

Adventist Leadership Did Not Reject Message of 1888

A Twelve-Point Listing of Determinative Evidence

Letter of Feb. 21, 1965
refers to these 12 points.

The charge has, by some, been iterated and reiterated that the denomination as a whole--and by others, that at least the leadership of the movement--rejected the message of Righteousness by Faith brought to the fore in the Minneapolis Conference of 1888. Such insist, for example, that until his death Elder Butler persisted in his rejection of that message. (On the contrary, Butler made a noble confession.) That such a sweeping charge is untrue and unjustified, and is contrary to historical fact, may be seen from the following dozen points:

1. No vote was taken by the Minneapolis Conference rejecting Righteousness by Faith. Indeed, no Conference vote of any kind was taken on the question itself. Furthermore, both Ellen G. White and A. T. Jones separately and explicitly declared that only "some" rejected it, while some accepted it, and some remained uncertain at the time. That cannot rightly be construed to mean a preponderant or determinative rejection.

2. The elected leadership was changed at the '88 Conference by vote of the session, the absent president George I. Butler, and Uriah Smith the secretary, being replaced by O. A. Olsen as the new president and Dan T. Jones as secretary. As is well known, Elder Olsen wholeheartedly accepted and maintained the teaching of Righteousness by Faith. The elected head of the movement, then, from 1888 to 1897 definitely did not reject Righteousness by Faith. And Olsen never wavered in his allegiance.

3. Furthermore, many of the "some" rejecting the message in 1888 made confessions of error in the years following 1888, and accepted it and/or ceased their opposition thereto--thus reducing the rejecting "some" to a relatively small percentage. Only small pockets of resistance remained, and certain individuals persisted in the rejective attitude. There are always some discordant voices that persist in the Church, but they do not constitute or represent the movement.

4. Again, the temporary chairman of the 1888 Conference, Stephen W. Haskell-- in the absence of Butler and before Olsen was elected--did not reject it, but aggressively championed the Righteousness by Faith issue, and in 1894 wrote to Mrs. White the significant message, "The battle has been fought, and the victory gained." (Haskell Letter to E. G. White, April 22, 1894.)

5. For a dozen years following 1888 E. J. Waggoner and A. T. Jones continued to teach the Minneapolis Message with great prominence--North, East, South, and West. Jones and Waggoner were sent out by the elected leadership of the General Conference to churches and educational institutions, extended Institutes and succeeding General Conferences, as the leading Bible teachers of the denomination. Their messages were proclaimed in public meetings and in published writings issued in book and periodical article form, with denominational publishing houses as the printers and our distribution agencies as the channels of dissemination. (Jones gave 24 studies at the 1893 General Conference, reported in full in the '93 Bulletin.)

6. Most determinative of all, Mrs. White herself did not reject it, and she was Adventism personified, as it were, and her writings our most representative and authoritative literature. She championed it publicly and emphatically, not only at Minneapolis but thereafter through revival meetings with Waggoner and Jones following Minneapolis, and continuing on through an unceasing stream of periodical articles books of major circulation and standing, and in personal testimonies. And this never ceased between 1888 and the year of her death in 1915. She represented pre-eminently the generation at the time of, and following, 1888.

7. Not only that, but Mrs. White never once declared or condoned the idea that the denomination as a whole, or that the leadership of the Movement, as such, had rejected Righteousness by Faith--only that "some" had definitely resisted and rejected it. But she continued to labor on for such, and to appeal to them. And her labors were singularly successful. Not a few responded and changed their course. She ever maintained an unvarying confidence in the triumph of the Church, and its destined heralding of the truth of Righteousness by Faith according to the plan

of God. In 1907 she wrote, "We as Bible Christians have ever been on gaining ground." (Letter 170, May 6, 1907.) Again, "God has a people whom He is leading and instructing." (Letter 378, Nov. 11, 1907.) This thought appears repeatedly in the first decade of the twentieth century. (2SM 396, 397.) If Mrs. White were living today she would surely repudiate and rebuke the charge of leadership-rejection.

8. Mrs. White spoke approvingly of the various confessions of men like Uriah Smith, G. I. Butler, and others, and expressed greater confidence than ever in these men following their manly public acknowledgement of erroneous attitude. (Even J. H. Morrison and R. A. Underwood later made confessions.)

9. Not only that, but A. T. Jones was made editor-in-chief of the Review (over Uriah Smith) for some four years--from 1897 to 1901--to provide a greater forum by which he might present more widely the larger principles involved in Righteousness by Faith. Such an action neither could nor would have been carried out if the leadership had rejected the message of Righteousness by Faith. This arrangement was, of course, done by official action. And Uriah Smith was party to the arrangement.

10. An increasing stream of literature setting forth the clear principles and provisions of Righteousness by Faith continued to flow from our publishing houses following 1888--conspicuously that of Dr. E. J. Waggoner's The Righteousness of Christ (1890), a 98-page Pacific Press book setting forth his precise teaching and phrasing at Minneapolis, based upon the shorthand reports of Jessie F. Moser, taken down at the Conference, which book was likewise reprinted in Australia in 1893, and then in Continental Europe in Hamburg and Basel as well.

11. It is also to be noted that no subsequent vote--that is, following 1888--was ever taken by any Conference or responsible Committee or Institute against the truth of Righteousness by Faith, but rather there was a succession of affirmations of adherence thereto, until irrevocable commitment was recorded by our most outstanding denominational official documents, such as the uniform Baptismal Certifi-

cate, adopted in 1941, and thenceforth in standard use.

12. We have the recorded declarations of the core of loyal men present at and participating in the 1888 Conference who took their stand along with Mrs. White and Waggoner and Jones, and who continued to bear increasing and leading church responsibilities in the succeeding years--S. N. Haskell, W. C. White, W. W. Prescott, E. H. Gates, F. H. Westphal, W. H. Edwards, Louis Johnson, A. O. Tait, M. C. Wilcox, E. Hilliard, A. T. Robinson, G. B. Starr, F. D. Starr, W. S. Hyatt, W. B. White, W. C. Flaiz, William Covert, R. B. Craig, C. L. Kilgore, J. O. Corliss, and T. H. Starbuck as part of the accepting "some." This is doubly significant in the light of the fact that the total number of delegates at Minneapolis numbered only 88, in 1888. The leadership clearly did not reject the message of Righteousness by Faith.

Conclusion: From this twelve-fold strand of evidence that cannot be broken, it is obvious that the frequently reiterated charge, by some, of denominational leadership-rejection of the message of Righteousness by Faith by the generation at and following 1888 is untrue, with such claims as unjustifiable and false. Those who continue to maintain such a position assume a grave responsibility toward the sovereignty of truth and evidence. No one can come face to face with truth, such as is here presented, and be the same thereafter. He either accepts or rejects it. And his future course is inescapably altered thereby.

It is sobering to remember that the personal defection of both A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner themselves, on different tangents (but not on Righteousness by Faith), had a definite bearing on the waning of the message they brought.

It is true, of course, that because of the failure of all to accept Righteousness by Faith with all their hearts, the Loud Cry was muffled and the Latter Rain restricted, we will have to remain in this old world many more years. This is because of failure to enter fully and unitedly into the experience called for, and to advance as a church on to that higher ground that comports with the requisites of the Righteousness by Faith.

That is serious enough, and surely constitutes a tremendous challenge to us all--as individuals and as a Church. Movements are under way to remedy this. Therefore let none make blind charges that only confuse and hinder, and that distort the picture and make arbitrary demands that are neither supported by historical facts nor by the Spirit of Prophecy, and that conflict with the testimony of the best-informed students in this crucial period of the movement--men who have had access to all the facts for evaluation, and are at the same time unswerving in their loyalty to the truth of Righteousness by Faith.

This is the time of all times for us to press together, and to move forward unitedly in response to the beckoning call to that genuine Revival and Reformation that stands as the expectation of God for us all. As surely as there is a God in heaven the Latter Rain and Loud Cry will do their allotted work and accomplish their distinct mission. God's predictive Word cannot be broken. The earth will be lightened with the shining of that other angel of Revelation 18:1. The message will veritably close in a blaze of glory.

LeRoy Edwin Froom.

Your second letter was still more revealing. It showed that what you really want is to argue, to challenge, to debate. In that I am not interested. Were I to flatter every one of your contentions with evidence that would convince others, you would simply come up with another series. It is clear that with such an attitude a continuing dialogue could go on endlessly, but would be profitless. In that you remind me of M. L. Anderson and his unhappy prophetic line that had such a sad end. That was his favorite technique. Answered on one point he always came up with another.

But most serious of all is the declaration, in the third paragraph of the opening page of your second letter, indicating that you have apparently taken a final, fateful stand, reaffirming the position you took years ago in your "1888 Re-Examined." It is the crucial point of your letter. You have said:

"The responsible leadership of the Church at and after 1888 resisted, spurned, misapprehended, and rejected" the message of of Righteousness by Faith there presented.

This re-iteration of your past stance has such serious--really frightening--involvements that I shall write you with great frankness. I shall tell you precisely what I am compelled to conclude, what I fear for you, and will utter a war what may come to you if you persist in your heter I'll doubtless not like what