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## GENERAL CONFERENCE OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

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November 6, 1961

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EAST AFRICA

Pastor D. K. Short  
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SOUTH AFRICA

Dear Brethren:

This is relative to your abbreviated thesis that was sent to me sometime ago. I think I wrote you to the effect that this material had been sent out to five individuals, all known for their soundness in the faith and good judgment in the evaluation of what is sound Adventist teaching and what may not be. These brethren have not communicated with one another, for I did not give them the others' names. We have heard from them now and I thought I would send you short excerpts from answers of several of them. I may say that they agree quite fully with each other in their replies and evaluation of your manuscript. As stated, these are excerpts but I believe they sum up pretty well what the men wish to state:

"Thank you for your letter and also the manuscript prepared by D. K. Short and R. J. Wieland. I have read through this abridged copy carefully and appreciate the shorter presentation. There is no question about the sincerity and zeal evident in the appeal presented by these two men. I feel, however, their search for the reason for the delay in Christ's return is misguided. It seems to me that the message of 1888 was accepted by some and rejected by others, but for us to put forth such emphasis upon the rejection of it as these two brethren do is not valid.

"We certainly are all agreed that we should lift the cross. I fail, however, to see how a re-evaluation of the 1888 movement is going to bring the latter rain. We need to look to the present and future rather than to some past failure. What difference if the 1888 message was rejected? The great question is not what was our attitude in 1888, but what is our response to

Pastors Wieland & Short--2  
11-6-61

God's message in 1961? It seems unreasonable to call the present-day church to repentance on the writings of two men who apostatized from this message. Surely the Lord has another way of arousing His people. A present study of the Bible and the Spirit of prophecy coupled with sincere and earnest prayer and heart searching would do much more to bring the latter rain than the spending of time investigating and weighing evidence as to whether some message of the past was accepted or rejected. We believe in the message of righteousness by faith and should go forth to preach it independent of anything that took place in 1888. The Adventist position on justification by faith as taught in Steps to Christ and other E. G. White writings is clearly set forth."

"The acceptance or rejection of righteousness by faith is an individual, personal matter. To the best of my knowledge, no attempt was made in 1888 to have the church, corporately, go on record as accepting the message as presented at that time. The appeal was made to people as individuals, not to the church as a body. The question of an 'official' stand of the church on the matter never arose. There was no 'official' acceptance of the doctrine, to be sure, but neither was there an 'official' rejection.

"In the years immediately following 1888 a number of the leading brethren who had opposed the 1888 message came out and accepted it, doubtless because of Sister White's emphatic approval of it. In view of the fact that there was no official, or corporate rejection of the message, now could there be an 'official' confession of such a rejection? Even Brethren Waggoner and Jones would be surprised and perplexed, I think, by the Wieland and Short proposal.

"With ample, inspired instruction on the subject, why should we go to an uninspired source, where we could never be sure that the personal opinions of the writer have not colored his explanation? The fact that Brethren Waggoner and Jones later apostatized implies an inherent instability of character which was doubtless present years before they stepped out of the church, and I would not for a moment consider it wise to place what they wrote during those years before our people generally. What our people need today is living leadership in the study, understanding, and application of the principle of righteousness by faith."

The following is a little more lengthy as the individual who went into this had unlimited time to give to the consideration of it, and I quote a little more fully from him. I have known this particular individual for many years and respect him highly as a careful student and scholar of our teaching.

"Is it true that the Holy Spirit was spurned and insulted by our ministers at and after the Minneapolis meeting? Is it true that Jesus was spurned and insulted in the person of His messengers? Is it true that in the dark decade following 1888 there prevailed a serious disregard of the Spirit of prophecy counsel on the part of the responsible leadership of the church?

Pastors Wieland & Short--3  
11-6-61

QUESTION 4: If evidence indicates that these things are true, is it not reasonable and obvious that there must come a deeper work of reconciling our sinful hearts with the righteousness of Christ than has ever taken place? at any past generation of God's people? (p. 9)

"There is much more of a similar nature in the succeeding pages of this 20-page summary of their thesis, but we shall stop here and consider only the above propositions; for what follows depends upon the truthfulness or error found in the above.

"Since I have never read any of the three 'sub-committee reports,' and therefore know nothing of their contents, I shall not attempt either to approve or disapprove of their contents.

"It is evident that Brethren Short and Wieland have made a very exhaustive study of that period of our denominational history which they bring up for review--much more exhaustive than I would pretend to have made. Moreover, if the gospel teaching of Righteousness by Faith is dependent upon and can only be understood in the light of such historical research, I fear that most of us who have been saved by grace would be at a disadvantage in attempting to evaluate their thesis.

"However, as I see it, the issue is both doctrinal and historical. It is very clear from the above questions that Short and Wieland postulate two different kinds of Righteousness-- 1) The righteousness by faith preached by the Reformers of the 16th century and by the pioneers of the 1844 movement. 2) The righteousness by faith preached by Jones and Waggoner 'as manifested in the initial latter rain and loud cry of 1888-1892.'

"This is a Biblical as well as a historical issue and must be evaluated and decided primarily on Biblical grounds. 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, and, so far as I am able to see, the only proof offered and dwelt upon is the fact that the latter rain, the loud cry and the coming of Christ did not take place in that decade following 1888. This fact, they seem to think, is sufficient to establish their thesis....

"Let us examine such proof in the light of a statement from the Spirit of prophecy that carries us one step back of 1888 in our denominational history:

"'If all who had labored unitedly in the work of 1844 had received the Third angel's message and had proclaimed it in the power of the Holy Spirit, the Lord would have wrought mightily through their efforts. A flood of light would have been shed upon the world. Years ago the inhabitants of the earth would have been warned, the closing work completed, and Christ would have come for the redemption of His people.' --Great Controversy, p. 458.

11-6-61

"According to this statement the end could and would have come long before Jones and Waggoner preached their message of Righteousness by Faith, and it would have come through the preaching of the righteousness by faith known and proclaimed by the early pioneers of the 1844 message. This in itself is proof that the righteousness by faith believed in and preached by our early pioneers would have been just as effective in bringing about the end as was the message of righteousness preached by Elders Jones and Waggoner in 1888.

"But let us return to the real issue which is the Biblical doctrine of Righteousness by Faith as taught by Christ and His disciples. I think I am quite safe in saying that the Bible knows nothing about two distinct kinds of Righteousness. God alone is righteous in all His ways, and He has sent Christ into this world of sin to live out in human flesh the righteousness of God. Christ is the embodiment of all righteousness, and he who has Christ has righteousness. The apostle Paul said that this righteousness is revealed in the gospel which he preached--'For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith.'

"Moreover, Paul declared that there is only one gospel which reveals the righteousness of God and that was the gospel which he preached. And 'though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you let him be accursed.' Gal. 1:8.

"The gospel which Paul preached is that 'everlasting gospel' brought to our view in the first angel's message of Revelation 14:6 which this people has been proclaiming ever since 1844 and will continue to proclaim unto the end; for there is no other gospel. This is the gospel which Jones and Waggoner preached in 1888. ...

"Thus far we have endeavored to give Elders Waggoner and Jones full credit for their part in preaching the much needed message of righteousness by faith, but this is only a part of their teachings during the designated decade.

"On page 13 of the thesis we are reviewing, Brethren Short and Wieland make the following request:

"'Is it not in order, therefore, that the denomination consider publishing a carefully edited anthology of their important writings?'

"It seems to me that if this were done and it contained not only a part, but all of their teaching during that period, 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.

"I am aware that this simple statement will have but little weight unless proof can be offered in its support, so I shall offer the following:

"Elder Waggoner himself, as well as others, have already publicized



Pastors Wieland & Short--5  
11-6-61

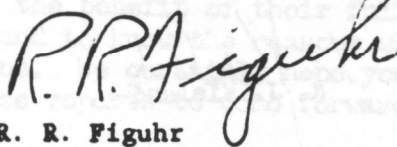
some of his most glaring errors, and we simply recall them to mind. One need only read Elder Waggoner's sermon as given on pages 57-60 of the February 23, 1899 G.C. Bulletin to discover the same 'Panthéism' as is found in the book 'Living Temple' which Sister White so vigorously protested against and severely condemned."

As I look over what these five brethren have written, I am forced to the conclusion, dear brethren, that our position in regard to your manuscript must be about that which our former evaluating committees reached. It seems to me that the brethren have gone to considerable trouble to give your statement careful consideration. They do want you to feel that they have not passed over lightly the matters that you consider so seriously, and that indeed are serious.

May we hope now, brethren, that this matter may be considered settled? Even if you are not fully satisfied, it seems to me that it would be an act of faith on your part and commendable in your conduct, were you to feel that you have left it with the Lord and with your brethren and your responsibility in the matter is finished.

With kind regards, and praying that the Lord will bless and guide you, I remain

Very cordially your brother,



R. R. Figuhr

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