

10th August, 1961

Pastor R. R. Figuhr
General Conference of S. D. A.
Washington 12, D. C., U. S. A.

Dear Elder Figuhr:

Thank you for your letter of August 2. We are unworthy of your kindness in writing us as you did, and we want to assure you that we appreciate your concern for us.

We wish to apologize unreservedly for giving you the impression our letter has given. We do not want to imply that our leading administrators are narrow or intellectually dishonest, and certainly not in any sense incapable.

We earnestly believe that our leaders are as honest, sincere, conscientious, and unprejudiced as any group of men that could be found in the world. We say this in all sincerity, Elder Figuhr. We have no sympathy with criticism of our leading brethren as such, and we deplore attacks on them. "It is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people." We do believe that no other group or combination of men within the remnant church would be any more capable or any more sincere than you brethren whom Providence has placed in your positions of responsibility. We do not believe that a change in leadership personnel is what the church needs.

Perhaps we expressed ourselves ineptly. What we meant to say was that it seems a human tendency for members of committees unconsciously to tend to uphold previous committee decisions and thus to approach a problem in a somewhat biased way. We greatly appreciate the effort of the General Conference in making possible an unprejudiced and full consideration of our recent resume. Please forgive us for giving you an unfortunate impression.

Perhaps we can make our position clear as regards attitude toward leadership. We see no value in criticizing leadership; rather, we believe that "there will be great humbling of heart before God upon the part of everyone who remains faithful and true to the end" (Ms 15, 1888). The church is all one body; and we consider that the facts of our history call us all, without exception, to repentance and contrition before the work will be finished. If we have said that we "dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips," we most decidedly regard ourselves primarily as men of "unclean lips" and unworthy more than our brethren. Surely we were unworthy ever to have said anything to our brethren in the General Conference in 1950. Nevertheless, we expressed our convictions openly to you, convictions which we feel time and further research have upheld; at least in our humble

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judgment. If your forthcoming report on the subject matter of our paper convicts the conscience that we have been in error, we shall pray for the grace to confess the error at this late date, regardless of consequences to ourselves.

In this connection may we state that we accept your conclusion from Acts of the Apostles, pages 163, 164, that "brethren of experience" should primarily be men who bear the responsibility of leadership in office. If you can permit us thus to hold such men in the highest esteem and respect short of according them any infallibility or inerrancy, and whilst rendering supreme homage of conscience to God's revealed truth, there will be no conflict between our view and yours?

Thus we shall love our leaders and cooperate with them loyally, recognizing the possibility that the Lord Himself can overrule their sometimes erring judgment; but ever anxious that we ourselves shall not presume to usurp an ultimate authority only the Lord himself holds.

It is in this light that we wish you to understand our expression which you refer to, "cry aloud." We do not imply that we have any intention of ever raising our voices outside the church. Only after the most earnest seeking for counsel with our leading brethren would we even dare to raise our voices within the church. We fully accept your counsel to believe that the Lord's overruling Providence will cause truth to emerge and triumph in His own good time. We will not be contentious if we suggest that "His own good time" has usually been in advance of His people's readiness to cooperate; and their dilatoriness makes their own task subsequently the more difficult.

We have several times referred to the statement in Gospel Workers pages 303, 304, requesting that you kindly help us understand how to relate this statement to the ones you have quoted to us. We fully accept the statements you have referred us to; we only inquire how the others can be understood to balance the counsel given. You allude to this statement in your last letter, but imply that it can be what the enemy points out as he leads to criticism of the leaders. But it was not an enemy who made the statement--it was Sister Hite. There are other similar statements in Testimonies to Ministers, pages 70, 76, 105-107 which we do not wish to misunderstand. We cannot believe that you would wish us to discount them entirely or in part. We understand that Spirit of Prophecy counsel is balanced, and calls for loyal cooperation with the leading brethren, on the one hand, and upholds God-given liberty in Christ Jesus within reason and sanctified, humble judgment, on the other hand.

Again expressing appreciation for your letter, we are

Sincerely yours,

R. J. Wieland

D. K. Short