

Chapter 37

Counsel to a General Conference President

Unwise Management of a Difficult Case—
[Extracts from a letter written from Europe to Elder George I. Butler concerning several ministers in the United States who had transgressed the seventh commandment.] Dear Brother: Your last letter is received, and the questions asked in reference to T and Brother V, I cannot answer further than I have done. I am inclined to the same opinion that I had when I wrote John V. The counsel that I gave him I think was safe, and if my good brethren had acted in concert with that counsel, that he should go to England to labor, I think they would have done that which was pleasing to the lord. I think matters have now come in bad shape for him. He has been entrusted with responsibilities which will have a tendency to elevate him. And it may be that he is not in as good a condition to go forth to labor in some far-off field as he was months ago.

I have not changed my mind in his case. I do not think that it has been managed wisely, taking his soul into consideration. He proposed to prove himself, on his own responsibility, without expense to the conference, and he should have had his chance.

Ellen White's Encouraging Dream—In regard to Brother H, I do not think your management the wisest. I think he should have a chance for his life. If the man is willing and desirous of coming to Europe on his own responsibility, perhaps that would be wisdom. He will never recover himself where he is under present circumstances. I did have a dream many months ago, which showed him restored with the blessing of God resting upon him, but he was not brought to this position by the help of yourself or Elder Haskell, but would have as far as you both were concerned, the attitude you assumed toward him, ever remained in the dark, and his light would have gone out in darkness.

That dream prompted the letter that W. C. White wrote him asking him in reference to coming to Europe, which your conference had voted one year ago that he should do, and made a mistake in sending him to Oakland instead of Europe. He should have come here at once.

A Decision in Regard to Counseling—We shall not urge anything more in his case, but shall do the uttermost in our power to save his soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins. I am in great perplexity at times, and have about come to the conclusion when a case of error and grievous sin is presented before me, to say nothing to my ministering brethren if they do not know the matter themselves, but labor earnestly for the erring one, and encourage him to hope in God's mercy and cling to the merits of a crucified and risen Saviour, look to the Lamb of God in repentance and contrition, and live in His strength. "Come now, and let us reason together; ... though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" [Isaiah 1:18].

There is not the mingling of the elements of character that brings justice and mercy and the love of God into beautiful harmony. There is altogether too much talking, too many strong words and feelings that the Lord has nothing to do with, and these strong feelings influence our good brethren.

Compassion and Sympathy, But Also Plain Dealing. I am compelled to deal plainly and rebuke sin, and then I have it in my heart, placed there by the Spirit of Christ, to labor in faith, in tender sympathy and compassion for the erring. I will not let them alone; I will not leave them to become the sport of Satan's temptations. I will not myself act the part of the adversary of souls, as is represented by Joshua and the Angel. Souls cost the price of my Redeemer's blood.

When men, themselves liable to temptation, erring mortals, shall be free to pronounce upon another's case, who is humbled in the dust, and shall take it on themselves to decide by their own feelings or the feelings of their brethren, just how

much feeling the erring one should manifest to be pardoned, [they are] taking on themselves that which God has not required of them. When I know that there are those who have fallen into great sin, but we have labored with and for them, and God has afterwards accepted their labors, when these have pleaded for me to let them go and not to burden myself for them, I have said, “I will not give you up; you must gather strength to overcome.” These men are now in active service....

No Sanction of Sin, But the Winning of Sinners. My mind is greatly perplexed over these things, because I cannot harmonize them with the course that is being pursued. I am fearful to sanction sin, and I am fearful to let go of the sinner and make no effort to restore him. I think that if our hearts were more fully imbued with the Spirit of Christ, we should have His melting love, and should work with spiritual power to restore the erring and not leave them under Satan’s control.

Need of Good Heart Religion—We need good heart religion, that we shall not only reprove,

rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine, but we shall take the erring in our arms of faith and bear them to the cross of Christ. We must bring them in contact with the sin-pardoning Saviour.

I am more pained than I can express to see so little aptitude and skill to save souls that are ensnared by Satan. I see such a cold Phariseeism, holding off at arm's length the one who has been deluded by the adversary of souls, and then I think: What if Jesus treated us in this way? Is this spirit to grow among us? If so, my brethren must excuse me; I cannot labor with them. I will not be a party to this kind of labor.

Hearts of Flesh, Not Hearts of Iron—I call to mind the shepherd hunting the lost sheep and the prodigal son. I want those parables to have their influence upon my heart and my mind. I think of Jesus, what love and tenderness He manifested for erring, fallen man, and then I think of the severe judgment one pronounces upon his brother who has failed under temptation, and my heart becomes sick. I see the iron in hearts, and think we should

pray for hearts of flesh....

I wish that we had much more of the Spirit of Christ and a great deal less self, and less of human opinions. If we err, let it be on the side of mercy rather than on the side of condemnation and harsh dealing.—Letter 16, 1887.