

6 Crescent Place
Takoma Park, Md. 20012

Dec. 21, 1964

(Personal)

Elder R. J. Wieland
P. O. Box 111
College Station
Berrien Springs, Michigan

Dear Brother Wieland:

In your carefully phrased response of December 6 you stress the point that you accepted the counsel of the Brethren not to agitate. That is well. And I believe that you have refrained personally—insofar as you yourselves are concerned. But the unimpeded circulation of your treatise through several Brinsmeadite channels does continue to agitate constantly—much more so, apparently, than you realize. Years ago you loosed something that is now beyond your control. And thus far you have taken no really effective step to counteract it.

You state that Thomas Durst "published a portion of a statement" from you that dissociates you from his group. But such a disclaimer, in such a medium, does not meet the issue. Comparatively few of our workers see his materials, I think, or trust his word. A disavowal, in order to accomplish anything must appear in a recognized denominational journal, such as The Ministry, if it is to reach our men and carry any weight with them. That you have not done. That is why you continue to be widely held accountable for association, if not conniving with, the Brinsmead disembling influence. That may seem unjust, but it is the simple fact.

I saw the statement to which you refer. But a few pages farther on there is a full-page ad pushing the sale of your item along with others. So one automatically cancels out the other. Durst has simply turned your statement into a sales gimmick. What you need, if you are ever to clear yourself, is to put a real disavowal in each of the Union papers (including certain overseas papers) manfully stating that it is being distributed not only without your permission, but over your vigorous protest, by a group whose views you do not endorse. That I urge.

And something of the sort should also appear in a back page note in the Review, for any laity. Unless you publicly deny all such relationships you are logically and inevitably looked upon as actually supporting their views. This long-time circulation program, without a decisive disavowal, incriminates you in the eyes of many, even if it is not true or justified.

Not only Durst, but Rue, Brinsmead—and I understand Hudson—have all promoted and/or sold your "1888" item, and before that some woman in the Northwest. So you have been regarded as identified with quite a group of dissenters over quite a period of years. This length of inclusion with them is very damaging to you. And your reluctance heretofore to publicly disavow Brinsmeadism is regarded in itself as an actual evidence of sympathy, if not, indeed, support. That can only be changed by a clean-cut disavowal. Otherwise, you continue

to invite grief and misunderstanding. That concerns me.

I understand there are some four Brinsmeadite groups that, though not in agreement among themselves, cooperate in printing and circulating what they consider effective anti-denominational documents. They put yours in that class, for they feel that it furthers their ends. You are not only being capitalized upon by them, but this very situation is injuring the church you love and serve.

Now to another point: As before stated, you had access to only a portion of the E. G. White statements on Righteousness by Faith and the '88 crisis and aftermath, and based your views upon this limited assemblage. But you have thus far declined to budge from your stand taken upon that partial and therefore misleading evidence. You quote "not peace but a sword" in justification for your procedure, but by-pass a whole bevy of inspired E. G. White counsels on the submission of one's individual viewpoint to the counsels and decisions of the Church. Passing such by such Spirit of Prophecy counsel entails a grave responsibility.

It should give us pause to reflect how we tend to revere one category of statements in the Spirit of Prophecy with which we are in accord, but pay scant heed to those strictures that cross our set positions or proclivities. How human we all are! Not long ago I searched out, for my own guidance, Mrs. White's statements on this principle of relationship. They are most sobering. I have had to follow them in several instances. But I gather you are not too inclined to be guided by their deep-seated convictions.

Brother Wieland, it appeared to me that you actually side-stepped the main points in my previous letter. I can perhaps understand that, for heeding them would call for a certain readjustment that apparently you are not prepared to make. As I see it, you also shifted from your former indictment that the leadership of the movement rejected the Message of 1888, and the generation of that time, to stressing the "loss of an experience" and the "closer fellowship" Mrs. White urgently called for. But that is an entirely different question, that shifts from the former charge.

Mrs. White declared, just after 1888, that not one in a hundred understood or experienced the realities of Righteousness by Faith. That means that 99% did not have an experience in its saving provisions around 1888. How much could be lost from that low point? That we did not enter as we should into that experience held before us, every honest Adventist will assent--with sorrow. But only some rejected it, while more and more accepted it, but even so not as they should. Nevertheless, Mrs. White declares that the Church has continued to move onward and upward--though not in the way God had desired. But that is not leadership-rejection, nor a majority-rejection, nor was it "that generation"-rejection, if I understand the facts.

You twice state that you are "ready to consider" evidence from the Spirit of Prophecy, and from eye-witnesses, and give it "serious study." You use the word "consider," not accept. There is, of course, a vast difference between the two. Having taken your stand--and having firmly maintained it for considerably more than a decade--it would naturally be very difficult to retrench. Perhaps pride of commitment is at stake. But there is something more noble than holding one's own ground against all comers.

I confess that I am beginning to see why some consider that you are set and resistant in your opinions, with little likelihood of changing, irrespective. You have a declared position to sustain. You have apparently dug in—but I hope not for all time. That, I believe, would be fatal. He who demands that something be proved to him, starts out with a serious handicap. He who insists on having to be convinced against his will usually ends up maintaining his preconceived opinion. And he who attempts to persuade another in such a situation has virtually an impossible task.

As to sharing more materials with you, I feel that while I have shown you certain items of additional evidence that you did not have, what I have shared with you has, it seems to me, been glossed over and explained away. Why, then, proceed further? What good would it do? Evidence seems to mean little when one's mind is made up, and his feet braced.

Moreover, one document that I did show you in confidence, and specifically marked "CONFIDENTIAL" at top of page 1, you challenged by writing Mrs. Pearl Waggoner Howard. She said you "seemed very anxious" for her reply. By this very act you apparently questioned the veracity of a competent eye-witness and participant that I had cited. I repeat, Mrs. Howard was only three years old in 1888, and is not 79 and ill. She says she never enquired into it. All hinges on the integrity of Jessie J. Moser, whose veracity you have questioned.

Such a procedure would seem to indicate that you were seeking to sustain your own view rather than to find the facts. I learned my lesson through that incident. Frankly, it did shake confidence in your attitude. A principle of integrity was involved, and an attitude revealed. I regret the episode.

I have much, much more by way of documentation. It takes years to compass a great theme and the full evidence. But as I said, at the present I scarcely see that it would be profitable to present additional statements. I do not question your honesty. But I see no evidence that you would recognize or admit evidence. You evidently feel so sure of yourself, and still react so keenly to your past contacts—and charges by certain brethren—that it would almost seem that your mind is now well-nigh closed to evidence. You were totally non-committal on what I did show you. I have never had a similar experience. I regret to write thus. But we both admire frankness, and it would seem to be that way.

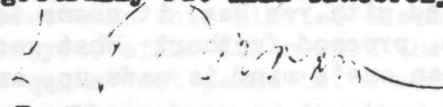
I still wish you could open-mindedly hear through a connected series of studies. I wish you could put aside your sensitivity over the wounds of the past, and seek to get the whole story. Such an attitude and occasion might give you a different vision—the over-all picture.

I can see that I have thus far failed in my attempted good offices. I wish that some one could break through the barrier of your seeming unwillingness to see. You would then have a much happier life, renewed confidence, and a new outlook. I feel sincerely sorry for you. The Elijah role of "I only" is not an inspiring one, either for yourself or for others. It does not aid the church, nor does it advance your own real objectives. Think not that you are alone in making the declarations of the Spirit of Prophecy the ultimate test. (But others of us insist on having all pertinent E. G. White evidence in order to get a true, balanced, and consistent view.) Any other procedure, I firmly believe, results in a distorted understanding, and in trouble. That,

it seems to me, has been your difficulty.

Now, I have written to and talked with you on these several occasions, sincerely hoping to help in a regrettable situation. I did it because of my belief in you and hope for you. And I did it solely on my own--not asked by any one. I have helped many persons. But I cannot see that anything has been accomplished in this instance. I therefore question the profit of further discussion unless and until your attitude changes. Perhaps I should not have injected myself into the problem. But I felt a sense of responsibility toward you because of my fuller studies and fuller access to all the evidence.

Regretfully but still sincerely yours,


L. E. Froom

LEF:ec

P.S. Somehow your letter of the 9th was delayed in reaching me. I will shortly answer the questions you asked.

LEF