

THE LOUD CRY TO COME IN A SURPRISING WAY

By Paul Penno, Jr.

January 13, 2010

For decades preceding 1888, the church and its leadership looked forward to the “times of refreshing” when the long-expected latter rain would come. This was a cherished expectation among us a century ago like the long-awaited coming of the Messiah was to the Jews in John the Baptist’s time.

However, few seemed to recognize that the latter rain and the loud cry would be primarily a clearer understanding of the gospel. The loud cry was expected to be increased noise. It took us by surprise that it turned out to be increased light.

We expected a thunderous shaking of the earth with a message of “Get ready, or else!” and were not prepared for the still small voice of a revelation of grace as the true motivation of the third angel’s message. The supernatural power we hoped for must be consequent on our accepting that greater gospel light that must lighten the earth with glory.

There was a terrible danger that the Jewish leaders might reject their Messiah when He should come “suddenly.” And there was an equal danger that the responsible leaders of our church might spurn the loud cry when it should begin. As far back as 1882 Ellen White had warned that they might someday be unable to recognize the true Holy Spirit:

“Many of you cannot discern the work and presence of God. . . . There are men among us in

responsible positions who hold that . . . such a faith as that of Paul, Peter, or John, is . . . old fashioned, and insufferable at the present time. It is pronounced absurd, mystical, and unworthy of an intelligent mind.” (5T 74, 79).

A false optimism prevailed (“I know that many think far too favorably of the present time”), and “in the mighty sifting soon to take place,” these leading workers could be found unfit for crisis-era leadership:

“Those who have trusted to intellect, genius, or talent, will not then stand at the head of rank and file. They did not keep pace with the light. Those who have proved themselves unfaithful will not then be entrusted with the flock. In the last solemn work, few great men will be engaged.” (5T 80).

Ellen White had looked forward to the time when the Lord would take leadership into His own hands and raise up human instruments whom He could trust:

“When we have men as devoted as Elijah, and possessing the faith which he possessed, we shall see that God will reveal Himself to us as He did to holy men of old. When we have men, who, while they acknowledge their deficiencies, will plead with God in earnest faith, as did Jacob, we shall see the same results.” (4T 402).

Specifically, the General Conference president in 1885 was warned that unless he and some others are aroused to a sense of their duty, they will not recognize the work of God when the loud cry of the third angel shall be heard. When light goes forth to lighten the earth, instead of coming up to the help of

the Lord, they will want to bind about His work to meet their narrow ideas. Let me tell you that the Lord will work in this last work in a manner very much out of the common order of things, and in a way that will be contrary to any human planning. . . . The workers will be surprised by the simple means that He will use to bring about and perfect His work of righteousness.” (October 1, 1885; TM 300).

That letter was addressed to both G. I. Butler and S. N. Haskell. Haskell heeded the warning and was one of the few who had the discernment to recognize the mysterious thing that was happening before his eyes three years later. But not Butler and many others. The Lord would be forced in 1888 to pass by experienced ministers, to use younger or more obscure agents:

“The Lord often works where we least expect Him; He surprises us by revealing His power through instruments of His own choice, while He passes by the men to whom we have looked as those through whom light should come. . . .

“Many will reject the very messages God sends to His people, if these leading brethren do not accept them. . . . Even if all our leading men should refuse light and truth, that door will still remain open. The Lord will raise up men who will give the people the message for this time.” (GW old ed., 126).

Again, in 1882 we were told:

“It may be under a rough and uninviting exterior the pure brightness of a genuine Christian character will be revealed. . . .

“Elijah took Elisha from the plough, and threw upon him the mantle of consecration. The call to

this great and solemn work was presented to men of learning and position; had these men been little in their own eyes, and trusted fully in the Lord, He would have honored them with bearing His standard in triumph to the victory. . . .

“God will work a work in our day that but few anticipate. He will raise up and exalt among us those who are taught rather by the unction of His Spirit, than by the outward training of scientific institutions.” (5T 81, 82).

Those 1882 testimonies exhibit an inspired foresight. It was as though that little lady wrote the 1888 history in advance!

The Divine Choice of Messengers

In that very year, 1882, E. J. Waggoner began a course of training that was evidently under the special guidance of the Holy Spirit. He was being prepared to be the agent of a special work. He later described his experience:

“I began my real study of the Bible, thirty-four years ago [1882]. At that time Christ was set forth before my eyes “evidently crucified” for me. I was sitting a little apart from the body of the congregation in the large tent at a camp meeting in Healdsburg [California], one gloomy Sabbath afternoon. I have no idea what was the subject of the discourse. Not a word nor a text have I ever known. All that has remained with me was what I saw. Suddenly a light shone round me, and the tent was for me far more brilliantly lighted than if the noon-day sun had been shining, and I saw Christ hanging on the cross, crucified for me. In that moment I had my first positive knowledge, which

came like an overwhelming flood, that God loved me, and that Christ died for me. God and I were the only beings I was conscious of in the universe. I knew then, by actual sight, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself; I was the whole world with all its sin. I am sure that Paul's experience on the way to Damascus was no more real than mine. . . .

"I resolved at once that I would study the Bible in the light of that revelation, in order that I might help others to see the same truth. I have always believed that every part of the Bible must set forth, with more or less vividness, that glorious revelation [Christ crucified] (Letter, May 16, 1916, written just before his sudden death).

In those same years preceding 1888 the Lord was preparing his colleague. The message of truth found A. T. Jones as a private in the U. S. Army. Although not a product of the schools, he studied night and day, amassing a great store of historical and Biblical knowledge. J. S. Washburn, who knew him personally, told us that he was a humble, earnest, and deep-feeling person whose effectual prayers gave evidence that he knew the Lord (interview, June 4, 1950).

Young Jones' keen intellect was balanced by warm, simple, child-like faith. In the days when he was used of God, he was powerful in preaching and in personal ministry. In the years immediately following 1888, there were significant demonstrations of the Spirit of God working through him, including special ministry in Washington at the U. S. Senate to defeat the Blair Sunday bill. In fact,

this near-century of continuing religious liberty that Americans enjoy is a legacy of the effective efforts of the unrecognized and unhonored Jones and Waggoner in opposing religious intolerance of their day.

The Spirit of God was truly preparing these two young men to herald to the remnant church and to the world itself the "beginning" of the long-awaited loud cry:

"The Lord in His great mercy sent a most precious message to His people through Elders Jones and Waggoner. This message was to bring more prominently before the world the uplifted Saviour, the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. . . . God gave His messengers just what the people needed (1895; TM 91, 95).

For eight years following 1888, Ellen White often spoke of these two young men as "the Lord's messengers," endorsing them in words never uttered of any others. There are between 200 and 300 such enthusiastic statements from her. In 1890 she said:

"Suppose that you blot out the testimony that has been going during these last two years, proclaiming the righteousness of Christ, who can you point to as bringing out special light for the people?" (RH, March 18, 1890).

In 1888 she had said:

"God is presenting to the minds of men divinely appointed precious gems of truth, appropriate for our time." (MS. 8a, 1888; A. V. Olson, *Through Crisis to Victory*, p. 279; hereafter, Olson).

“The message given us by A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner is the message of God to the Laodicean church” (Letter S24, 1892).

When she first heard the message of Waggoner, she immediately perceived its true significance. It was a special revelation for the church and for the world:

“I have had the question asked, what do you think of this light which these men are presenting? Why, I have been presenting it to you for the last forty-five years,—the matchless charms of Christ. This is what I have been trying to present before your minds. When Brother Waggoner brought out these ideas at Minneapolis, it was the first clear teaching on this subject from any human lips I had heard, excepting the conversations between myself and my husband. I have said to myself, it is because God has presented it to me in vision that I see it so clearly, and they cannot see it because they have not had it presented to them as I have, and when another presented it, every fiber of my heart said amen.” (Ms. 5, 1889).

In our modern terminology, she perceived the message to be a transmission that would apply power from the engine to the drive wheels. For “forty-five years” she had been racing the engine, but the power to finish the gospel commission wasn’t getting through. Now she perceived how the new message supplementing the old would actually prepare the people of that generation for the coming of the Lord. No wonder she was happy!

How the Loud Cry Was Not Recognized

As early as April 1, 1890, Ellen White, growing in understanding, applied the language of Revelation 18 to the 1888 message:

“Several have written to me inquiring if the [1888] message of justification by faith is the third angel’s message, and I have answered, “It is the third angel’s message in verity.” The prophet declares, ‘And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.’” [Rev. 18:1] (RH, April 1, 1890).

By 1892, she was ready to state unequivocally that the message was indeed the beginning of the long-awaited loud cry:

“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 light of the angel whose glory shall fill the whole earth.” (RH November 22, 1892).

Note that the “beginning” of this angel’s work was the message, not its assumed acceptance by the leadership or the people. We shall see later how this reality packs a powerful significance in a time of crisis.

Elder Butler, the most responsible officer of the church, was foremost in opposing that precious light of the loud cry. Few others were spiritually able to transcend his negative influence. In his blind opposition to the loud cry we may see the tragic fulfillment of the inspired warning sent him on October 1, 1885 (cf. TM 300):

“There are some who have a desire to have a decision made at once as to what is the correct view in the point under discussion. As this would please Elder Butler, it is advised that this question should be settled at once. But are minds prepared for such a decision? I could not sanction this course. . . . They are not prepared to make safe decisions. . . .

“I see no reason for the wrought-up state of feeling that has been created at this meeting [Minneapolis, 1888]. . . . The messages coming from your president at Battle Creek are calculated to stir you up to take a decided position; but I warn you against doing this. . . . Excited feelings will lead to rash moves.” (Ms. 15, 1888; Olson, p. 295).

“I can never forget the experience which we had in Minneapolis, or the things which were then revealed to me in regard to the spirit that controlled men, the words spoken, the actions done in obedience to the powers of evil. . . . They were moved at the meeting by another spirit, and they knew not that God had sent these young men to bear a special message to them which they treated with ridicule and contempt, not realizing that the heavenly intelligences were looking upon them I know that at that time the Spirit of God was insulted.” (MS. 24, 1892).

Thus did the leadership of this church, fondly expecting to be vindicated before the world in the long-expected loud cry, actually do despite to the Spirit of grace and despise the riches of His goodness.

Let us make clear that this sin of insulting the Holy Spirit did not bind the corporate body of the church

in the unpardonable sin. The ancient Jews’ sin against the Holy Spirit consisted of attributing His work to Satan (Mark 3:22-30). We do not read that our brethren in general in the 1888 era went that far, although some individuals may have done so. (Insulting Him was bad enough!) Ellen White continued to minister to this church until her death in 1915, thus indicating her belief that forgiveness is possible, and that the solution to our problem is not denominational disintegration or abandonment, but denominational repentance and reconciliation with the Holy Spirit.