

March 19, 1962

Pastor R. R. Figuhr
6840 Eastern Ave., N. W.
Washington 12, D. C., U. S. A.

Dear Elder Figuhr:

We thank you for your letter of February 27, and do appreciate your kind expression of confidence and good will.

It is after extended, prayerful thought that we write again to you. We believe that you are unaware that certain statements in your letter are not according to the full facts. We believe that it would be neither charity nor loyalty to you or to the church should we withhold from you information in this connection. Truth is something none of us need be reticent to acknowledge or confess; and we sincerely believe that as workers in this cause we have the right and the bounden duty to communicate privately to the highest officer of the church certain convictions based on facts that have come to our attention.

In your letter you question our opinion that the last report of the General Conference in respect of our manuscript is the most untenable to date; and that after twelve years it seems that this document has not yet been considered for "content and historical truthfulness."

You state that our document has been given careful consideration by good, reliable, and experienced brethren on at least three separate occasions, and that our "light" has been given careful and fair consideration. We believe that you are honest and sincere in making these statements. Further, we believe that the brethren who have given attention to our document on these occasions are likewise honest and sincere men. We refuse to believe otherwise. But it is with charity and kindness, and in loyalty to you as servants of God, that we say that these good brethren have formed their conclusions on the basis of incomplete knowledge of historical evidence vital to a righteous judgment in this matter. Were the issues relatively unimportant ones, we would gladly keep silent. But we appeal to the Lord to vindicate a concern for what is in fact a very serious matter.

1. The first occasion you refer to is the study given this document by the Defense Literature Committee, culminating in the report prepared by Dr. Yost and Elder W. E. Head. We have always appreciated the earnest and sincere desire of these brethren to help us and have tried to take to heart, personally, their warnings. But our re-reading of this report fails to disclose evidence that it contains a "careful and fair consideration" of the "content and historical truthfulness" of our document. For example:

a. It offers no consideration of our oft-repeated evaluation of the 1888 message as being the beginning of the latter rain and loud cry. In this vital premise of our thesis, it fails to come to grips with the real point at issue.

b. In respect of the aftermath of the 1888 Conference, it only asks

us to accept the opinion of Elder A. W. Spalding, which opinion was obviously at variance with clear-cut statements from the agent of the Spirit of prophecy, statements which we knew of. We believe that the brethren later came to realize that to set Elder Spalding against Sister White thus did not in fact settle the matter, with all due respect to this godly and earnest man.

c. The remainder of the report offers no specific consideration of the historical subject matter of our document other than to reject it. The section which deals with Baal worship makes no investigation into any doctrinal aspect of the problem, but seeks to bring the discussion into the area of personalities, which we definitely avoided.

Surely no one can consider this report to be a "careful and fair consideration" of the subject matter of this document. We believe it only right that you delete reference to this report in the setting of your statement.

2. The "Further Appraisal" of 1958 was the second occasion referred to. Again, it becomes obvious that there is no consideration of the subject matter of this document as such; but rather an attempt to prove the authors guilty of an unethical use of E. G. White exhibits.

a. We can offer evidence that the preparation of this second report did not take into account considerable vital material having a direct bearing on the various points of our thesis. Neither its author or the General Conference Committee voting approval of it were aware of the existence of some of this pertinent E. G. White literature which demanded consideration before definite conclusions could be maintained. In fact, frank acknowledgement of this was later made; and it was conceded that the authors of 1888 Re-examined had done careful and painstaking research. These facts can have only the one effect of very largely nullifying the validity of "Further Appraisal" as constituting a careful and fair consideration of the manuscript.

b. We feel that the charge that we were dishonest in our use of Sister White's writings should, in all fairness, be withdrawn by the General Conference. We prepared an "Answer" which you have never to date acknowledged; and it seems to us that it should be acknowledged. We cannot believe that the General Conference will wish to virtually ignore vital evidence in an important issue, whilst maintaining that they have given the matter "careful consideration."

3. As regards the last report dated November 6, 1961, we have not been permitted to consider the full reports of the brethren who have ⁹⁻¹⁴attention to the recent "Summary". Therefore it is difficult for us to know how full and complete was their study of the whole matter. From the excerpts you have sent us, however, it appears quite evident that there has been only superficial attention to the points we listed specifically in the Summary sent to you. With deep respect to you and to the five brethren whom you quote, we must offer the following comments on this report:

a. When you requested we prepare a summary of our 204 page document, we did not understand that it would be considered to the exclusion of the original complete work. We understood that it would provide a busy executive with the gist of the matter, leaving the full details and sources still in the original, and that the Summary should be a key to

abbreviate consideration of the important points we felt had not been previously considered. Now it is evident from what you wrote us that some of these brethren at least were not really familiar with the literature of this matter, but confined their study to the brief resume without consideration of the manuscript itself.

b. An example to show that this is true is the reply quoted on pages 4 and 5 of your letter which assumes that we recommend the publication of all of Jones' and Waggoner's writings even after their apostasy. "Such an anthology would not add much luster to their fame as teachers of truth and as examples of those who are sanctified by the truth." Reference immediately follows to Waggoner's teaching of pantheism in 1899. The brother making this statement simply could not have read our manuscript with care, because in at least three places in it we specifically and emphatically limit our recommendation for consideration of Jones' and Waggoner's writings to the period between 1888 and 1893 (cf. pages 120, 113, 203, 204). The writer whom you quote thus really misrepresented our true position and held us up to ridicule; and in charity to him we say that he did so whilst being quite unaware of what we had actually said and reiterated so. Now can such a report be maintained to be "careful consideration" of this manuscript?

c. Another example of misrepresenting our true position is in the excerpt from the third writer whom you quote. He is obviously not aware of what we have said concerning righteousness by faith when he states that "Short and Wieland postulate two different kinds of Righteousness." "It is significant that they do not cite a single Bible text or statement from the Spirit of prophecy to support their idea that there are two different kinds of Righteousness by faith." We know you will agree that it is not fair to condemn us for something we do not teach either explicitly or implicitly. Nowhere in what we have written do we see support for such a statement attributed to us. Any "difference" between the 1888 message and past concepts of righteousness by faith is clearly declared to be "a further development," "new revelations of the age-old mystery of godliness. . . The light is old, shining from eternity; the revelation is new." (cf. pp. 44, 53). It would seem difficult for anyone who had really read this chapter V of our manuscript to attribute to us what this brother did.

d. You previously asked us to list clearly the points which we felt had not been dealt with during the past eleven years. In response to this request, we asked twenty-six specific questions covering the subject matter of the manuscript. The last report does not provide a straightforward answer to even one of them, the nearest to one being the remark, "What difference if the 1888 message was rejected?" In most cases our summarizing questions appear to be ignored.

In view of the above, we seriously question if the Lord requires us, as regards conscience, to "yield" to the judgment of men who give such evidence that they themselves are not fully conversant on vital points, and who have not discussed with us in detail the points that need attention. We do most certainly "yield" to your judgment as regards activity; and have refrained for twelve years from agitating or publishing our views. Our stand today is what it was in 1951—we submit to you as regards the

4

organization of the church; and as regards conscience, we appeal the matter to the Investigative Judgment for Providence to settle if and when the Lord so desires.

We are ready to accord, and we do accord, to the General Conference brethren all the respect and honour due them. But we know you do not ask us to render to a General Conference Committee or sub-committee a submission that the Lord does not require a human soul to render to Himself. "The government of God is not. . . founded upon a blind submission, an unreasoning control. It appeals to the intellect and the conscience. 'Come now, and let us reason together,' is the Creator's invitation to the beings he has made. God does not force the will of His creatures. He can not accept an homage that is not willingly and intelligently given. A mere forced submission would prevent all real development of mind or character; it would make man a mere automaton." (Steps to Christ, pp. 47, 48).

We are sure that you do not intend to demand a blind submission when you quote to us Volume 5, pp. 291-293. We are very certain Sister White had no such intention when she wrote those words. It appears evident, from considering the import of many other statements from her pen, that she intended a yielding of judgment and a submission of conscience based on reasoning and consideration together as brethren, that "brethren of experience" will condescend to reason with those from whom they ask submission.

We would point out in closing, and again we say this with respect, that not yet has the General Conference Committee authorized a hearing or discussion with us concerning the subject matter of this manuscript. Three extensive reports of condemnation, based on obviously incomplete evidence, have been prepared on separate occasions covering more than a decade, all without any discussion with the authors relative to the thesis of their paper. When in our past history has there been a precedent for such reticence ever so long a time to sit down and talk face to face and reason with brethren who have communicated to the General Conference certain convictions on a serious subject?

We would like to refer to our letter to you of May 31, 1961, the last paragraph, in which we suggested the advisability of personal discussion with men authorized to discuss in detail the subject matter of our manuscript. A truthful and clear settlement could be made, such that the Lord would bless, to the end that present confusion could be resolved into that deep and lasting heart-unity that a denominational love for truth alone can ensure. If an increasing number of workers and members in the world field gain the impression that the General Conference are indeed reticent to deal with this matter in a candid and fair manner, confusion is certain to increase, most unfortunately. As missionaries in a dark and difficult field, we recognize clearly the necessity for unity, maintaining deep and genuine and growing respect for the General Conference. We are confident the Lord will lead, and in submission to you brethren under Him, we leave all in His hands.

Sincerely yours,

R. J. Wieland
R. J. Wieland

D. K. Short
D. K. Short