

37-A-1

April 15, 1977

Elder Neal C. Wilson
Office

Dear Neal:

This morning Brother Patzer brought to me the letter from Dr. Roy Williams of March 15, in which he raises the question about your article in the Review of February 17, on pages 18-19. Involved is the statement signed jointly by James and Ellen White which appeared in the Review and Herald of March 24, 1868.

I think the Williamses have a point well taken in the matter of the heading to the item which appears in the Adventist Home on page 346. Although I think that the heading is not too far wrong, it is capable of an interpretation which the text itself does not justify. I think I wrote the heading--if not, it was done in our office. The point I had in mind was this: The material deals with adultery and the question of divorce, whether the innocent spouse could or should remain with the guilty party, and it deals also with adultery and the question of church membership. In other words, if an individual overtaken in such a sin could be restored to the church, under what circumstances this would be.

So, we had in mind with the heading the questions of adultery and divorce and adultery and restoration to church membership. Nothing is said about remarriage, and therefore nothing about the question of church membership after the remarriage of a divorced person. This is not introduced in the article, and we did not intend to deal with it. This being the case, the portion of the article which we used deals adequately with the subject, and paragraphs five and six were not necessarily pertinent to the chapter in Adventist Home.

Now, our dear friends the Williamses have taken the position that James and Ellen White, because of the heading which appears on the article as we have supplied it, are made to teach that a guilty person, divorced and remarried, may in the remarried state be restored to the church after they have merited the confidence of God's people by unqualified confessions and a period of sincere repentance. What they were talking about in their article was individual dis-fellowship from the church for adultery, whether or not he continued in the present marriage.

As you have dealt with this matter in your paragraph in the Review at the bottom of page 18 and the top of page 19, you summon the witness of James and Ellen White for their counsel in dealing with "marital offenses." You do not say that it is divorce and remarriage. So your last sentence, "that some of the guilty

April 15, 1977

could be restored to the church," is presented in the setting of guilt in marital offenses. I think you are technically correct, but of course the whole thing is in the setting of divorce and remarriage, and so more will be read into it than either James and Ellen White or you have written. I am sure, however, that you have built on the foundation of a few incontestable illustrations such as the Will Wales case, and two or three others which we have handled with initials and not names, but some of them involving some quite prominent folk.

The action which was taken by the General Conference Committee was not based upon the James and Ellen White statement published in the Adventist Home, but on the basis of other cases.

In closing, Neal, I will say that I have ceased to read the correspondence from the Williamses. My days are limited and I have much to do, and I have discovered that they refuse to accept facts which we can document. Somehow it must come out their way. So I have felt that it was useless for me to carry on a running correspondence with them. I have terminated it after working with them over a period of time, placing what we have all considered valid exhibits in their hands. These they tend to gainsay. I do not question their loyalty to the message or their sincerity, but this is where the matter stands. If I can help you further, let me know.

Sincerely your brother,

Arthur L. White, Secretary

ALW/nc