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"Watchman, what of the night?"

The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will enquire, enquire ye: return, come. Isaiah 21:11-12

REJECTED OR ACCEPTED?

Ever since the writing of the manuscript - 1888 Re-Examined - by Elders Wieland and Short, there has been a contention as to whether the message of 1888 was accepted or rejected. Wieland and Short have never claimed that the denomination or its leadership rejected the doctrine of righteousness by faith, if one understands that doctrine to be the Reformed teaching on that subject. Their position is simply that responsible brethren at Battle Creek rejected the message of Christ's righteousness which was declared to be the beginning of the Latter Rain, and the Loud Cry. Also it must be stated in fairness that these brethren have never claimed total rejection of this advanced light. They have stated clearly in their manuscript and before committees that the "some" who accepted the message of Jones and Waggoner were in reality but "few".

Elder A. G. Daniells in his book, Christ Our Righteousness, lists three categories of reaction to the message given.¹ This section of his presentation is preceded by two searching questions:

Who can tell what would have come to the church and the cause of God if that message of Righteousness by Faith had been fully and wholeheartedly received by all at that time? And who can estimate the loss that has been sustained by the failure of many to receive that message?²

Then at the beginning of Chapter Two of his book, Daniells writes from his point of time (1926) in these words:

To this day, many of those who heard the message when it came are deeply interested in it and concerned regarding it. All these long years they have held a firm conviction, and cherished a fond hope,

that some day this message would be given great prominence among us, and that it would do the cleansing, regenerating work in the church which they believed it was sent by the Lord to accomplish.³

O that wistful someday! Evidently Elder Daniells did not share the view that the church had accepted the message of 1888 in its intended fulness even in 1926!

A differing point of view has been expressed at length by the late A. V. Olson. The very title of his book summarizes his conviction - Through Crisis to Victory 1888 - 1901. Keep in mind the date 1901, and then observe what Sister White stated in that year and in 1903, which we shall consider at the close of this thought paper.

Putting aside for the present, the arguments over the "some", the "many", and the "few" as these words relate to the acceptance or rejection of the message of 1888, let us carefully study the outline in the Spirit of Prophecy showing clearly how God viewed the message, and how He estimated the reaction.

Beginning in 1879, and continuing through 1885, there came a series of statements on how near the end was. Observe these sentences carefully:

1879 - We are now on the very borders of the eternal world.⁴

1881 - The end of all things is at hand.⁵

- I have been shown that we are standing on the very threshold of the eternal world.⁶

1885 - We are standing, as it were, on the borders of the eternal world.⁷

- We are standing on the very verge of the eternal world.⁸

- Eternity stretches before us. The curtain is about to be lifted.⁹

Then came 1888, and the messages of Elders Jones and Waggoner. Of these messages Sister White declared:

It is the third angel's message, which is to be proclaimed with a loud voice and attended with the outpouring of His Spirit in a large measure.¹⁰

In 1892, Sister White was able to state:

The time of test is just before us, for the loud cry of the third angel has already begun in the revelation of the righteousness of Christ, the sin-pardoning Redeemer. This is the beginning of the angel whose glory shall fill the whole earth.¹¹

This statement is not a rhetorical use of words as Jarnes would have us believe in his recent publication¹² but a statement of fact in a true historical setting. All of us recognize that the expressions, "loud cry", and "the angel whose glory shall fill the whole earth," refer to the prophecy of Revelation 18, and mark the final events just before our Lord's return. If this is not the import of how Heaven viewed the message of 1888, then all the messages that were given to this people just prior to 1888 as to the imminence of the end were irrelevant.

But these startling facts from our past history strike at us with a peculiar force. For lo, now eighty years have passed, and the work still remains unfinished, and our Lord has not come! It is utterly ridiculous to assume that the statistics of our church's material progress over the years since 1888, indicate an experience commensurate to what is indicated will be the experience in the time of the loud cry "when divine power is combined with human effort."¹³ How do we understand the "glory" of the angel of Revelation 18? - a statistical record, or the character of Christ reproduced in His people with its attending results?¹⁴

One thing is painfully clear. If the message of 1888 had been accepted none of us would still be here in this old world at the present hour. Of this point, the servant of the Lord speaks with absolute assurance. Here are her words in 1903:

Brethren and Sisters, from the light given me, *I know* that if the people of God had preserved a living connection with Him, if they had obeyed His word, they would today be in the heavenly Canaan.¹⁵

