of marriage, divorce, remarriage, and adultery. She felt that the different cases where the devil had led men into serious entanglements were so varied and so serious, that should she write anything that could be considered as a rule for settling such cases, it would be misunderstood and misused.”—W. C. White to C. P. Bollman, Jan. 6, 1931.

We concur fully with Ellen White’s view. Moral problems are complex. No two situations are exactly alike. Each will require careful study; and although the differences may be minor, each situation will require its own solution. The Holy Spirit will always be needed as a divine Guide and Counselor to help those who are grappling with

moral problems.

All given names in this book are genuine, but, in the various problem cases cited, letters of the alphabet have been substituted for the surname. All chapter titles and sub-headings have been supplied.

It is our hope and prayer that in the hands of an ever-learning and truly caring church, the materials in this compilation will contribute to the elevation of moral standards in the church, and at the same time provide comfort, encouragement, and hope for those whose complex moral problems seem beyond human solution.

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