

Box 111, College Station  
Berrien Springs, Michigan  
February 21, 1965

Dr. L. E. Froom  
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Washington 12, D. C.

Dear Elder Froom:

Brother Short and I had been waiting for some word from you after our letter of December 27, 1964, and had hoped that you might share with us some of the Ellen G. White evidence you have been referring to. I have now concluded that the material must consist of the tentative section of a chapter you sent us entitled, "Adventist Leadership Did Not Reject Message of 1888, A Twelve-point Listing of Determinative Evidence."

If I am correct in this assumption, courtesy requires that I make some acknowledgement of the document and brief comment thereon. I regret that Brother Short is not in the country now to consider this with me, so I speak only for myself.

Definition of terms. Lest there be any undue misunderstanding, I wish to make plain that Brother Short and I have never held that the denomination or its leadership rejected the doctrine of justification or righteousness by faith as understood by the Evangelical Christian churches in the Reformation tradition. We understand that the "message of Righteousness by Faith brought to the fore in the Minneapolis Conference of 1888" (to use your phraseology) was the beginning of the long-awaited "latter rain" and "loud cry," a message calling to a closer relationship to Christ than had been the experience of any denominated people previously, and intended to prepare the church for the coming of the Lord in that generation then. It was this message and the experience inherent therein, we have understood, that the responsible leadership of the church at and after 1888 resisted, spurned, misapprehended, and rejected.

The second sentence of your first paragraph may refer to someone whom we do not know about. We ourselves have certainly never made a statement intimating that until his death Elder Butler persisted in his rejection of the 1888 message.

For some months now, I have carefully considered your twelve points, and wish to comment as follows on each one:

1. The reaction to the message sent by the Lord at the 1888 Session was, of

necessity, a heart reaction to Christ, rather than a formal committee vote.

So far as "some" accepting the message is concerned, this fact we have never denied or disregarded. However, the more complete context of the E. G. White and A. T. Jones statements about the "some" does not seem to support your analysis. Both witnesses' statements definitely indicate a "preponderant or determinative rejection" of the message; and I shall cite evidence as follows:

(a) Jones recognized that "some" accepted (G. C. Bulletin, 1893, pp. 185, 243), but that a group who "favored" the message lacked the courage of conviction:

Others would favor it, but when the spirit of persecution was strong, instead of standing nobly in the fear of God, and declaring in the face of the attack, "It is the truth of God, and I believe it in my soul," they would begin to yield and in an apologetic way offer excuses for those who were preaching it, as though it were a matter of men's persons, to be held in advantage because of admiration. (Ibid., p. 185).

I can't now name anyone who accepted the truth at that 1833 meeting openly. But later many said they were greatly helped by it. . . .

When camp-meeting time came we all three [Waggoner and Sister White] visited the camp-meetings with the message of righteousness by faith. . . . This turned the tide with the people, and apparently with most of the leading men. But this latter was only apparent, it was never real, for all the time in the General Conference Committee and amongst others there was a secret antagonism always carried on; and which . . . finally gained the day in the denomination, and gave to the Minneapolis spirit and contention and men the supremacy. (Letter to C. E. Holmes, May 12, 1921; emphasis added).

It seems evident that Jones regarded the "some" who believed as in at least two categories: (1) those who lacked the courage to declare their faith openly in the face of strong opposition; or (2) those who were younger, uninfluential men. The fact that some men said later that they really believed proves little.

It is evident that Jones used the generic term "the brethren" or its pronoun as the subject of the verb "reject" or its synonym in respect of the Minneapolis message about ten times in one 1893 sermon; and the pronoun "we" in the generic sense likewise a further five or six times. An example is as follows:

What then did the brethren reject at Minneapolis? [Some in the Congregation: "The loud cry."] What is the message of righteousness? The testimony has told us what it is; the loud cry--the latter rain. Then what did the brethren in that fearful position in which they stood, reject at Minneapolis? They rejected the latter rain--the loud cry of the third angel's message. . . .

Brethren, the time has come to take up tonight what we there rejected. Not a soul of us has ever been able to dream yet the wonderful blessings that God had for us at Minneapolis, and which we would have been enjoying these four years, if hearts had been ready to receive the message which God sent. (Bulletin, p. 183).

All this was after the more notable of the confessions. One wonders if Jones should be cited as favoring the leadership-acceptance theory.

(b) Ellen G. White's reiterated statements show that she likewise believed

that the preponderant reaction of the brethren constituted a rejection;

Now our meeting is drawing to a close and not one confession has been made, there has not been a single break so as to let the Spirit of God in.

Now I was saying what was the use of our assembling here together and for our ministering brethren to come in if they are here only to shut out the Spirit of God from the people? . . . I have been talking and pleading with you, but it does not seem to make any difference with you. (MS. 9, 1888).

It is not wise for one of these young men to commit himself to a decision at this meeting where opposition rather than investigation is the order of the day. (MS. 15, 1888).

The spirit and influence of the ministers generally who have come to this meeting [Minneapolis] is to discard light. (Letter B-21, 1888, Oct. 14).

Without denying that "some" received the message, it seems difficult to understand how the servant of the Lord could more emphatically declare that the general attitude manifest was decided rejection.

(c) She too had difficulty finding "one" with the courage of convictions:

Again and again did I bear my testimony to those assembled [at Minneapolis] in a clear and forcible manner, but that testimony was not received. When I came to Battle Creek, I repeated the same testimony in the presence of Elder Butler, but there was not one who had the courage to stand on my side and help Elder Butler to see. . . . [His] prejudice was greater after hearing the various reports from our ministering brethren at that meeting in Minneapolis. (Washington, January 25, 1889, U-3-1889).

(d) Some statements from Sister White referring to the "some" who believed occur in a context that mentions the phenomenon of a "counter influence" pressing in from responsible brethren to hinder and impede the work of faith:

But God was accepted by some [at Nazareth, when the Jews tried to murder Jesus]; the witness was here that He was God; but a counter influence pressed in, and the evil angels were working through the congregation to raise doubts that would cause the hearts to disbelieve so that it would shut out every ray of light that God would permit to shine. . . .

. . . Well, here the battle is before us. (MS. 8, 1888, Oct. 29).

I know that He [Christ] has a blessing for us. He had it at Minneapolis, and He had it for us at the time of the General Conference here [1889]. But there was no reception. Some received the light for the people, and rejoiced in it. Then there were others that stood right back. And their position has given confidence to others to talk unbelief, and cherish it. (MS. 2, 1890).

Our younger men look to our older brethren, and as they see that they do not accept the message, but treat it as though it were of no consequence, it influences those who are ignorant of the Scriptures to reject the light. These men [the responsible leadership of the church, obviously] who refuse to receive truth, interpose themselves between the people and the light. (B&H, Mar. 18, 1890).

These men have been holding positions of trust, and have been molding the work after their own similitude, as far as they possibly could. . . Blind leaders of the blind. (TM 80, 81).

(e) Unequivocal statements attest that the relation between the "some" who accepted the message and those who rejected or disregarded it was disproportionate.

Those who accepted it were few; those who rejected it, many. Her retrospective view was that those who "refused to accept the message" and "hated" it were "many" (cf. TM 89-97). She felt she had to stand "almost alone" (Diary, February 8, 1890). Not "some" at the head of the work at Battle Creek, but the generic "those at the head of the work" kept themselves aloof from the message of God (R&H March 18, 1890). The rejectors were those having power to "close the door, that light shall not find an entrance to the people of God" (ST May 26, 1890). Elder Daniells recognized that the "some" who accepted were either so few or so uninfluential that Sister White had to "stand almost alone . . . amid either hesitancy or active opposition on the part of many" (The Abiding Gift of Prophecy, p. 369).

2. You state that Elder O. A. Olsen "never wavered in his allegiance", implying that the change in officers in 1888 constituted a virtual acceptance of the message, or indicated the same. This deduction hardly follows logically. There were indeed printed statements from Elder Olsen expressing very earnest and sincere appeals to accept the message. I have read them. But what did Sister White herself say about the 1888-97 administration and its general reaction to the message? "There was no reception" at the 1889 Session, as at the one the year before (MS. 2, 1890); and she informed the delegates at the 1891 Session, "you possess in a large degree the same spirit that was revealed in the Conference at Minneapolis" (Bulletin, p. 256). Eight years after the Minneapolis Conference, responsible brethren still kept "alive the spirit which ran riot at Minneapolis" (TM 76), and because of the continuing unbelief, she had to address "brethren who occupy responsible positions in the work: The Lord has a controversy with you" (Letter, January 16, 1896—the context is clear). In 1901 she said, "For the last fifteen years wrong decisions have been made" (Stenographic report, College Library, April 1). Elder Olsen often courteously acknowledged reproof, but seems to have done little or nothing about the situation: "Year after year the same acknowledgement was made, but the principles which exalt a people were not woven into the work." (1901 Bulletin, p. 23). The tops had been cut off, but the roots had been left in the ground, to bear their unholy fruit (TM 467). Apparently, the picture which emerges from historical records is that the Butler administration openly and frankly opposed the message; the Olsen administration confessed to, but /accept manifested a continuing underground opposition.

Mrs. White said of Elder Olsen:

I feel very sorry for Brother Olsen. I have written him much in regard to the situation. He has written back to me, thanking me for the timely letters, but he has not acted upon the light given. The case is a mysterious one. . . . Notwithstanding the light which has been placed before him, for years in regard to this matter, he has ventured on, directly contrary to the light which the Lord has been giving him. . . . He is leading other minds to view matters in a perverted light. . . .

I am distressed beyond any words my pen can trace. Unmistakeably Elder Olsen has acted as did Aaron, in regard to these men who have been opposed to the work of God ever since the Minneapolis meeting. . . .

. . . The disease at the heart of the work poisons the blood, and thus the disease is communicated to the bodies they visit. (Letter to A. O. Tait, August 27, 1896).

Sister White said the same to Elder Olsen himself:

I am sorry you have not regarded the warnings and instructions which have been given you, as of sufficient value to be heeded, but by disregarding them before men who care naught for them, have made them a common matter, not worthy to have weight in your practice. Your practice has been contrary to these warnings, and this has weakened them in the eyes of men who needed correction, who in their life-practice have separated from God. . . .

Brother Olsen, you have lost much from your experience that should have been brought into your character building, by failing to stand firmly and faithfully for right, braving all the consequences. (Letter, May 31, 1896).

Incidentally, the same letter gives evidence that the tap-root of the difficulty was not administrative centralizing tendencies, but was the Minneapolis unbelief perpetuated.

3. The assertions in this section that "only small pockets of resistance remained" seem unfortunately contradicted by Ellen G. White testimony, both published and well-known, and so easily accessible, in fact, that but few of your readers can be influenced by your assertions. The editor of the general church paper continued to exert an influence decidedly opposed to the message. (See Letter, January 9, 1893, and 1 SM 234, 235, addressed to Uriah Smith).

No one, to my mind, questions the ultimate genuineness of the brethren's confessions, or doubts their participation in the first resurrection. The important point is whether their confessions effectively counteracted the result of their initial rejection of the beginning of the "loud cry" and "latter rain." It was "in a great degree kept away from the world" (Idem.).

If "only small pockets of resistance remained", why should the messenger of the Lord attach so very much importance to them? She said in 1896 that "men . . . keep alive the spirit which ran riot at Minneapolis" (TM 76), and she addresses burning messages to "those who have stood for years resisting light and cherishing the spirit of opposition" (p. 91). Why write thus if only two or three men are involved? It is evident that at least some of the brethren who repented wavered in their repentance. While the Lord most graciously blots out the transgressions of those who "since that time have repented . . . , every time the same spirit awakens in the soul, the deeds done on that occasion are endorsed, and the doers of them are made responsible to God" (Letter, May 31, 1896).

Again, may I call your attention to a statement of Elder Prescott that

seems to be meaningless if only small pockets of resistance persisted:

There are many in this audience [the 1901 Session] who can remember when . . . thirteen years ago at Minneapolis, God sent a message to this people to deliver them out of that experience. . . . For the past thirteen years this light has been rejected and turned against by many and they are rejecting it and turning from it today. (Bulletin, p. 321).

At the same Conference Ellen G. White said that "many . . . have been more or less out of line since the Minneapolis meeting" (Ibid., p. 205). This statement is more mild than Elder Prescott's; but the significant point remains that there could hardly have been the about-face you assume.

4. Elder Haskell did indeed support the message. You certainly have a point here, and it is worth its full weight. As to whether Mrs. White—better able to judge the situation—concurred with his one-sentence judgment you quote, the reader will be unable to forget her many clear statements otherwise.

5. Although this point is well taken it will not bear a strained deduction. The appointments of Jones and Waggoner while they were still straight ~~was~~ certainly a work of Providence. Their appointments and prominence after they were unstable ~~was~~ part of the inescapable recognition that they were or had been outstanding men. But to assume that their appointments are evidence that they and their message met with a heart-reception on the part of the responsible leadership at Battle Creek would require one to practically deny abundant E. G. White evidence otherwise. Elder Jones' trip to Congress to fight the Blair Sunday bill almost overnight transformed him into a celebrity. Without requiring as a necessity any change in heart-attitude toward the message of Christ's righteousness which he proclaimed, the brethren were thereafter placed in an exceedingly difficult position. How could they possibly ignore this hero after his return from Washington? He was like a new David in the camp who had slain Goliath. Onemight as well argue that Saul loved David because David was "entrusted with important responsibilities" thereafter in Saul's court, and "Saul set him over the men of war," (PP 649; 1 Sam. 18:5), as to argue that the brethren at Battle Creek loved Jones and favoured his message. Another point to bear in mind is that in those days, the local elders of the common people who heard him gladly had more voice in the appointment of church speakers than they do today.

What Sister White said about the brethren's attitude toward Jones and Waggoner coincides roughly with what Saul felt toward David. There was an active "spirit of persecution" against them (G. C. Bulletin, 1893, p. 184), they were obliged to suffer "opposition," "difficulties and obstacles" from "in our own ranks" (p. 419), suffered criticism (R&H, December 23, 1890), were "hated and despised," taunted with being "fanatics, and enthusiasts" by ministerial brethren (TM pp. 96, 97), suffered from

others' "jealousy and evil surmising" (Letter S-24, 1892), were "despised" by "men professing godliness" (R&H, August 17, 1897), endured "hard, proud, sneering speeches spoken against" them (Ibid., May 27, 1890), were the objects of "feelings of enmity and bitterness . . . in the heart" of men who were their colleagues (Letter to O. A. Olsen, Sept. 1, 1892).

6. Yes, certainly, Sister White accepted the message wholeheartedly, and immediately as soon as she heard it, unhesitatingly. But by virtue of your assumption here, one can argue that Moses' faithfulness at Kadesh-Barnea obviated Israel's rejection of the message of the ten unfaithful spies. If Sister White was Adventism personified, and if she accepted the message (as she did), was not Moses Israel personified? But the record indicates that Israel wandered forty years despite Moses' wonderful faithfulness and loyalty, even until that whole generation died for their unbelief save Caleb and Joshua. And we have certainly delayed our Lord's return for many more years than that because of "our" unbelief at and after Minneapolis, and at least two whole generations have gone to their rest already, despite Sister White's faithfulness herself personally.

7. Yes, Sister White maintained an unvarying confidence in the triumph of the church, and its ultimate success in hearding the "loud cry" to the ends of the world. And so do we, Elder Froom; and because of this unshaken faith, we call for a denominational repentance, beginning at the General Conference itself, which is wholly consistent with the facts of our own denominational history. There is no question but that God is leading a people to victory.

But so far as Sister White repudiating the charge of "leadership-rejection", if she were to come to life today, she would be obliged to uphold the written statements she signed her name to many years ago. If the Adversary through the machinations of Spiritualism were ever able to bring an effigy purporting to be Sister White, "she" would indeed deny the import of her previous statements that are so unequivocal, and would naturally deny the necessity and possibility of a denominational repentance and humbling of heart before God. But she herself in her lifetime never contradicted herself in the area of reiterated, positive statements and positions.

8. This point is not questioned in the least, although her letter of January 9, 1893, discussing Smith's post-confession attitudes must be taken into account.

9. By 1897, Jones himself had begun to be worn-out with the persistent and unreasoning opposition he had had to bear, if not against himself or his message from 1838-93, at least against right principles in general. He was tending

toward his later tragic state as a man who had "lost his bearings" (J-104-1911). As early as 1894, Jones was "never in greater peril than at the present time," and his soul is "in peril." "Brother Jones is in positive danger and his brethren do not see that danger." (Letter, March 15, 1894). J-242, 1906). By the close of the century, he had needed to be converted anew.

Further, the statement in 1 SM 234, 235 indicates that by 1896 the "Minneapolis era" was a thing of the past, and the unbelief manifested had been by that time conclusive and determinative so far as that generation was concerned. That chapter was drawing to a close. The appointment of Jones as editor was after the unequivocal 1896 statement referred to above. Previous pointed warnings had indicated that if there were not a repentance and acceptance of the message within a reasonable time (which apparently closed with the 1893 Session), the special light of 1888 would be "withdrawn" with "an eternal loss" to the brethren of that era (not the loss of their souls, but the loss of participation in the finishing of God's work and translation itself—see 1893 Bulletin, p. 386, statement by Prescott). (MS. 8, 1888, and 5T 720). The brethren were placing themselves where "light cannot be communicated from heaven that we ought to communicate to others" (MS. 13, 1889). The appointment of Jones in 1897 could not, therefore, affect or change the outcome of the rejection of what was to have been the beginning of the latter rain. It was too late, for that generation.

10. The publication of Waggoner's book in 1890 was a good work, but as has been pointed out above, the over-all influence of the Waggoner-Hones teaching was largely counteracted by the influences emanating from Battle Creek (Letter read at eleventh meeting, 1893 Session, Feb. 27, 1893). Some have suggested that the publication of Desire of Ages and other E. G. White books after 1888 proved that the 1888 message must have been accepted and proclaimed. If so, it would only be logical to conclude that these books constitute the "loud cry" or the "latter rain", and that therefore those blessed events are of the past.

Incidentally, Waggoner was editor at the Pacific Press in 1890 when his book was published. It was probably done without any urging from Battle Creek.

11. These affirmations and votes have reference to the usual doctrine of justification and righteousness by faith as held by the Reformers and the Evangelical Protestant bodies, and as taught by Sister White from 1844-88, as well as thereafter. The issue at stake at Minneapolis and in the reaction thereafter was a heart-attitude toward Christ and His righteousness, and a preparation for translation.

12. This is a very serious statement. These "recorded declarations" were made after the 1888 Conference, and after the era had passed into a history now lighted by Spirit of Prophecy interpretation of its significance. Unless these good brethren were more than human, they would tend to interpret their position at and after Minneapolis in the light of subsequent developments. The inference you draw in this paragraph seems contradicted by Ellen G. White evidence. If the twenty-one brethren whose names you list as those who "took their stand along with Mrs. White and Waggoner and Jones" listened to the following statements made at the Conference, as they surely must have, being present, why didn't they protest in some way? They could surely contest Mrs. White's right to use such strong, sweeping expressions as the following:

What was the use of our assembling here together and for our ministering brethren to come in if they are here only to shut out the Spirit of God from the people? . . . I have been talking and pleading with you, but it does not seem to make any difference with you. (Remarks when the Conference was "drawing to a close," MS. 9, 1888).

Opposition rather than investigation is the order of the day. (MS. 15, 1888).

The spirit and influence of the ministers generally who have come to this meeting is to discard light. (B-21, 1888).

In 1889, Sister White said, "there was no reception", and when she came to Battle Creek from Minneapolis she could find "not one" with the courage to stand on her side before Elder Butler (MS. 2, 1890; Letter U-3-1889). Granted, many or even all the twenty-one you mention may have been absent from Battle Creek at that time; but the evidence seems clear that these "some" who accepted the message either lacked the courage to declare themselves for it openly, or were younger, uninfluential men, and were likely swayed by the "pressure" (to quote Sister White) that came from the responsible leadership at Battle Creek.

Months and years after 1888, these twenty-one brethren could have come to the place where they believed and supported the message, and I do not question that—at least in so far as they could at that time understand its real import. But the statement in 1 SM 234, 235 would indicate that whatever may have been the extent of that faith, it came too late or was too proportionately insignificant to prevent the tragic consequences affirmed therein.

If twenty-one brethren took their stand with Sister White and Jones and Waggoner, why would A. G. Daniells say that Sister White stood with the two brethren "almost alone"? Why would Sister White herself mourn the necessity of her standing "almost alone" (Diary, Feb. 8, 1890)?

A document I have had for some years written by R. T. Nash says: "The writer

remembers, and many who attended the meetings at that conference know of what took place. . . . The speakers [Jones and Waggoner] met a united opposition from nearly all the senior ministers." This is from his "Eyewitness Report."

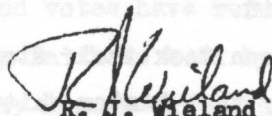
One Elder W. D. Emery, while not an eyewitness at the Conference, heard reports from brethren who had been present. In an interview a short time before his death recently, he said, "Elder Breed was the only conference president who stood by Elders Jones and Waggoner. He was in the room when Sister White put on her bonnet and started to leave. She felt they had rejected her testimony and in turn had rejected the Lord. When she reached the door, she turned and came back saying, 'No, the Lord will not let me leave.'" (Emery's Report)

How reliable these reports are I cannot say; they do seem to agree with Mrs. White's statements more than your conclusions do.

Conclusion. Your third paragraph practically concedes all that we have ourselves maintained regarding the 1888 history. These remarks render your twelve points largely a matter of semantics. "The only conclusion the candid reader can come to is that the "loud cry" and the "latter rain" were rejected on behalf of that generation, through the heart-attitude of responsible brethren leading out in the Lord's work. The long delay of nearly eighty years since is an impressive exhibit that no rationalizing can obviate. Even if one should write as many volumes as the Britannica seeking to deny the leadership responsibility of brethren of that era in their determinative (though unwitting) and conclusive reaction against the gracious message, the obvious truth will remain forever apparent to any inquiring and thoughtful student.

In my humble opinion, Elder Froom, if you publish these twelve points, you will, in the eyes of posterity, if not in the eyes of this very generation here and now, considerably tarnish your excellent reputation as an unbiased and objective historian and scholar. This is said with kindness and with deep respect.

Sincerely yours,

  
R. J. Wieland