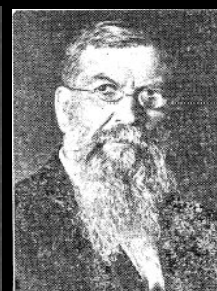
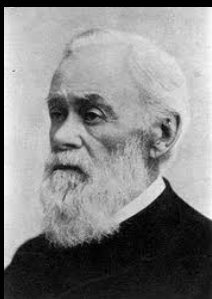


# THE ADVENTIST MOVEMENT

ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THE  
SEVENTH DAY CHURCH OF GOD

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**RICHARD C. NICKELS**

**THE ADVENTIST  
MOVEMENT:**  
Its Relationship to the  
Seventh Day Church of God

PART 1

by

**Richard C. Nickels**

**February 25, 1972**

**Revised, 1993**

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PHOTO: (TOP, LEFT TO RIGHT) WILLIAM MILLER, JOSHUA V. HIMES, ELLEN  
WHITE, JAMES WHITE, (BELOW, LEFT TO RIGHT) JOSEPH BATES, A.N. DUGGER,  
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## Important Ideas

Man is by nature *mortal*, the dead are unconscious until the resurrection, the punishment of the wicked is total extinction, and immortality is a gift from God (paraphrase of **George Storrs**, circa 1842).

“Whoever is opposed to the personal reign of Jesus Christ over this world on David’s throne, is Antichrist . . . all sects in Protestant Christendom . . . are opposed to the plain Bible truth of Christ’s personal reign on earth; they are Antichrist . . . . If you intend to be found a Christian when Christ appears, come out of Babylon, and come out now” (**Charles Fitch**, July 1843).

We should be called “Church of God,” and not “Adventist.” The “true people of God” must have the name, “Church of God” (paraphrase of **Joseph Marsh**, May 21, 1845).

You Sabbath-keepers are inconsistent. The same scriptures which support the Sabbath also support the keeping of Passover and the Feast Days (paraphrase of **A.N. Seymour**, 1856).

“The kingdom of Heaven, kingdom of David, kingdom of God, and kingdom of Israel are one and the same . . . Jesus and the Saints are heirs to this kingdom . . . . nowhere in the Bible, is the Christian Church called a kingdom!” (**R.V. Lyon**, circa 1860).

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## **Summary**

William Miller proclaimed the end of the world in 1843-1844. The American Adventist Movement which Miller led spawned a number of churches, including Sunday-keeping Adventists (Advent Christian Church, Church of God of Abrahamic Faith), as well as Sabbath-keeping Adventists (Seventh-Day Adventists, Seventh Day Church of God). The Seventh Day Church of God has much in common with Sunday-keeping Adventists.

The Adventist Movement generated several key ideas that were carried over to the Seventh Day Church of God, including the name, "Church of God," the Sabbath/Holy Day question, conditionalism, the "Age to Come," the regathering and identity of Israel, church government, the soon return of the Messiah, and coming out of Babylon.

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# THE ADVENTIST MOVEMENT

## I. The Setting

Seventh Day Baptists in the early 1800s were characterized by “coldness and apathy” and were generally in a lethargic state. Yet, strangely, the period of 1820-1840 saw their greatest growth in membership. Numerically they were growing, but spiritually they were in the depths of false doctrine.

Seventh Day Baptists were not alone in a general religious depression during this period. “Toward the latter part of the 18th Century there was much spiritual unrest and the churches of America were dead in religious formality and certain Bible truths seemed all but lost.”<sup>1</sup>

Ellen G. White states in her work *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan* that the “Reformed” churches were in need of reforming: “. . . the condition of the church at this time is pointed out in the Saviour’s words in Revelation: ‘you have a name that you livest, and art dead.’” Churches, she said, had refused to learn new truth. To awaken them, she states, God sent “an American Reformer,” William Miller.<sup>2</sup>

### Millennial Views: Post versus Pre

The commonly accepted 1800s view of the millennium was what is known as “post-millennialism,” the belief that the “Kingdom of God” would come by *gradual* stages; as more and more of the world’s population became “converted,” the millennium would be established. At the end of the 1000 years, with the earth perfected, Christ would return. Before the return of Christ, the Jews would have to return to

Palestine, set up their own state, and be converted.<sup>3</sup>

“Pre-millennialism,” held by William Miller and others who came to be known as “Millerites,” or “Adventists,” was the belief that Christ’s second coming would precede the 1000-year Millennium, and that this event was soon coming. It was a radically “new” idea that gained enthusiastic advocates in an era marked by religious and political fervor.<sup>4</sup>

### **Sociological Explanation**

Western New York, described in a book of the same title by Whitney Cross, was in the period of 1800-1850 a “Burned Over District.”<sup>5</sup> It was the scene of much religious enthusiasm, including the birth of Mormonism and Shakerism. Numerous Seventh Day Baptist churches were established in the region during these years, and a center of Adventist activity was Rochester, where Joseph Marsh’s papers were published, and where the Advent Review and Sabbath Herald was later published for a time. Religionists there tended to be emotional. There was much religious competition, rivalry and bitter strife between the different sects.

After the depression of 1837, the pre-millennialist idea of the soon-coming millennium was an instant panacea, an escape from economic woes for poorly educated people. In a day of “spiritualizing away” much of the Bible, the close literalistic interpretations of Scripture by Miller and his associates initiated a northern United States revival that brought interest in religion among many to a fever pitch.

### **Aftermath: “Blackness and Desolation”**

The Millerite movement was like a prairie fire; it created fervor when the issue was burning, but when the 1844 original “date-setter’s” time had passed, ridicule and scorn caused numerous “converts” to lose all faith in the Bible and become infidels. “For years the spiritual condition of some parts of the State of New York was not unlike that of a prairie after it has been swept by fire. All was blackness and desolation and death.”<sup>6</sup>

After 1844, a noticeable decline in “conversions” occurred nationwide. The period of revivals had come to an end, and even greater



“spiritual lethargy” followed the collapse of Millerism.<sup>7</sup>

## II. William Miller — “The Old Man With the Concordance”

A veteran of the War of 1812, William Miller subsequently had become a farmer in New York. He had scorned organized religion and rejected the Bible until the death of a friend and pangs of guilt from cursing led him to profession of Christianity. When his friends ridiculed his switch, he made them a bet: he would carefully study the Bible, and if he could not harmonize its apparent contradictions, he would renounce his faith. A two-year study, during which he used mainly a Cruden’s Concordance, convinced him that the Bible is its own interpreter. Especially intrigued by the prophecies of the Book of Daniel, Miller came to believe that the Second Coming would occur “about the year 1843.”

For thirteen years he kept studying, rechecking his figures and keeping his ideas basically to himself. He was too shy to preach publicly his views, until in 1831 some of his fellow Free Will Baptists in Low Hampton, New York, asked him to preach on his theories of the Second Advent. His first sermon, at the age of 57, he described as a “cold, dull, lifeless performance.”<sup>8</sup>

Miller improved greatly, and became one of the most influential preachers in the history of American evangelism. His sincere, unaffected style made his message greatly appealing to the common people.

From 1831 through 1839 Miller preached mostly in small towns and villages in New England, going only where he was invited to speak. He subsequently became a licensed Baptist minister, although he spoke his prophetic ideas at churches of many denominations. Numerous Baptist, Methodist, Congregational, and other churches invited him to speak before them. Often they did not agree with his prophetic preaching, but, as “spiritual lethargy had been prevalent in some of the churches,” they invited him to speak to stir up religious enthusiasm. A man who spoke on the soon-coming end of the world had “drawing power.”<sup>9</sup>

Miller was not out to start a separate religious denomination; he lived and died a Baptist. However, his theories of the end of the world created a religious revival that shook all the churches of the North. His detailed calculations, coupled with ignorance of ministers and credulity of the uneducated populace led, many to embrace his theories.<sup>10</sup>

## Calculation of the Crucial Date

The Book of Daniel has been called the “Battleground of Bible Criticism,” and the misuse of it by men such as William Miller have made it a muddy field indeed.

William Miller’s theories of the end of the world “about the year 1843” centered on the so-called 2,300-days prophecy of **Daniel 8:14**, coupled with the 70-weeks prophecy of **Daniel 11**. His interpretations stemmed from at least five assumptions, all of them false:

- (1) in Bible prophecy, a day always represents a year
- (2) the 70-weeks and 2,300-days prophecies begin at the same time
- (3) the starting date was 457 B.C.
- (4) there was a year zero
- (5) the cleansing of the sanctuary of Daniel 8:14 means the purging of the earth with fire at the return of Christ<sup>11</sup>

To these may be added a sixth assumption, that the 2,300 mornings and evenings stand for 2,300 days in prophecy, rather than 1,150 days. Of the 2,300-days, or prophetic years, the first 490 years, from 457 B.C. to 34 A.D., were said to be the years allotted to the Jewish nation (70-weeks), and the rest, 1,810 years, allotted for the gospel to go to the Gentiles. Christ was said to have died in the midst of the week of seven years, 27-34 A.D.

Several calculations were involved in determining that the year 1843 (later changed to 1844) date was the date of the return of Christ. However, the most basic method used was adding 2,300 years to 457 B.C., and arriving at 1844. Miller never set an exact date, but in January, 1843, he stated that the Second Advent would occur between March 21, 1843, and March 21, 1844, the “Jewish year” of 1843 (obviously, Miller counted the non-existent year “zero” in his initial calculations). After the 1844 date had passed, Miller’s associates, especially Samuel S. Snow, revised the date to the tenth day of the seventh Jewish month — October 22, 1844 as they (erroneously) figured it — for the second coming of Christ.<sup>12</sup>

Apparently the exact date was not the criterion of the Millerite movement; Joshua Himes, Henry Dana Ward and Henry Jones, leaders in the movement, did not hold to the 1843 date, but believed the time was near.<sup>13</sup>

## Miller's Ideas

Miller's linkage of the 2300-days prophecy to the 70-weeks prophecy was not original. Other students of prophecy had pointed to similar ideas before his time. What was "new" was his belief that the coming of Christ precedes the millennium, and that Christ would come about 1843. In this Miller radically departed from "evangelical Christians" of his day.<sup>14</sup>

Miller believed that the wicked would be destroyed by Christ's coming, the just would be resurrected at the return of Christ, and the dead unjust would be resurrected at the close of the millennium. Contemporary "Christians" often spiritualized away the resurrection, as well as the millennium.<sup>15</sup>

In direct contrast to English Adventists, or Literalists, who were active at the same time, Miller believed that the literal Jews would *not* return to their homeland and be converted prior to the return of Christ. One of the five "Fundamental Principles on Which the Second Advent Cause Is Based," which were continually listed in the major Millerite periodical, *The Midnight Cry!*, is that the "only restoration of Israel yet future, is the restoration of the saints to the new earth, when the Lord my God shall come, and all His saints with Him."<sup>16</sup>

The other four "Fundamental Principles" of the Millerite movement are these:

(1)The earth will be regenerated, restored to the Edenic state, and be the eternal abode of the resurrected righteous.

(2)The only millennium spoken of in the Bible is a period of 1000 years between the first and second resurrections.

(3)All prophecies have been fulfilled except those relating to the coming of Christ, the end of the world, and the restitution of all things.

(4)"There are none of the prophetic periods, as we understand them, extending beyond the [Jewish] year 1843."<sup>17</sup>

## Part of a Worldwide Movement

Miller's proclamation of the soon-coming end of the world was not unique, as other religious leaders were proclaiming much the same thing, and some of them even before Miller. "During the early decades of the nineteenth century a profound conviction of its [Second Advent]

imminence developed simultaneously and spontaneously among pious scholars in practically all religious bodies in the different countries of Christendom.” The belief that the “end of the age” was near became common.<sup>18</sup>

Christ’s speedy advent was proclaimed by Joseph Wolf in 1831-1845 in Asia and around the world. Extensive Second Advent beliefs permeated the Moravians in Germany; Kleber’s book *The End is Coming* set 1843 or 1844 as the crucial date. In England, Edward Irving preached the soon return of Christ and published an English translation of a Spanish book, *The Coming of Messiah in Majesty and Glory*. In 1840-1844, some 700 ministers of the Church of England were proclaiming the Advent doctrine (the figure may have been 300 ministers of the Established Church and more than twice that number of nonconformists.)<sup>19</sup>

In the United States, a minister named Davis in South Carolina began at the same time as Miller to proclaim similar views, although the two men originally had no knowledge of each other.

In Sweden, children were seized upon and began preaching the Second Advent, despite a law forbidding teaching anything contrary to the Established Lutheran Church. Eighteen year old Erik Walboam wrote that he and others were “seized by this heavenly power . . . that we could in no wise resist . . . [and] we began to proclaim to the people, and to proclaim with a loud voice that the Judgment hour had come . . . .”<sup>20</sup>

Loughborough states that this “simultaneous work . . . is indeed a striking evidence of God’s hand in the movement.”<sup>21</sup>

### **III. Miller’s Associates**

In Europe the Second Advent movement was principally fostered by individuals. However, in America the movement was much more extensive and more organized. “Millerism,” as it was originally termed, was an inter-church movement led by William Miller, a licensed Baptist minister of Low Hampton, New York, and supported by scores of leading Protestant clergymen of nearly all denominations. Some 200-300 ministers proclaimed his ideas, and 500 public lecturers toured the country.

Miller’s ideas became commonly known in much of the nation. From 50 to 100 thousand people identified themselves as Second Adventists in 1843-44, and the Hartford Universalist alluded to a million

adherents.<sup>22</sup> The South generally was not receptive because slaveholders were against the message, fearing their slaves would revolt if they felt the end was near.<sup>23</sup> Many leading Adventists, such as Joseph Bates, were anti-slavery and pro-temperance, and these ideas were not popular in the South.

### **Himes — Promoter of Adventism**

Until 1840, William Miller preached mostly in small towns and villages of New England, speaking only where he was invited. He was a good preacher but not a promoter. In December, 1839, he was asked to preach in cultural Boston by Pastor Joshua V. Himes of the Baptist Chardon Street Chapel. A former Unitarian, Himes was a born promoter. He started the two major Millerite papers, *Signs of the Times* (1840), later renamed the *Advent Herald*, and *The Midnight Cry!* as well as several others. With Himes, Millerism spread to the larger cities and was no more a one-man work, but that of a great and increasing number of ministers.

Himes, as editor of these influential papers, became second only to Miller as the leader of the movement. In 1864, Himes became an Advent Christian minister, and he later died in the Episcopal church.<sup>24</sup>

Himes did not believe in the 1843-44 date, but he wholeheartedly supported the work because he thought the truth would become evident.<sup>25</sup>

### **Confederation on One Idea**

Various conferences were held by Millerite ministers to give unity and direction to the movement. The first conference, held in Boston, in 1840, specifically stated that the movement was not out to form a separate church but to proclaim that the Second Advent was very near.

The third conference, held in Portland, Maine, in October of 1841, formed a committee for “examining, advising and recommending” qualified lecturers; but there was nothing to prevent a man from rising up and claiming to preach Millerite doctrines. Miller encouraged all to distribute literature and write “useful and interesting articles.”

There was remarkable unity for so loosely organized a movement. At conferences, the various Protestant ministers even held communion together. Except for the issue of the Second Advent, the theological

views of most could easily pass for orthodox views in most denominations.<sup>26</sup> The Advent date was the only real cohesive factor; when that failed, it was natural that the movement splintered and divided.

### **Leading Millerite Ministers**

Josiah Litch, a Methodist minister, was one of the first really prominent men to join Miller in wholehearted promotion of the Second Advent movement. In 1838 he published a scholarly work, the “Probability of the Second Coming of Christ about the Year 1843.” In 1841 he was hired as “general agent,” for the movement and traveled widely, preaching at the expense of the publications.<sup>27</sup>

Charles Fitch was a former Presbyterian of New Jersey who in 1841 wrote “Reasons for Believing in the Second Advent of Christ in 1843.” At the close of 1842 he began a paper in Cleveland, *The Second Advent of Christ*.<sup>28</sup> It was Fitch who wrote the most famous Millerite sermon, “Come Out of Her, My People!” which encouraged Millerites to come out of their churches and be separate. It was largely due to his influence that Millerism became more than an interdenominational movement.

Timothy Cole was another leading Adventist minister from the time the Second Advent movement was organized in 1840. He was later the first editor of the *Bible Advocate* (1846-1848), published in Hartford, Connecticut.

James White, although not a leading Millerite minister, deserves mention because of his later importance among Sabbatarian Adventists. He was baptized in the Christian Church at the age of 15. In 1842, White attended a Millerite campmeeting in Maine, and although only 21 years old, decided he must preach. In 1843 was ordained a Christian minister.<sup>29</sup>

### **Joseph Bates — Pioneer Adventist**

A self-made sea captain from Fairhaven, Massachusetts, Bates had been a prisoner during wartime, 1812-1815. Bates drank, chewed tobacco and swore like any other salt until his wife packed a New Testament among his reading materials during one voyage. He subsequently abstained from tobacco and cursing and resolved never to drink another drop of alcohol. Later he was baptized into the Disciples

of Christ Church, and the same day he organized a local Temperance Society. Afterwards, Bates became a vegetarian and quit tea and coffee. In 1839 he heard about William Miller, studied thoroughly his prophetic theories, and became firmly convinced that “about the year 1843” would be the end of the world.<sup>30</sup>

Bates became a leading Millerite lecturer and often presided over Millerite conferences. After 1844 he became a Sabbatarian (observing the Sabbath from six o'clock Friday to six o'clock Saturday) and spread the message into Ohio. He also pioneered Adventism in Michigan and other states in the Midwest.<sup>31</sup>

#### **IV. Organization of the Millerite Movement**

The first Millerite conference, called the “General Conference of Christians Expecting the Advent of Our Lord Jesus Christ,” was held in Boston at Himes' church on October 14-15, 1840. Its stated purpose was “not . . . to form a new organization in the faith of Christ; nor to assail others of our brethren who differ from us in regard to the period and manner of the advent; but to discuss the whole subject faithfully and fairly . . . [and] by so doing we may [spread the gospel] . . . that the way of the Lord may be speedily prepared . . .”<sup>32</sup> Further sessions were to coordinate and plan the loosely knit movement.<sup>33</sup>

The second General Conference, held in Lowell, Massachusetts on June 15, 1841, was attended by over 200 from Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Maine, Vermont, and New York. It recommended the formation of Bible classes for discussing articles and literature on the Second Advent, the questioning of local ministers on the Adventist message by presenting texts for them to explain, and the establishment of Second Advent libraries in various cities of the North. If Adventist believers were opposed by their local churches, they were advised to continue attending and “do what they can to bring the church to a better mind.”<sup>34</sup>

The attitude of being above partisanship was still evident: “. . . the Conference will not be a place for controversy, or party strife, or sectarian display; and least of all, a place for assailing the great pillar of holy truth, the church, its ministry, its ordinance, or its Sabbaths.”<sup>35</sup>

Other conferences were held before 1844 in Maine, New York City, Connecticut, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Rhode Island. Gradually there developed from the Millerite movement a sectarian philosophy

which after 1844 led to the formation of several distinct churches.

### **Camp Meetings and Prophetic Charts**

A conference held in Boston on May 24, 1842, stressed the soon-coming end and the urgency of giving the “Midnight Cry” of **Matthew 25**. It was decided to hold Adventist camp meetings, the first one was held at East Kingston, New Hampshire, in the summer of 1842. Numerous speakers, including Miller, lectured at the eight-day East Kingston camp meeting, which was attended by 7,000 to 15,000 Adventists of many denominations from New England and Canada. It was further agreed during the 1842 conference to publicize prophetic charts. One such chart, based on the visions of the beasts in the books of Daniel and Revelation, was constructed by Fitch and Apollos Hale.

The value of the prophetic charts was proved during the lectures at East Kingston; charts became a distinguishing feature of Millerite speakers, and later Seventh-Day Adventist and Seventh Day Church of God evangelists. It was believed that the charts fulfilled **Habakkuk 2:2** in making visions plain. Listeners might forget the words of a speaker, but the lurid caricatures of the beasts of Daniel and Revelation were burned upon the audiences' minds. Millerite lecturers “needed to do little more than hang up the chart in order to grip the interest of the audience and hold it throughout a lecture.”<sup>36</sup>

### **Growth of Movement and Conflicts**

At the time of the 1842 camp meeting, Himes wrote in the Signs of the Times advising those who wished Adventist lecturers to visit them to send in their request to the editor. Himes remarked, “. . . new lecturers are now entering the field, and we hope to be able to supply more of the numerous calls in the future, than we have been able to in the past.”<sup>37</sup>

Much ridicule was heaped upon “End of the World Miller” and his associates. Advertisers cashed in on the Adventist interest; cigar advertisements caught newspaper readers' eyes with headings such as “End of the World” and “The Second Advent.” Conservative Philadelphia newspapers described Millerite meetings as “wild orgies.” Disrupters and hoodlums often cleared lecture halls by shouting “Fire!” at the top of their lungs. The New York Times published an extra section portraying Miller’s chart with a refutation of Millerism by



“Rev.” Dowling, a Baptist minister.<sup>38</sup>

In the face of intensifying opposition, Miller branded those who made up stories and twisted what he said as liars. Millerite papers devoted much space to refuting false charges and included a “Liar’s Corner” which merely listed false reports without refutation.<sup>39</sup>

Exaggerated rumors were spread about the supposed fanaticism of Millerites, and it was even claimed that numerous people had been driven insane by his teachings. Miller himself promoted calmness, and in an article in the Signs, “Occupy Till I Come,” he urged farmers to continue to work and plant crops. Some, however, did engage in fanatical excesses; many farmers in late 1844 failed to harvest their crops, thinking the end was sure to come.<sup>40</sup>

The real problem in the movement was not fanaticism but friction between the Millerites and their respective denominations. To say the least, Millerite adherents were often coldly received by their churches; many were even expelled.

### **Conditional Immortality**

George Storrs, editor of his own paper, the Bible Examiner, was a leading Adventist who began to advocate the mortality of man. His famous “Six Sermons,” published c. 1842, showed that man is by nature mortal, the dead are unconscious until the resurrection, the punishment of the wicked is total extinction, and immortality is a gift of God.

Thousands of Adventists accepted this doctrine although it was not a test of Adventist belief. Yet, conditionalism ran counter to the “immortal soul” teaching of major Protestantism, and aroused so much ire that many “soul sleeping” Adventists were expelled from their churches for “heresy.”<sup>41</sup>

“Church of God (Adventist).” It was aptly descriptive.Ω

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**THE ADVENTIST  
MOVEMENT:**  
Its Relationship to the  
Seventh Day Church of God

PART 2

by

Richard C. Nickels

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## **“COME OUT OF HER, MY PEOPLE!”**

Miller did not want to form a new religious sect. He stated, “I have not advised any one to separate from the churches to which they may have belonged, unless their brethren cast them out, or deny them religious privileges . . . . I have never designed to make a new sect, or to give you a nick name.”<sup>41</sup>

Yet Miller’s associates, especially Charles Fitch, sounded a cry for open separation from the churches. In July, 1843, Fitch preached a sermon, “Come Out of Her, My People,” later published in magazines and in tract form. In it he proclaimed a radically “new” idea, that not only the Roman Catholic Church but also the Protestant churches, were Babylon, and true Christians should come out of them.

“. . . whoever is opposed to the personal reign of Jesus Christ over this world on David’s throne, is Antichrist . . . all sects in Protestant Christendom . . . are opposed to the plain Bible truth of Christ’s personal reign on earth; they are Antichrist . . . . If you intend to be found a Christian when Christ appears, come out of Babylon, and come out now. Throw away that miserable medley of ridiculous spiritualizing nonsense, with which multitudes have so long been making the Word of God of none effect, and dare to believe the Bible . . . no one that is ever saved can remain in Babylon.”<sup>41</sup>

As Adventists left or were thrust out of churches, they formed their own churches and often hurriedly built their own structures.<sup>41</sup>

In January, 1844, leading Adventists met in New York City to formulate a state Second Advent association. Officially it was nonsectarian, but it was an inevitable step toward a new church organization. The Advent Herald of March 20, 1844, stated that “Adventists” would be the best appellation for the group, for it “marks the real ground of difference between us and the great body of our opponents.”<sup>41</sup>

By April, 1844, Joseph Marsh in the Voice of Truth of Rochester,

New York, was calling for outright separation from the churches.<sup>41</sup> Some 50,000 people eventually did separate from their churches.<sup>41</sup>

## **V. The Great Disappointment — 1844**

When March 21, 1844, had passed and Christ had not come, Millerites suffered their “First Disappointment.” On May 2, Miller confessed his error and acknowledged he was disappointed, but could not see where he had miscalculated, and that he believed the Day of the Lord was still very near. The Millerite movement did not fold with the passage of the date but continued to publish and rehash the same prophetic theories.

At an Advent conference in Boston on May 31, 1844, Miller, Himes and other leading ministers signed a resolution urging Advent believers not to allow the churches they were affiliated with to silence them, and if they were cast out, not to take revenge upon their former churches.<sup>41</sup>

### **Seventh Month Movement**

Samuel S. Snow was the originator of a new date for the Second Advent, the “tenth day, seventh month, year of jubilee,” which was calculated (wrongly) to be October 22, 1844. Disappointed Adventists seized upon this new date, and the movement gained new enthusiasm in the summer of 1844. Adventism was by now a well-defined movement, with ministers, meeting houses, and Second Advent associations. Miller, Himes, Fitch and Litch only reluctantly accepted the new date. The fever pitch of the instigators of the “Seventh Month Movement” quickly brought Millerism to its climax.<sup>41</sup>

### **Climax and Disappointment**

Stories of excesses committed by Adventists on October 22, 1844, have been many and varied. It appears that the “ascension robe story”



was generally untrue and that most Adventists did not fanatically stand on hilltops with white robes waiting to be wafted into the clouds to meet the returning Christ. It is clear, however, that most of the believers gave up nearly all their worldly possessions in the last days or weeks before the date, many of them giving to Himes as the editor of the papers. The presses were grinding out extras to the very day of the expected Advent. After the date had passed, Himes led a program to aid destitute Adventists who had given up everything. Most farmers had not sold their farms, but few had harvested their crops that fall.<sup>41</sup>

Midnight of October 22 was a bitter time for those who had firmly believed in the date. One Millerite, Washington Morse, stated that the “pang of disappointment to the Advent believers . . . can find a parallel only in the sorrow of the disciples after the crucifixion of their Lord.”<sup>41</sup>

Hiram Edson wrote, “. . . all our fondest hopes and expectations were blasted . . . . Has the Bible proved a failure? Is there no God, no heaven . . . . Is all this but a cunningly devised fable? . . . We wept, and wept, till the day dawn.”<sup>41</sup> That is, until he had a “vision” which spiritualized away and gave a new interpretation to the anticipated event of October 22, 1844.

George Storrs gave his overview when he stated that the whole movement had been propagated by mesmeric trances.<sup>41</sup>

## **VI. After 1844: Confusion and Dissension**

With the passage of October 22, 1844, the only cohesive factor holding Adventism together had vanished. The result was that by 1855 the Adventist movement had splintered into at least 25 divisions of what was once the Advent body.<sup>41</sup> Some Adventists had refuted their positions and returned to their churches or had become atheists.<sup>41</sup>

Miller and Himes continued to preach and publish. In August, 1845, Miller published his *Apology and Defense*, contending that his views were orthodox and opposing any of the “new theories” that had developed to explain October 22 and the Disappointment. He maintained that the date was not “a fulfillment of prophecy in any sense.” Although Storrs and Fitch were preaching conditionalism, Miller contended that it was not an integral part of the movement, and

that the Advent was still near and must continue to be preached. Miller died in 1849 a disappointed and frustrated man.<sup>41</sup>

I.C. Wellcome, of Yarmouth, Maine, later a leading Advent Christian, stated that “during the years 1845-46, while the faithful and stable believers were seeking to ‘strengthen the things that remain,’ by publishing . . . as before, many minds were reached by the arguments embraced in the doctrine of the Advent near which had not been moved before.”<sup>41</sup> Conditionalism and the Sabbath were two key issues which came to the fore and were to divide the Adventist movement.

Fanaticism sprang up almost everywhere among Adventists. There are reports of some who took “literally” Jesus’ words of **Matthew 18**: “Except ye . . . become as little children,” and thought this Scripture required them to crawl on all fours and imitate babies. Others accepted the “no work” idea, believing that the seventh millennium or antitypical Sabbath had arrived, and that it was a sin to work; instead, they sat around discussing “spiritual” matters. Others claimed visions or used hypnotism to win followers. Ellen G. Harmon, later Mrs. James White, attacked fanaticism, but she was accused herself of leading a fanatical movement based on her visions.<sup>41</sup>

One Adventist practice that other churches perhaps views as fanatical was footwashing. Adventists generally took the position that footwashing was obligatory. J.B. Cook, Joseph Turner, Enoch Jacobs, and G.W. Peavy were leading proponents of footwashing.<sup>41</sup> This practice may have started in Maine and then spread to northern New York, and later to Adventists in Ohio and Michigan. Many of the same people took up the “holy salutation” or holy kiss.

### **Additional Date Setting**

October 22, 1844, was not the last date set by any means. A large proportion of Adventists, including James White, “firmly believed” that Christ would come in the seventh Jewish month in 1845. Ellen G. White stated, “We were firm in the belief that the preaching of a definite time was of God.”<sup>41</sup> Joseph Bates and many Sabbatarian Adventists held that 1851 was the date.<sup>41</sup> Mrs. White endorsed the 1851 date in a vision on June 30, 1850; but in the spring of 1851 James White retreated from this position, saying that the vision gave only her “impression.”<sup>41</sup>

Canright, a former Seventh-Day Adventist leading minister, states, “Adventists have set the time for the end of the world in 1843, 1844, 1847, 1850, 1852, 1854, 1863, 1866, 1867, 1877, and so on, till one is sick of counting. Learning nothing from the past, each time they are quite as confident as before.”<sup>41</sup>

## Albany Conference

A “Mutual Conference of Adventists” was called in Albany, New York, on April 29, 1845, to resolve the confusion and different views that had arisen since the Great Disappointment. Cross states that the purpose of this conference was to prevent “spiritualizers” such as Edson from gaining command of the movement.<sup>41</sup>

Attended by Miller, Himes, Litch and other leaders, the conference drew up a statement of beliefs, and passed resolutions denouncing “fanaticism.” A committee was created to examine candidates for the ministry, and congregations were asked to set up churches accountable to God alone. Thus was formed the General Conference of Second Advent Believers, the forerunner of the Evangelical Adventist denomination.<sup>41</sup>

The Albany Conference has been termed the last attempt to hold the Millerite movement together in one cohesive body, and it did stabilize the movement for several years.<sup>41</sup>

There were *four divisive issues* that ensured the breakup of Adventists after the Albany Conference:

(1) Millerites had rejected the prophecies requiring a return of Israel to Palestine either before or soon after the Second Advent. They held that since the Jews had rejected the Messiah, they had forfeited the promises to spiritual Israel. Contrariwise, “Age-to-Come Adventists,” led by Joseph Marsh, came to believe that a return of the Jews was necessary before the Advent.

(2) Conditionalist ideas had been accepted by 3/4 of the Adventists, but the Albany Conference dodged this issue; Miller and his direct descendants, Evangelical Adventists, held to the common “immortal soul” view.

(3) The Sabbath later became a major issue. Bates, who was not at

Albany, had embraced the Sabbath only a few weeks previously. The Conference was against Sabbath-keeping, speaking disparagingly of “Jewish fables and commandments of men.”

(4) The “shut door” controversy was perhaps the biggest divisive factor.<sup>41</sup>

Sabbatarian Adventists, at first a tiny minority, commonly accepted “shut door” theories, while first-day Adventists held to the “open door” idea, which stated that the door of salvation was not closed on October 22, 1844. The Sabbatarians accepted Edson’s “New Sanctuary” idea and claimed that this event was fulfilled in heaven on October 22; Miller’s direct descendants rejected 1844 as the date of any fulfillment of Bible prophecy. Competition and strife between the two groups became rife.<sup>41</sup>

### **Marsh’s Objections to the Albany Conference**

Joseph Marsh was influential editor of the Adventist paper *Voice of Truth and Glad Tidings of the Kingdom at Hand*, published in Rochester, New York. His paper accepted articles supporting Advent dates subsequent to October 1844, and he was strongly against the organizing tendencies of the Albany Conference. He, with Storrs, was spokesman of the view that church organization meant becoming part of Babylon.

In the *Voice of Truth* published on May 21, 1845, Marsh objected strongly to the name “Adventist,” by which the Albany Conference had designated itself. He stated that he was part of the “Church of God” and could never be part of a group that accepted any other name than the Scriptural one. He maintained that the name, “Church of God” was sufficient because it pointed out “those as a church who belong to God,” and Marsh insisted that the “true people of God” must have the name “Church of God.”

Marsh also objected to voting on “resolutions,” since it was obvious that humans could err. By voting on whether or not a certain doctrine was true, he asserted, the Albany Conference would subsequently force false doctrine on others.

Finally, Marsh objected “to the doings of the Albany conference because the proceedings as a whole, look like forming a new church,

instead of coming to the order of the New Testament under the name there given to the true church.”<sup>41</sup>

In differentiating people who held to the name “Church of God” and observed the Sabbath, it should be noted that neither Marsh nor the “Churches of God” which stemmed from Marsh (and Benjamin Wilson in Illinois) observed the Sabbath.

Yet Marsh’s ideas about the church name, anti-organization, and the “Age to Come” seem to have been very similar to those of a later group calling themselves “Church of God (Adventist),” subsequently known as the Church of God (Seventh Day). The ideas held by this group are markedly different from the beliefs of Seventh-Day Adventists.

## **VII. Four Major Church Groups**

Besides Seventh-Day Adventists and the Seventh Day Church of God, four additional church groups descended from the Adventist movement. Only two of them exist today.

### **(1) Evangelical Adventists — American Millennial Association — 1858-1914**

The “original” Millerite group, that is, those who published the *Advent Herald*, continued to push for strong organization under a conference, in opposition to Marsh and Storrs. Their view on consciousness in death and an eternally burning hell came to be a minority position. Apparently they did not encourage further date setting.

In 1854 the Second Advent Mission Society was organized, and in 1858 was achieved the formal organization of Herald Adventists. This was the first Adventist group to officially organize as a sect. The American Evangelical Adventist Conference was formed, with the American Millennial Association as the publishing department.

Evangelical Adventists continued to be “ecumenical” and as a result, steadily declined in numbers and influence. Himes, editor of the *Advent Herald*, deserted them in 1864; the name of the paper was changed ca. 1876 to *Messiah’s Herald*. In 1906 there were reported to be 1,147 Evangelical Adventists, with 34 ministers and 30 churches. The group

was geographically located from Pennsylvania to Vermont. By the time of the 1916 Census, however, Evangelical Adventists were nonexistent.<sup>41</sup>

## **(2) Advent Christians — First-Day Adventists**

The Advent Herald, pro-organization and anti-conditionalist, and the Voice of Truth, anti-organization and pro-conditionalist, fired volleys back and forth against each other, and tended to become exclusivist, refusing to print articles by Adventists with other ideas.

As a result, a “free paper,” the Bible Advocate, with Timothy Cole as editor, was established in 1846 after a conference in Hartford, Connecticut. This new paper espoused conditionalist and post-millennial views. (The Bible Examiner of George Storrs mainly expressed his own particular “life and death” conditionalist views.)

The Advocate was originally “middle of the road” in regard to church organization but later shifted toward Marsh’s position, and, because of financial problems, merged with Marsh’s renamed paper, the Advent Harbinger, in 1849.

Marsh’s “new doctrine” of the so-called “Age to Come” made his paper and his supporters especially hostile to the Advent Herald and any form of organization. In the period of 1845-50, the key issues of dispute among Sunday Adventists were organization, conditionalism, post versus pre-millennialism, and “Age to Come.”<sup>41</sup>

Moderate opponents of the Advent Herald “original faith” group began a Second Advent Union Missionary Association in Connecticut in 1850 for the purpose of aiding existing Adventist churches and ministers. It established a periodical, the Second Advent Watchman, with W.S. Campbell and Joseph Turner as editors. The Watchman opposed the Herald but did not hold to the “Age to Come” doctrine, and was not as vehemently anti-organizational as Marsh.

Thus by 1852 there were three strands of first-day Adventists:

(1)The Advent Herald “original Adventist faith” group, centered in Boston and New York, pre-millennialist, immortalist, and favoring strong ecclesiastical organization.

(2) The Second Advent Watchman group of Hartford and New York, teaching conditionalist, “soul sleeping,” annihilation of the

wicked, and millennium past, and divided on the issue of church structure. The Watchman group was a forerunner of the Advent Christian Church.

(3) The Advent Harbinger and Bible Advocate group of Marsh, centered in Rochester, New York, holding to conditionalist, probation after Advent, and the return of the Jews to Palestine ("Age to Come"), and opposing most church organization. Marsh's group later became known as the Churches of God in Christ Jesus, or Church of God (Oregon, Illinois).

### **Jonathan Cummings and the World's Crisis**

The Watchman accepted several articles in support of Advent dates proposed for 1851 and 1852, but it apparently refused to accept the views on prophecy of Jonathan Cummings, F.H. Berick and others who purported different dates: the fall of 1853 or the spring of 1854.<sup>41</sup> The proponents of these dates, mostly young men who had recently joined the Adventist movement, believed that God had given them understanding of the time of Christ's return. They began publishing a paper, *The World's Crisis*, was started in Lowell, Massachusetts, to expound their views. The Crisis group, which also held to strong conditionalist views, gained a considerable following among Adventists.

After the passage of the 1854 date, the Crisis party was invited back to the "original group," but their conditionalist views prevented a union with the nascent Evangelical Adventists. Some of the Crisis party shifted their hopes to an 1857 date.<sup>41</sup>

### **Advent Christian Organization**

In 1854 the Maine Advent Christian State Conference was organized, followed by conferences in Central Illinois in 1855, Iowa in 1856, Michigan in 1858; Indiana and Minnesota in 1859, and later New York, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Kansas, Missouri, Arkansas, Quebec,

Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick.<sup>41</sup>

William S. Campbell was the driving force behind the eventual unification of the entire Advent Christian body. A convention in 1860 resulted in the forming of the Christian Association, later the Advent Christian Association. The formal organization of the denomination took place at Worcester, Massachusetts, on November 6, 1861.

Joshua V. Himes toured the Midwest in 1862 and settled in Buchanan, Michigan, where in 1864 he launched a new paper, *Voice of the West*, under the Western Advent Christian Publishing Association.

Advent Christians are second in size among Adventist groups, next in number to Seventh-Day Adventists.<sup>41</sup> It has been said that there were 6,250 Advent Christians in 1850; 7,120 in 1860; and 34,555 in 1870; but in the year of 1967, the figure was only 30, 256, despite the 1964 merger with the Life and Advent Union. Advent Christians appear to be slightly declining in numbers today. Conditionalism and the soon-coming Advent (with no definite date) continue to be two distinguishing tenets of Advent Christians.

Although Advent Christians do not make a practice of observing the Biblical Holy Days, it is interesting to note that the Advent Christian yearly camp meeting at Wilbraham, Massachusetts, usually held in August or September, was for some time termed a “feast of tabernacles.”<sup>41</sup>

### **(3) Life and Advent Union, 1863-1964**

John T. Walsh, assistant to editor George Storrs of the *Bible Examiner*, in 1848 maintained that there was no resurrection of the wicked dead. Rejecting the “Age to Come” idea that there would be a chance for those who had never heard the gospel during their lifetime, Walsh did not believe that God would resurrect the unjust merely for the pleasure of condemning them to death. God was too “loving” for that, Walsh reasoned, and therefore the unjust dead would simply not be resurrected. Eternal life could be had only through Christ. Walsh was merely carrying Storrs’ “annihilation of the wicked” idea to its ultimate extent.

Storrs was at first against Walsh’s ideas, but later accepted them. Subsequently, so much debate occurred with Walsh and Storrs opposing



the main body of Adventists that on August 30, 1863, a separate denomination, the Life and Advent Union, was formed at Wilbraham, Massachusetts. A new paper, Herald of Life and the Coming Kingdom, was issued by this group and was edited by Storrs and Walsh. Later they both abandoned the movement.

Members of the Life and Advent Union had much in common with Advent Christians, but differed sharply on several points. The millennium of Revelation 20:2 was said to be past, at the Second Advent the righteous would live forever on a purified earth, the wicked would sleep forever and never be resurrected. and the year 1873 was held to be as a possible date for the Second Advent.

In 1906 there were 60 ministers, 28 churches, and 3,800 Life and Advent Union members. In 1964, the Life and Advent Union merged with the Advent Christian Church.<sup>41</sup>

#### **(4) Church of God — “Age to Come” Adventists**

Joseph Marsh, editor of the Voice of Truth of Rochester, New York, objected strongly to the Albany Conference and, as previously noted, maintained that the “true people of God” must have the name “Church of God.” He became the leader of the “Age to Come” Adventists.

#### **Additional Date Setting**

Marsh’s paper allowed expression of opinions about possible dates for the Second Advent. For example, on page 36 of the issue published on April 29, 1846, H.H. Cross expressed belief in the spring of 1847 as a probable date. It may be that Marsh’s objections to organization were due to his participating in date setting, since organization denied faith in future dates by making provision for the future. Again and again, his paper tried to stir up enthusiasm over future dates.

Marsh’s followers organized camp meetings, despite the opposition of the Albany Conference group toward having them.<sup>41</sup> Camp meetings, even today in the Church of God (Seventh Day), tend to be used to stir up the membership to a realization of the nearness of the Advent.

## **Anti-Sabbath and Shut Door**

Marsh at first held to the “Shut Door” idea but soon rejected it along with Sabbatarianism, which later became associated with it. In the issue of *Voice of Truth* published on August 6, 1845, Marsh maintained that Adventists of that time were the Laodicean church:

They seem to think themselves the infallible expounders of God’s Word; . . . Yet they cannot see their mistakes, the conflicting opinions among themselves, and not infrequently, the opposite views, in a very short time, from the same individual (pages 416-17).

Marsh was correct in rejecting the “shut door” idea. Although many Adventists held fast to this teaching, the door to salvation was not shut, for as Revelation 3:20 states, if any man opens the door, Christ will come in unto him.

Although Marsh rejected Sabbatarianism, much Sabbath discussion, both pro and con, was allowed in the pages of his papers. As early as April 27, 1845, C.P. Whitten of Nashua, New Hampshire (near Washington), wrote to Marsh of his belief in the Sabbath, pointing to Galatians 3:29, Exodus 31, and Isaiah 58:13-14, and asking Marsh to print the tract, “Sabbath of the Lord our God.” However, in his letter of June 2, 1845, Whitten repudiates his Sabbath stand. In August of 1845, T.M. Preble wrote in defense of the Sabbath, terming Sunday-keepers the “Pope’s Sunday keepers and God’s Sabbath breakers.” Marsh wrote refutations to both Whitten and Preble.<sup>41</sup>

Oscar D. Gibson of Houghtonville, Vermont, wrote Marsh in September of 1845 that “there are some in this region, who preach that we must keep the seventh day as sabbath, and in many places, it has divided the saints.” Gibson was anti-Sabbath.<sup>41</sup>

## **Merger With *Bible Advocate***

The Bible Advocate, (not be confused with the present *Bible Advocate* magazine, published by the Church of God [Seventh Day], which had its origins in the 1860's) a "free paper" edited by Timothy Cole, was started on July 11, 1846, as a result of the Hartford Convention. Its introductory issue referred to the "Church of God." Joseph Turner, a later editor, supported his "no personal devil" theory. Articles supporting 1846 and 1847 dates appeared.

In Sabbath discussion allowed in its pages, Editor Cole opposed Sabbath proponents. Nathaniel Jones of Northfield, Vermont, and Sister C. Stowe supported the Sabbath in its pages in the fall of 1847. In December, 1847, J.B. Cook wrote a series of four articles supporting the Sabbath. Paradoxically, it seems that Cook claimed the resurrection was on Sunday, but editor Turner said it was on Saturday.<sup>41</sup>

The Advocate merged with Marsh's paper in June of 1849 to become the Advent Harbinger and Bible Advocate.

### **The "Age to Come" — A "World Tomorrow"?**

The "most controversial doctrinal innovation" of the Harbinger and Advocate, which distinctly set it apart from the publications of "life and death" (conditionalist) Adventists, began to be defined in the November 17, 1849 issue. In a series of articles that extended into 1850, Marsh expounded his views on the Advent and the millennium.

Marsh spoke of at least four "ages" (dispensations): the "Mosaic Age," which closed with the death of Christ; the "Gospel Age," which would close with the Second Advent; the "Age to Come," when Christ would rule for 1,000 years with the saints on the earth; and the "Eternal Age" on the new earth. This was strikingly different from that the Millerites, who believed that at the Second Coming the earth would be purged with fire and the new earth established.

Marsh held that the saints (the resurrected dead, or the living transformed) would reign with Christ on the earth for a thousand years. With the Devil bound, the nations would learn war no more. During the millennium, all those living and dead who had not had an opportunity to acknowledge Christ as Lord in their lifetime would be given that chance.

This probationary time would be ruled over by Christ and the righteous immortals. Marsh denied that this was a "second chance." At the end of

the “Age to Come,” the wicked would be resurrected, Satan would be loosed, and would deceive them and the wicked would be destroyed. The “Eternal Age” would then begin on the new earth.

Gradually, the “Age to Come” Adventists also accepted the view that before the Second Advent, the Jews would return to Israel and establish a nation, because the Jewish people would have a prominent place among nations in the “Age to Come.” This latter idea was similar to the views of English Adventists, or Literalists, from which the Millerites had disassociated themselves at the first conference in 1840. However, Marsh’s party later merged with some American Literalists of Illinois, the Wilson family.

Marsh’s ideas were published in a tract or book entitled *The Age to Come; or Glorious Restitution*. “Age to Come” Adventists came also to be known as “Restitutionists,” and since they believed in the restoration of literal Israel to the land promised to Abraham, they were also known later as the “Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith.”<sup>41</sup>

### **“Age to Come” Party**

Marsh’s “Age to Come” views were not unique to him. Dr. John Thomas, editor of the *Herald of the Kingdom and Age to Come*, had published papers since the 1830’s advocating similar views. Thomas, however, had no connection with Millerism or Adventism, and was basically independent.<sup>41</sup>

With Marsh the “Age to Come” view became an obsession, and this fact, along with his virulent anti-organization stance, led his group to separate from other Adventists. To the end of the 1850’s, “Age to Come” Adventists were even separated geographically from other Adventists. The teaching was not widely accepted in New England, eastern New York, Pennsylvania or anywhere on the Atlantic coast. Its adherents were mainly in western New York, southern Canada, and Ohio. “Age to Come” Adventists scored most of their successes farther west. By the 1860’s there was a clear line of distinction between them and “life and death” Adventists.

O.R.L. Crozier, Jonathan Wilson, R.V. Lyon, and J.P. Cook came to express “Age to Come” views similar to Marsh’s.<sup>41</sup>

## Shaky Organization of “Age to Comers”

During 1850-51, the *Harbinger* and *Advocate* strongly opposed the “shut door” and Sabbath Adventists. The issue of August 16, 1851 again refuted the name “Adventists,” saying the proper term was “Christian” or “Church of God” (page 65).

In May of 1852, Marsh and his party held a conference at Rochester and made a statement supporting “faith in the personal Advent of Christ, the gathering of the remnant of Judah, and Israel to Palestine, its restoration, re-building of Jerusalem, the reign of Christ on the throne of David on literal Mount Zion; the unconsciousness of the dead, the destruction of the wicked, and eternal life of the righteous.”<sup>41</sup>

At the next Rochester conference, in June of 1853, the “Evangelical Society” was formed. This was a voluntary association, simply for business purposes, with the deacons of the Rochester church handling a common fund to assist needy ministers and churches. These early attempts at organization were squeamish ones, for Marsh had long maintained a firm stance against any organization.

In 1854 the *Harbinger* was renamed *Prophetic Expositor* and *Bible Advocate*. Marsh discussed church order in an early issue, maintaining that Church of God is the only proper name, those who have believed and obey constitute the church, tht believers are added by immersion in the name of Christ, that gifts in the church are administered by deacons and ministers (not visions), and that the Lord’s Supper ought to be observed every Sunday. The paper strongly opposed the 1854 time movement.<sup>41</sup>

The “Age to Come” group called a general conference in 1855 which resulted in organizing the North Western Christian Conference of the Church of God. The meeting place was Jeffersonville, Indiana, and the local pastor there, Nathaniel Field, was the prime mover for organization. Marsh, A.N. Seymour and J.B. Cook were prominent figures attending. The organization included the states of New York, Ohio, Michigan, Illinois, and Indiana; state evangelists were named for the last four states and one evangelist at large was named.<sup>41</sup>

The second meeting of the conference, held in 1856, did not go well,

as there was still strong opposition to all order and organization. Field wrote to Marsh in the *Expositor and Advocate* of May 1, 1857: “Every one sets up for himself, is a church or sect to himself, ordains himself, belongs to no church in particular, is responsible to nobody for his moral or ministerial conduct, sets all authority and order at defiance, and repudiates all ideas of Church government and discipline” (page 640). Field was so despondent over his failure in organizing the Church of God that he quit and joined the Advent Christians.<sup>41</sup>

### **Midwest Manouverings**

In 1858 the Michigan Church Conference was organized; E. Miller, A.N. Seymour, and O.R.L. Crozier were appointed evangelists. The Iowa and Minnesota Christian Conference, organized previously, was in the same year enlarged to include Wisconsin, where the “Age to Come” doctrine dominated among Adventists. William Sheldon was evangelist in Minnesota, P.S.W. Deyo in Iowa, and Yates Higgins in Michigan. Most of these men were “Age to Comers” at the time, but the line between Adventists and Age to Comers was not sharp; reports were sent both to the Crisis and the Expositor and Advocate. Sheldon later became an Advent Christian.

Ties between the “Life and Death” Adventists and the “Age to Comers” were even stronger in Illinois. The Northern Illinois Conference of Adventists and the Central Illinois Conference of Adventists sent reports to both papers. In 1857 there was an Illinois conference of the Church of God that had no connection with the other conferences.

The “Age to Come” position in Illinois was supported by English Adventists who had arrived in Pennsylvania and the Middle Atlantic states in the late 1840’s and migrated west in the 1850’s. Geneva, Illinois, where Benjamin Wilson published the Gospel Banner and Millennial Advocate, was the center of the Illinois group. These Literalists views were similar to “Age to Comers” in that they believed the Jewish nation must be restored before the Second Advent and the millennium. Their views on church order and the name Church of God were also similar to the “Age to Come” party.<sup>41</sup>

## **Marsh Leaves the Scene**

Financial problems forced Marsh to reduce both the size and the frequency of his paper in 1855. The *Expositor and Advocate* ceased publication in 1860 when Marsh moved to Canada and sold the paper to Thomas C. Newman, who renamed it the *Millennial Harbinger and Bible Expositor* and issued it from Seneca Falls, New York.

Joseph Marsh died in 1863. He who had spoken so much against forming a new sect and of the necessity of liberty had himself been termed a narrow sectarian who heaped vituperation upon those who disagreed with his views. Although Storrs agreed with Marsh's "Age to Come" views, he could not work with Marsh.

### ***Harbinger and Expositor Period, 1860 - ?***

The *Harbinger* issue of October 17, 1860, reported on the third annual meeting of the Michigan Christian Conference, held at Mason on October 5-7, 1860 (soon after the Seventh-Day Adventist Conference at Battle Creek). E. Smith was elected president, and O.R.L. Crozier secretary. The Iowa Christian Conference likewise reported that it supported the *Harbinger*.

Repeatedly the *Harbinger* published support for the name, "Church of God," and individual churches reported with that name.

## **Sabbath Disputes Continue**

Controversy between Sunday-keepers and Sabbath-keepers raged in the late 1850's and early 1860's. J.H. Waggoner and other Sabbatarians locked horns with A.N. Seymour in Hillsdale, Michigan, in 1856-57. Seymour noted that Sabbatarianism had begun to flourish there in 1848, and that the movement had begun with falsehoods against Marsh, and that M.E. Cornell had led the Sabbath-keepers' attempt to destroy Marsh's paper. Seymour stated that he knew of ten ministers in Michigan and Indiana who had withdrawn from Sabbath-keeping;

including Elder M. Curry. Seymour challenged the Review and Herald to produce Scriptures answering his questions on the Sabbath.<sup>41</sup>

A real bone of contention, because of which many either did not keep the Sabbath or had left Sabbath-keeping, was the issue of the Feast Days. M.E. Cornell at Jackson, Michigan, invited Seymour to attend a conference of Sabbath-keepers. He did attend and heard James White and Hall and *Stephenson* [NOTE: J.M. Stephenson, in 1856 a Sabbath-keeper, was one of the leaders of the “Messenger Party,” but later apparently dropped the Sabbath and joined the “Age to Come” party. He is listed as Secretary of the Christian Association of Northern Wisconsin in 1861 (*Harbinger and Expositor*, February 6, 1861, pages 170-71)] speak in defense of the Sabbath. However, they could not sufficiently answer Seymour’s questions. His questions centered on the phrases “throughout your generations,” “for a perpetual covenant,” and “for ever,” which are phrases the Bible uses for the keeping of the Sabbath, sacrifices, and Feast Days (Exodus 31:12-17, Deuteronomy 5:29, Exodus 12:11-24, Numbers 10:1-10, II Chronicles 2:4, Ezekiel 46:13-14, Leviticus 3:16-17, Exodus 29:8, 30:8-10). Seymour concluded that since sacrifices are no longer required, neither is the keeping of the Sabbath. He viewed the Sabbath-keepers as inconsistent and maintained that if they believed in keeping the Sabbath, they should also keep Passover, the Feast Days, and the sacrifices.<sup>41</sup>

Seymour’s rejection of the Sabbath was not entirely hypocritical because many of the Sabbath-keepers were inconsistent. Later on, in 1861, William P. Shockey in the *Harbinger and Expositor* expressed ideas similar to Seymour’s. In answering Elder Moses Hull’s arguments for the Sabbath, Shockey noted that Hull said the apostles still called it the Sabbath day after Pentecost; hence, Hull said, it is still to be observed. Shockey answered: “. . . this hypothesis would as surely prove that the disciples should keep the feast of unleavened bread (Acts 20:6) . . . if the fact of the New Testament writers calling the other by its original name also proves that the feast of unleavened bread should be observed yet.” However, Shockey said, all commandments to observe these days were “nailed to the cross.”<sup>41</sup>



## Elder R.V. Lyon — Amazing Ideas

One of the prominent figures mentioned in the *Harbinger* and *Expositor* was R.V. Lyon, a minister who apparently worked in New York and in Canada West (Ontario). He appears as an evangelist in the *Harbinger* issue of April 30, 1862, with this message: “Notice to the brethren in Canada West: Where shall our annual conference be held, for the Church of God of Canada West? The last of June will be the best time” (page 301).

Three tracts of his, found at Aurora College, purport some very interesting views. Lyon stated that first-day Adventists believed the earth was the sanctuary of Daniel 8:14, while Seventh Day Adventists said the sanctuary was in heaven. In Lyon’s view, both were wrong; Lyon believed it was Palestine, and that it would be cleansed when released from Turkish domination.<sup>41</sup>

As for the Kingdom of God, Lyon was correct. He stated that Christ will reign on the earth with the resurrected and changed saints for 1,000 years, with Satan restrained. Israel and Judah will be gathered, Jerusalem will be built up as the capital of the world, and the Tabernacle will be rebuilt. The law will go forth from Zion, there will be one language, and the pure gospel will be preached to the whole world. Christ will continue to reign with His Cabinet for all eternity. After the 1000 years, Satan will be doomed, and God the Father will return to the earth. Lyon states,

“the kingdom of Heaven, kingdom of David, kingdom of God, and kingdom of Israel are one and the same . . . Jesus and the Saints are heirs to this kingdom . . . nowhere in the Bible, is the Christian Church called a kingdom!”

Man’s only future home is the earth. To enter the Kingdom of God, faith, repentance, baptism and continuing to live in Bible truth are required.<sup>41</sup>

In conjunction with the return of Christ, Lyon held that Judah and the Ten-Tribe House of Israel will be regathered. They are separate but will be rejoined, as the “Two Sticks” prophecy of Ezekiel 37:15-28 reveals. This prophecy, Lyon stated, was written 134 years after the Ten Tribes went into captivity, and they were never brought back to their

land, never united with Judah, nor has David or Christ ever ruled over them. “Consequently, we are to look for the conversion and gathering of Israel to their own land, subsequent to the second advent of Christ.” His pamphlet did not state where the Ten Tribes of Israel located, however. On page 3 of this tract he uses the term, “Church of God.”<sup>41</sup>

### **Further History of Age to Come Adventists**

The local and regional conferences of the Church of God continued, with no national organization emerging until scattered elements organized as the Churches of God in Christ Jesus at Philadelphia in 1888. This union was an amalgamation of several independent Adventist groups which had existed under names such as Church of the Blessed Hope, Brethren of the Abrahamic Faith, Restitutionists, Restitution Church, Church of God, and Age to Come Adventists. In 1889, this “organization” ceased to function.

Finally, in 1921 a General Conference was organized at Waterloo, Iowa, and headquarters was established at Oregon, Illinois. The name chosen by the group was Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith, or simply Church of God (Oregon, Illinois).

Apparently there is no formal ordination of ministers. The 1926 membership was listed as 3,528. In 1965 it was 5,800. Leading states are Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois.<sup>41</sup> Apparently the General Conference is still a very loose organization.

## **CONCLUSION**

### **Taylor’s Statistical Analysis — 1860**

William Miller in his *Apology and Defense* estimated that 200 ministers and 500 lecturers had embraced his views. In addition, there were 1,000 Adventist congregations with about 50,000 believers who had separated from their former churches.

Adventist numbers apparently did not grow, for the first attempt at

an Adventist census, made by Daniel T. Taylor in 1860 and published in the Crisis, also lists about 50,000. The reason for no growth? After 1844, Adventists “no longer were making an impact beyond their own ranks. Their influence was limited to their own numbers.”<sup>41</sup> This dead condition was due in no small part to the “shut door” ideas embraced by many, especially the Sabbatarians.

The following is a compilation based upon Taylor’s report<sup>41</sup>:

Total Adventists in U.S. and Canada: 50,000

Adventist Ministers by State:

New Hampshire 61 Canada West 22  
New York 58 Wisconsin 20  
Massachusetts 56 Rhode Island 18  
Maine 47 Canada East 17  
Vermont 45 Minnesota 8  
Pennsylvania 41 Unknown areas 7  
Illinois 38 New Jersey 5  
Michigan 33 Nova Scotia 3  
Connecticut 28 Missouri 1  
Ohio 27 Kentucky 1  
Indiana 25 Arkansas 1  
Iowa 22 TOTAL: 584

NOTE: The total may include some Seventh Day Baptists. Of the total of 584 ministers, 57 were Sabbath-keepers.

### **Doctrines of Ministers**

On the subject of the Second Advent doctrine:

(1) 251 held to the view of the pre-millennial Advent and personal reign of Christ (of these, 57, viz., the Sabbatarians, held that the 1,000-year reign of Christ will be in heaven).

(2) 102 held to the pre-millennial advent and personal reign and the English Literalist or “Age to Come” viewpoint.

(3)27 were anti-millennialists, claiming the 1,000 years to be in the past, but believing in the eternal personal reign of Christ on the earth.

As for the “Lord’s Supper,” it was generally observed once a month. Some kept it less often, and others neglected it altogether.

### **Circulation of Periodicals**

*World’s Crisis* (Advent Christian)\*2,900

*Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*

(Seventh Day Adventist)2,300

*Advent Shield* (Millerite)\*\*2,100

*Prophetic Expositor and Bible*

*Advocate* (Marsh)\*\*1,500

*Bible Examiner* (Storrs)\*\*1,000

*Herald of the Kingdom and*

*Age to Come* (Thomas)850

*Gospel Banner and Millennial*

*Advent* (Wilson)?

\* By 1864, *Crisis* circulation had grown to 7,000

\*\* Estimated

### **Relation of Adventist Groups to Church of God (7th Day)**

It is interesting to find that many important ideas found among first-day Adventists were later adopted by the Church of God (Seventh Day). These ideas were utterly foreign to Seventh-Day Adventists. The only logical conclusion is that there is an historical connection between Adventist groups, especially “Age to Come” people, and the Seventh Day Church of God.

On May 21, 1907, the *Bible Advocate*, published in Stanberry, Missouri, advertised the Twelfth Annual Conference of the Churches of God in Christ Jesus, to be held at Waterloo, Iowa, on August 17-25. The article states that the annual meeting has been advertised in previous issues of the *Advocate*, and that although the Waterloo Churches of God did not observe the Sabbath, they were “believers of the other points of

our faith.” A 1908 issue of the Advocate maintained:

“These people hold the same faith and doctrines as we do with the exception of their rejection of the Sabbath.”

Again, in 1928, in referring to the “Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith,” the Advocate stated that their “faith we heartily endorse.”<sup>41</sup>

Historical records thus lead inescapably to the conclusion that the Seventh Day Church of God originally had a close relationship with the “Age to Come” party. The name “Church of God” was retained by both groups, along with a fairly accurate doctrine of the millennium. However, the “Age to Come” party refused to accept the Sabbath.

### **Eight Important Ideas — “The Things That Remain”**

The Adventist movement generated eight key ideas or doctrines which have been passed down to the modern Seventh Day Church of God. These key doctrines distinguish this church from others.

**(1) The Name, “Church of God”.** Marsh’s 1845 statements about the Scriptural name “Church of God” are almost a carbon copy of beliefs held by the Seventh Day Church of God today. In tracing the history of the Seventh Day Church of God, Dugger attempted to show a connection with Sabbatarian opposers of the name Seventh-Day Adventist and the Hope of Israel party. These ties need to be further demonstrated. The Hope party was certainly known for its anti-Ellen G. White stance rather than its holding out for the name, “Church of God.” It is possible that the Hope party was later joined by a few “Age to Come” people holding to the name “Church of God.” The idea that there is a true church and that it must be called the Church of God was evident in Marsh’s 1845 statements.

**(2) The Sabbath Question — Law of God.** Which laws of God are binding on Christians today? Certainly the Sabbath issue was agitated in every Adventist paper, including Marsh’s Crisis, and the Advent Herald.

The “shut door” idea, belief in the “divine visions of Ellen G. White,” holding to a Sunday resurrection (based upon an E.G. White vision), spending the millennium in heaven, and later, rejecting all meats and dairy products: these Seventh-Day Adventist ideas turned many away from the Sabbath. But for many first-day Adventists, the biggest

detriment to accept the Sabbath was the inconsistency of those Sabbath-keepers who accepted the Sabbath but rejected Passover and the Holy Days.

The Sabbath issue never died out but continued to be raised, and publications either refuted or supported Sabbath-keeping. The Restitution Herald, the official paper of the Church of God (Oregon, Illinois), continued from time to time to bring up the issue of Sabbath-keeping, and refute it.

It is noteworthy that the question of observing Passover and the Holy Days is inherent in the Sabbath issue. All who examine the Bible evidence on the pro and con of the Sabbath issue come face to face with Passover and the Holy Days. James White addressed this problem, in the first issue of the Present Truth in 1849, in which he upheld the Sabbath, but rejected the Feast Days. And today, every branch paper of the Seventh Day Church of God publishes articles to refute the Holy Days, although in some Advocates of the 1920's, pro-Holy Day articles such as the one by G.G. Rupert were allowed to be printed.

The Holy Day question, which originated in the controversy over Sabbath-keeping, is a continuing issue in the Seventh Day Church of God.

**(3) Conditionalism — Heaven and Hell.** What is the nature of man? Does he have an immortal soul?

William Miller and the original Millerites believed in the immortality of the soul, an ever-burning hell and going to heaven. But, beginning with Storrs, the idea of conditionalism came to dominate Adventism. Thus, belief in soul sleeping, immortal life only through Christ, and the annihilation of the wicked came to be held by many. The millennial issue also arose with conditionalism. Seventh-Day Adventists take the view that the millennium will be spent in heaven; but the "Age to Come" view and the Seventh Day Church of God teaching is that it will be on earth.

Conditionalism led to divisiveness in the Adventist movement. The Advent Christians, formed a separate church mainly because of the issue of the nature of man. Because they kept Sunday, they were alienated from Seventh-Day Adventists, and believed man is naturally mortal, so they were alienated from Evangelical Adventists. It is interesting to note that Alexander F. Dugger Sr., later editor of the Bible Advocate and

father of Andrew F. Dugger Sr., was an **Advent Christian** minister in Simpson, Iowa, in 1867-68. He later came to accept the Sabbath.

**(4) The “Age to Come” — Gospel of the Kingdom of God.** More understanding needs to be gained of the “Age to Come” ideas of Marsh and of the Seventh Day Church of God, past and present. The predominant teaching of the Seventh Day Church of God today is that the millennium will be on the earth, that the saints will reign with Christ over physical people, that Israel will be the most prominent nation, and that the wicked will be resurrected and destroyed sometime after the millennium. Radically different from Seventh-Day Adventist theories, the “Age to Come” doctrine continues to be a prominent part of the Seventh Day Church of God message, and is close to a true understanding of the Kingdom of God.

Inherent in the “Age to Come” issue is whether or not there will be a probationary period for those who have not had a chance to accept or reject Christ, and if so, when. Although differing opinions exist among Seventh Day Church of God congregations today, the idea of a so-called “second chance” is generally rejected, but an explanation is lacking to explain how the vast millions will have their “first chance.”

**(5) Regathering and Identity of Israel — The Second Exodus.** An accessory to the “Age to Come” doctrine, but important enough to be listed separately, is the issue of the return of Israel in conjunction with the Advent of Christ. William Miller claimed that Scriptures foretelling the return of Israel applied only to the church, “spiritual Israel.” Seventh-Day Adventists accepted this view. But Literalists, “Age to Comers,” and the Seventh Day Church of God believe the prophecies about the regathering of Israel apply to literal, physical Israelites. Modern-day Israelites will repent, they say, and the Israeli nation will be set up immediately preceding Christ’s return and will be the model nation in the “Age to Come.”

But where are these physical Israelites? R.V. Lyon knew that Israel and Judah were separate, but apparently he did not understand the location of modern-day Israel. The “British-Israel” idea is inherent in the doctrine of the return of Israel.

Most modern Seventh Day Church of God members believe all Israelites are Jews. Although Frank Walker and the late Roy Davison disagreed with this, the majority of the Seventh Day Church of God

teaches that the emigration of Jews to Israel is a fulfillment of the prophecies of the regathering of Israel.

Another inherent issue is the understanding of major prophecies relating to the events preceding the return of Christ. Seventh-Day Adventists maintain that the two-horned beast of **Revelation 13** is the United States, which will turn into a power persecuting Sabbath-keepers. They preach a “Third Angel’s Message.” Early in the Seventh Day Church of God, A.C. Long published a tract on the “Two Horned Beast” refuting the Seventh-Day Adventists and stating that the two-horned beast is the papal power, which is also the false prophet.

As for the Battle of Armageddon, the Seventh Day Church of God today believes the United States will fight with the Jews against the Russian and Asian hordes. (Walker says the battle is Israel versus Gentiles, since he believes the United States is Ephraim.) Again the Seventh Day Church of God prophetic views are markedly different than those of Seventh-Day Adventists. What did the Seventh Day Church of God formerly believe about this prophecy?

**(6) Church Government.** As Marsh was vehement against strong central church government, so is the Seventh Day Church of God. Field’s lament to Marsh in 1857 that every Church of God minister was independent and repudiated church government could very well describe almost the entire history of the Seventh Day Church of God. Independence, lack of real unity, and distaste of strong church government have characterized its history. And where there has been some “strong” organization, it has been something like a 12-7-70 scheme with diluted authority.

The “Age to Come” Church of God only reluctantly organized finally in 1921. The local conference system was the most that could be gained in the way of stronger unity. Seventh Day Baptists had the same problem; their General Conference could only suggest, and only church at the South Fork of the Hughes River seemed to be governed from the top down by the elders.

The issue of church authority and government is another legacy handed down to the Seventh Day Church of God from the Adventist movement.

**(7) Soon Return of Messiah.** The Seventh Day Church of God teaches that the Second Advent of the Messiah is near. Prophetic signs



point to the fulfillment of God’s plan in the present generation. This idea began to be popular in the 1830’s with William Miller, and has never died out among Adventists. All major Sabbath-keeping groups today, Seventh-Day Adventists, Worldwide Church of God, Church of God (Seventh Day), Sacred Name, etc., are Adventist to the core. They believe the Messiah will return soon.

**(8) Coming Out of Babylon.** Charles Fitch’s famous 1843 sermon “Come Out of Her, My People!” created a clear line between those who believed in the return of Christ to rule the earth, and those who spiritualized away the Kingdom of God. The idea that Catholics *and* Protestants are part of Babylon, and that we must separate ourselves from false teachers, was a key theme of the Adventist Movement and is a theme of the Church of God today.

These eight doctrines held by the Seventh Day Church of God all have their roots in the Adventist movement. Correlation is not necessarily causation, nor proof of direct connection. But the similarity between the beliefs of Seventh Day Church of God and the Adventist movement, especially “Age to Come” Adventists, is striking, to say the least. Until the 1920’s, the official name of the body now known as Church of God (Seventh Day) was “Church of God (Adventist).” It was aptly descriptive.Ω

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