

## 01-Finding Our Voice: The Road to 1888

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### I-What was Adventist in Adventism?

#### 1. Coming Out of 1844.

- a. After October 22, 1844; the little flock were without safe harbor. But God began even then to open the way for His message to go forth. Hiram Edson of Port Gibson, New York received an epiphany the morning after in a cornfield next to his home that Jesus had entered the sanctuary's holiest of holies. This meant that the sanctuary of Daniel 8:14 was not the earth. It was there in heaven that He entered to do a work before coming back to earth to receive His church. That was the beginning of the sanctuary doctrine, but it still didn't tell us exactly where we were in salvation history or what our next step was suppose so be.

#### 2. Understanding Where We Are in Salvation History.

- a. We began to understand that Miller had preached the first two of the three angels of Rev. 14:6-12. We then realized there was a third angel. This period after October 22 was considered a tarrying me, and this time period was perceived to be for only those who received William Miller's message in order to stay prepared to meet Jesus in the air. The third angel's message was to be ministered to them and not to the fallen world outside, in order to caution them to remain faithful and to worship the one true God. This was the beginning of the Closed Door movement.

When we began to understand that all three angels were to be preached, we saw our calling from God to continue the restoration of Bible truths. With the Sabbath, the doctrine of conditional immorality and the sanctuary truth being opened up to us, along with the teaching of the Second Advent, we forged our identity. By 1851, the door began to open as we saw our way clear.

#### 3. Forging Our Identity in the Sabbath/Sanctuary Conferences.

- a. The truths that would set Adventism apart from other Christians was forged into our pillars of the faith at a series of conferences. We know of twenty weekend "conferences" held between April 1848 and the end of 1850. During these conferences, our four pillar doctrines were hammered out; from which we have never had to capitulate, though we certainly have grown into a deeper and fuller understanding of them.

The four pillar doctrines are 1) the Sanctuary Doctrine, which includes the 2,300 days, the judgment and the salvation of God's people; 2) The Sabbath, 3) State of the Dead [Conditionalism] and 4) The Second Coming. This fourth pillar is a belief in the Advent, namely, the second advent of Christ from which we get part of our name. An Adventist believes not just in the coming of Christ, but that it will be a visible and literal coming of the person of Jesus to get His people. This coming is not a spiritual or symbolic event. The doctrine includes our beliefs in our remnant identity (Rev. 12:17) and the three Angels messages of Rev. 14:6-12.

#### 4. Lost Gospel Voice.

- a. Over the years from 1844, our focus as a people tended to be on the preaching of our distinctive doctrines. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, most people were already Christian and understood the doctrine of salvation, relatively speaking. Our focus was to

convince them of what made us Adventist. So, over the years, our voice regarding the cross and salvation began to dim and to take on a more legal form, I believe it was because of our high view of God's Ten Commandments. By the 1860s, through the theological input of men like Joseph Bates and Uriah Smith, the Sabbath became not just evidence of our fidelity to God, but a very means of our salvation.

Ellen White noted our need to advance when she wrote, "Brethren, shall we not all of us leave our loads there? And when we leave this meeting, may it be with the truth burning in our souls like fire shut up in our bones. You will meet with those who will say, 'You are too much excited over this matter. You are too much in earnest. You should not be reaching for the righteousness of Christ, and making so much of that. You should preach the law.' **As a people, we have preached the law until we are as dry as the hills of Gilboa that had neither dew nor rain.** We must preach Christ in the law, and there will be sap and nourishment in the preaching that will be as food to the famishing flock of God."<sup>1</sup> To finish our work, we need to get our voice back. We have been on this road for 132 years. The events from 1957 (over 63 years ago) has placed our feet on a path of open conflict over two very distinct gospels. Only one I believe will finish the work. Our story is to shed some light on which one it is.

## II-Moving Towards Minneapolis.

### 1. Who are the Major Players?<sup>2</sup>

#### a. E. J. Waggoner.

- i. **E J Waggoner.** Son of Pioneer Joseph Harvey Waggoner, was born January 12, 1855, in Waukau, Wisconsin, the sixth of ten children. Ellet studied chemistry and anatomy at Battle Creek College in 1875 and later that year entered the University of Michigan, where he received a degree as Doctor of Medicine.<sup>3</sup> In 1880, the recently-married "doctor" began medical work at the Adventist Rural Health Retreat in California, but his disenchantment with that work soon led him to employment at the Signs where his father had become editor after the death of James White.
- ii. "The turning point of the Christian experience of the young adult Ellet J. Waggoner came on a 'dismal, rainy afternoon' during a camp meeting held at Healdsburg, California, in October of 1882. While sitting on the edge of the main tent listening to a 'servant of God' making a presentation on the grace of God, Waggoner suddenly found himself overtaken by a profoundly moving vision of the crucified Christ. His recollection breathes the rapture of vivid revelation and discovery."

"Suddenly a light shone about me, and the tent seemed illuminated, as though the sun were shining. I saw Christ crucified for me, and to me was revealed for the first time in my life the fact that God loved me, and that Christ gave Himself for me personally. It was all for me. If I could

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<sup>1</sup> Ellen White, Review and Herald, March 11, 1890.

<sup>2</sup> Bios taken from Bert Haloviak; *Three Paths to Minneapolis: The Adventist Struggle for Righteousness* (Draft) 1988.

<sup>3</sup> "Abridged biography and obituary of Dr. Ellet Joseph Waggoner," PC 48 GCA; RH, March 5, 1908 (obituary of Mariette Waggoner); E J Waggoner to W C White, Aug 27, 1875, Waggoner 1875 WE.

describe my feelings, they would not be understood by those who have not had a similar experience, and to such no explanation is necessary.”<sup>4</sup>

b. A. T. Jones.

- i. **A T Jones.** Alonzo Trevor Jones was born in Rock Hill, Ohio, April 21, 1850. He worked as a "clerk" after his elementary school training until he enlisted in the Army, November 2, 1870. Jones had been promoted to sergeant by 1874 when he was transferred to Fort Walla Walla. In the summer of that year, Isaac Van Horn, SDA evangelist, pitched his tent at Walla Walla City, where the lectures on "the prophecies, the second coming of Christ and the Law and the Sabbath question" attracted Jones along with "a few other soldiers." Following the typical Adventist evangelistic style, Van Horn on the 17th day of the meetings called upon those in attendance who agreed that the evidence favored the seventh-day Sabbath to vote so by standing and 50 to 75 did just that. When the question was reversed, "not one witness, out of a congregation of about 350 arose in favor of Sunday." Jones attended regularly, "bought a Bible and a copy of every piece of [SDA] literature and spent his leisure time when off duty, in study."

Jones was baptized into the Church, August 8, 1874, and continued to devote his leisure Army time to intense study "with the idea that as soon as he was released from the Army he would immediately enter into the service of the Lord by preaching the truth." Civilian Jones received the denominational license to preach in 1875<sup>5</sup> and in 1884 the "Pacific Coast Council" recommended that he "come to California, where he could gain experience" by associating with the veteran workers there.<sup>6</sup> Jones and Waggoner were now together as writers for the Signs, and soon to be co-editors.

c. George Ida Butler, GC President.

- i. **George Ide Butler.** If anyone seemed destined to represent traditional Adventism, it was George Butler. At age 10, George went through the 1844 "disappointment," and was baptized by J N Andrews in 1856. Butler became well known as a tent evangelist and thus was immersed in the debating-style ministry so successful during the evangelization of the mid-west. He was widely acclaimed as defender of the faith during the apostasy of the former president and treasurer of the Iowa Conference and became president of that conference in the 1860s. Butler was elected GC president in 1871 and served until 1874 and then again was president from 1880 to 1888. He was 55 when his health and "other matters" caused his resignation from the GC presidency and he left for retirement in Florida in late 1888.

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<sup>4</sup> Woodrow Whidden, II; *E. J. Waggoner: From the Physician of Good News to Agent of Division* (Review and Herald, 2008) quoted from page 19.

<sup>5</sup> . RH, Aug 26, 1875.

<sup>6</sup> . ST, Oct 2, 1884.

Emmett Vande Vere, twentieth-century church historian, succinctly summarized Butler as an administrator: "He had driven hard to inculcate the fundamentals of Seventh-day Adventists and had become a stickler for discipline."<sup>7</sup> Butler himself admitted to having "too much iron in his nature," but still strongly resented the attitude that certain "fledgling" ministers in California should feel equipped to challenge traditional SDA teachings.<sup>8</sup> Butler saw in the debate that centered on the question of the law in Galatians as an onslaught against denominational structures most meaningful to him. He had engaged in many an evangelistic crusade whose main emphasis was the importance of the Sabbath and he saw a distinct threat to his concept of ministry if the new position prevailed. Indeed, Butler was convinced that "Seventh-day Adventists have never taken a stand upon Bible exegesis which they have been compelled to surrender."<sup>9</sup>

d. Uriah Smith, Review and Herald Editor.

- i. **Uriah Smith.** Like Butler, Smith perceived Adventism to be under siege. The time was inappropriate to the asking of fundamental questions about the basic message of the church. Besides, those basic questions had all been resolved in the past. Smith's forte was prophetic interpretation and he feared what A T Jones' tampering was doing to the validity of the list of the ten kingdoms/horns of Daniel 2 and 7 [when Adventism seemed to be on the brink of great changes].

Born in 1832, Uriah was 12 during the 1844 experience and joined the Sabbatarian Adventists in 1852. His initial denominational writing was a 35,000-word poem significantly entitled, "*The Warning Voice of Time and Prophecy*." He too would see the prophetic timetable being fulfilled around the 1888 period and felt that the close of prophetic time hardly seemed appropriate for the developing of new doctrines. Smith was the first General Conference secretary, the first Bible teacher at Battle Creek College and editor of the Review for [nearly] half a century.

2. Battle Over the Law in Galatians

a. Gal. 3:24: Ceremonial or Moral?

- i. Smith, in 1884 wrote, "If it can be maintained that the distinction between the two laws does not exist, Sabbath-keeping at once disappears from the list of Christian duties." (Synopsis of Present Truth, 258).
- ii. Dudley M Canright, "The Two Laws" published 1876.
- iii. The important text of the "added law in Galatians." Gal. 3:19-25.
  1. For 30 years this law was interpreted to be the ceremonial law.
  2. In 1856, by way of an older pioneer referred to as Father Pierce, the church would guard the perpetuity of the law. J. H. Waggoner's book, *The Atonement* was taken out of print which supported the

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<sup>7</sup> . Emmett K Vande Vere, "Rugged Heart: The Story of George I Butler," p 29.

<sup>8</sup> . George Butler to Ellen White, Dec 24, 1886, GIB 1886 and Butler to Ellen White, Oct 1, 1888, GIB 1888, WE.

<sup>9</sup> George Butler, "A Circular Letter to All State Conference Committees and Our brethren in the Ministry," RG 9, Documents 4, GCA.

idea that the law in Galatians was moral. The new view would be that the law in Galatians would be the ceremonial law.

- a. Before that time, J. White, Andrews, Smith and Bates held that the law in Galatians was the moral law.
- b. Smith and Butler would later believe Ellen White had a vision on this and wrote to J.H. Waggoner, confirming the law was the ceremonial law.
- b. The law became controversial in 1844 and again in '86 when Jones and Waggoner began to teach that the law in Galatians was the moral law, or Ten Commandments.<sup>10</sup>
  - i. Notice what was happening with Ellen and James White.
- c. **The Way of Life** picture was first shown to James White by Dr. M. G. Kellogg sometime in the early 1870s. The original artist is unknown, but James White found the picture to be such a "vivid portrayal of the plan of salvation" that he had it published as early as 1874 and advertised it in the Review and Herald as an "Allegorical Picture showing the Way of Life and Salvation: Through Jesus Christ From Paradise Lost to Paradise Restored." Two years later, in October 1876, 1,000 copies of a new and improved edition, with an explanatory brochure, was published.



Merritt G Kellogg, pub. 1874. Later in 1876 without the Eye of God

- i. Not long before his death, James White was planning to revise and republish the picture, but with Christ in the center but was unable to complete his work before he died. Ellen White finished the project and had it published in 1883



### 3. Other Issues.

- a. The Blair Sunday Law.
  - i. There was a growing tension over Sunday laws in the 1880s. This came to a head in the spring of 1888 when Senator H W Blair pushed for a constitutional amendment to Christianize Americas schools and to pass a national Sunday law. It failed in 1888 and was put back up in 1889.
  - ii. This background to the 1888 conference intensified belief we were at the end and the importance that we appear united in our doctrines. Any

<sup>10</sup> Ellen tells us later that the law is both the moral and ceremonial law. 1SM, 233.

changes now might undermine our message and even spell the demise of the God's last day movement. The stakes were high, and it appeared the time was right for Adventism to step into the light on the world stage.

- b. The 10 Horns of Daniel 7.
  - i. As early as 1885, Jones presented his study of the ten horns that the Huns were not one of the horns as Adventists and Uriah Smith had understood it for years, but rather; the Alemanni.
    1. The problem it created in Smith's mind was, "Thousands would instantly notice the change, and say: 'Oh! Now you find that you are mistaken on what you have considered one of your clearest points; and so if we give you time enough, you will probably come to acknowledge finally that you are mistaken on everything.' Thus the tendency would be to unsettle minds upon all points, and create confusion" (US to AT, Nov 8, 1886).
4. The 1886 GC and its Aftermath.
  - a. Butler published a little book to present what he believed to be the Adventist Orthodox view, *The Law in the Book of Galatians*. He presented it to the constituents of the 1886 conference. He had written a series of letters to Ellen White who was in Europe at the time, but her lack of response resulted in his declaration to make a brief comment about the law in Galatians which turned into the 85 page book presented at the 1886 conference.
    - i. In addition, D. M. Canright's book, *The Two Laws* (1876) was reprinted in 1886. The section on the law of Galatians had expanded from six to 24 pages. The 1886 conference was to put Jones and Waggoner with their 'false teachings' in their proper place and put the Church back on Track.
      1. Canright was most likely the tragedy of the '86 conference. By Feb. 17, 1887, he requested his membership in the church be terminated and turned in his preaching credentials. The following year, he published *Seventh-Day (sic) Adventism Renounced*. The problem is, Dudley Canright believed Jones and Waggoner regarding justification. In so doing, he could not reconcile the gospel with Adventism; so after a number of previously failed attempts, he finally overthrew Adventism and aligned with the Baptists.
5. Ellen White's response to the Warring Parties.
  - a. One of her most important letters went to Jones and Waggoner, Feb. 18, 1887. She spoke about how she had written J. H. Waggoner and told him he was wrong. She could not however remember just what point he was wrong on. Also noted that Jones and Waggoner were wrong for publishing their views in the Signs. Waggoner withheld his book, *The Gospel in the Book of Galatians* because of Ellen White's council.
  - b. She mailed a copy of the letter to Butler, who saw the letter as a victory and then in false piety shoved down their throats by saying things like he always loved the two young men and took pity on those who suffer such great disappointment. As a result, he published an aggressive article in the Review of March 22, 1887. His use of Ellen's letter upset her, and she gave Waggoner permission to publish his

view. This whole thing was not in God's order, but in all fairness this would result in the publishing of Waggoner book on Galatians.

6. The California Conspiracy.

- a. William M Healey, a California pastor reported a meeting held on the West Coast with W. C. White, AT Jones, EJ Waggoner and other California ministers in June 1888 and that the meeting was to study the 10 horns and the law in Galatians. An honest Bible study was perceived by Butler as an attempt to change traditional Adventism. Ellen's letter of April 1887 to Butler for caution all came together with Healey's report. He fired off a 40 page letter dated Oct. 1, 1888 to Ellen White. Called for his delegates to stand by the old landmarks and not to give in to the California Conspirators. His followers dug in for a battle. When Ellen discovered what was happening, she quipped, "We are in for it." (MW, Oct. 9, 1888).

Seventh-day Adventists are about to experience a conference that they are still trying to understand over 130 years later. At this point in time, it is forty-four years after the great disappointment, and we're about to discover what is Christian in Adventism, - or are we? The curtain now opens on Minneapolis. But before we go there, we'll examine the aftermath of the 1888 conference and the legacy we have had to live with.

Go to: 02-The Imminent Christ: Justification Within

Suggested Reading:

Knight, George Knight, *User Friendly Guide to the 1888 Message, A* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1998).

Olson, A. V., *Through Crisis to Victory (1888 -1901)* (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald, 1966).