

Jones, Alonzo Trévier (1850–1923)

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Alonzo Trévier Jones was an evangelist, church administrator, prolific author and editor, and religious liberty advocate.

Early Life (1850–1874)

Alonzo Trévier Jones was born in Rockhill, Ohio on April 26, 1850.¹ Few details are known of his childhood. On November 2, 1870, at the age of 20, Jones enlisted as a private in the United States Army and left Ohio to serve in the Southwest. After about two years, he was stationed in the Northwest at Fort Vancouver with the 21st Infantry. Then in January 1873, Jones's company was transferred to Tule Lake, California as a reinforcement unit to assist in putting down a resistance group of 50 Modoc Indians who refused to comply with the government's policy of forcing Indian tribes into reservations.² Jones's company then marched across eastern Oregon to their new station at Fort Walla Walla, Washington.

As Jones settled in on his military post at Fort Walla Walla, the Seventh-day Adventist Church was sending its first minister to work in the Pacific Northwest, and the first assignment was to conduct tent meetings in the town of Walla Walla. The missionaries chosen for the work were Isaac Van Horn and his wife, Adelia. Van Horn was himself a convert of Adventist pioneer Joseph Bates (1792–1872), and he pitched his 60-foot tent in Walla Walla



Alonzo Trévier Jones.

Photo courtesy of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Archives.

in the spring of 1874.³

In those days, Adventists in the Washington Territory were few in number and miles apart, making denominational growth difficult and slow. Adelia soon wrote to Ellen and James White to describe the bleak situation and the overall lack of believers who could throw themselves into the ministry and build up the work. She expressed an earnest desire to find someone in that area who could “make a stir.”⁴ She did not yet know that in that very area was a young soldier, A. T. Jones, who was spending his free time in the garrison feeding his voracious appetite for reading and studying and would soon display a remarkable gift for “making a stir.”

Jones ventured out from the garrison and attended Van Horn’s lectures. After devouring all the Adventist literature he had access to, Jones enthusiastically embraced the teachings and committed himself to a new life.⁵ On August 8, 1874, while still enlisted in the United States Army, Jones was baptized. A report in the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* described the events of that day. After the Sabbath service, a group “went to the water side; a hymn was sung and a prayer offered.” After several baptisms, “a young man, a soldier from the garrison,” stepped forward. “For weeks he has been earnestly seeking the Lord, and a few days since received bright evidence of sins forgiven. After being buried with Christ he arose exclaiming with upraised hands, ‘Dead to the world, and alive to thee, O my God!’”⁶

Career and Ministry (1875–1885)

Following his baptism, Jones continued his studies and became increasingly interested in history and the prophecies of the Bible. By July 1875, members of the growing Seventh-day Adventist Church in Walla Walla petitioned the General Conference to recognize Jones officially as an Adventist preacher. A month later, on August 26, the *Review and Herald* acknowledged the young man’s evident talent and his promising future as one who “came out clear and decided on the truth about one year ago. Having but little duty to do as a soldier, he has employed the greater portion of his time in study, with the idea that as soon as he was released from the army he would immediately enter into the service of the Lord by preaching the truth. He has already preached a number of times to the entire satisfaction of those who heard him.”⁷

Jones was finally discharged from the United States Army in November 1875, five years after enlisting. With his military responsibilities behind him, he threw himself into full-time ministry at age 25. His responsibilities throughout the following two years were primarily in assisting Van Horn’s evangelistic work and in conducting his own meetings throughout the Pacific Northwest. In September 1876, Jones ventured out solo and held his first evangelistic meetings in Eola, Oregon, which resulted in a newly founded church of eight members. He continued on to Oak Grove, then concluded a series of fifty lectures in Jefferson, Oregon on February 12, 1877, which resulted in fifteen new believers.⁸

Just a year before his ordination, at the age of 27, Jones married Adelia Van Horn’s sister, Frances E. Patten, on April 15, 1877. Frances gave birth to their first daughter, Laneta, in 1883, and their second daughter, Desi, in

1887. Laneta was born with a mental disability, and the pressure of constant care would eventually wear heavy on the couple. Jones's constant travel schedule kept him away from home for extended periods of time and caused tension in their marriage. It took years, and some prodding from Ellen White and other colleagues, before Jones came to terms with his struggling home life. In the early 1900s, he finally acted on it and made things right with his wife.⁹

Van Horn and Jones saw the fruit of their labors when the General Conference, in October 1877, organized the five churches and 200 members within their territory into the North Pacific Conference. Van Horn was elected president with Jones as treasurer.¹⁰ From 1877 through 1879, Jones continued holding evangelistic meetings throughout Oregon, baptizing new members and organizing new churches in places like Beaverton, Damascus, and Eugene City.¹¹ With evident fruit from his ministry, the denomination ordained Jones in 1878.

Soon more leaders in the Adventist movement were beginning to notice Jones's impressive potential. Ellen White's initial encounter with Jones prompted her to write to James White in June and July of 1878 expressing that, in her estimation, if Jones were granted the right opportunities, "he would make a promising young man." She recognized his earnestness and dedication, already establishing himself as a preacher who "calls great congregations and is an acceptable speaker."¹² When Stephen N. Haskell met Jones in 1879, he wrote to James White, "Bro. Jones is a splendid man. Think he will make a stir. Give him a country and he will cut his own fodder."¹³

But the sheer size of the North Pacific Conference was too much for Van Horn's leadership. Due to the vastness of the territory and the long distances between the believers, members of the Upper Country were left without spiritual nurture and supervision. There was a desire for a more manageable arrangement, splitting the existing conference into two different conferences. On May 25, 1880, at a meeting in Milton, Oregon, delegates voted to divide the North Pacific Conference into two conferences, using the Cascade Mountains as the dividing line to create the Upper Columbia Conference.¹⁴ The newly established Upper Columbia Conference began with 119 members in four churches.¹⁵ Jones was elected secretary, with George Colcord as president.

As early as 1877, Jones had expressed his desire to leave the Northwest and avail himself of a broader education. But this desire could not be granted. Then in 1880, Jones again missed out on an opportunity to leave the Northwest, due to the area's need for his contribution. By 1884, after a decade of committed service in the Northwest, Jones once again pressed his desire to be relocated in pursuit of new challenges and opportunities in the work. At a camp meeting in Portland on June 30, 1884, delegates recommended that Jones be transferred to "labor in California under the direction of that Conference." He had served his time in the Northwest, and his "privileges of associating with those who were experienced in the work had been very limited."¹⁶ Now Jones was off to California to begin a new phase in his ministry.

Having already contributed several articles to the *Review and Herald* on the subjects of prophecy and religious liberty, Jones caught the eye of Joseph H. Waggoner, editor of *Signs of the Times* and *The American Sentinel*.

Before long, Jones began working at the Pacific Press Publishing Association in Oakland, California as associate editor, along with his new friend, E. J. Waggoner (son of J. H. Waggoner).¹⁷ On May 6, 1886, the *Signs of the Times* announced that Jones and Waggoner were elected editors, with Joseph H. Waggoner taking a lesser role and allowing the young men to rise as leaders.¹⁸

Along with his new responsibilities as co-editor with E. J. Waggoner, Jones had also continued to delve deeper into his research in history and prophecy, especially with the added role of teacher, beginning in the fall of 1885, at nearby Healdsburg College.¹⁹

Ten Horns Controversy

Since the early days leading up to his conversion, Jones had exemplified a voracious appetite for reading and studying—a passion he nurtured throughout his entire ministry. When asked about his approach to historical research and writing, he insisted on the necessity of students checking the evidence for themselves. “You are not proper students until you have done all that yourself. . . . You must know that for yourself, or you will not know the philosophy of it for yourself, and you can not make it plain to other people.”²⁰ This refusal to be satisfied with superficial knowledge left an impression on those who observed his ministry. By 1884, his reputation as a student of history and prophecy had persuaded the delegates of the 1884 General Conference to commission him to produce “a series of articles,” based on historical research, that would substantiate the fulfillment of Bible prophecies. He was instructed to gather “quotations from history” so that the brethren could have access to “the words of the history itself.”²¹

Barely a year into his research project, Jones’s historical studies of the tens horns of Daniel 7 led him to a different conclusion from that held by Uriah Smith (1832–1903). Smith was the church’s senior authority on prophetic interpretation, editor of the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, and author of the book, *Daniel and Revelation*. From what Jones could gather from his sources, Smith’s inclusion of the Huns as one of the ten kingdoms was incorrect. Instead, the Allemanni were a better fit with the prophecy.

Reaching out for feedback, Jones wrote to Smith in May 1885 to initiate dialogue and to share his difficulties with the conclusions in Smith’s *Daniel and Revelation*. He assured Smith, “I have tried my best to bring about an agreement, but with no authorities that I have, can I make it fit. . . . I don’t want to disagree with you on them if it can be prevented. . . . If you have evidence on this to which I have no access, please let me have the benefit of it.”²² Jones added a postscript at the end of his letter stating his conviction: “We shall have to defend every single point of our position, and I believe we must have every point unquestionably fixed, and that everyone must know as far as possible just how, and why each point is so historically as well as scripturally.”²³

When Smith failed to respond, Jones printed his research in the *Signs of the Times* journal, igniting a debate between the two men. From Smith’s perspective, it was dangerous for the church’s preachers to follow Jones in adopting an interpretation different from that which they had presented “for the past forty years,” because the

church would lose credibility as “thousands would notice the change” and conclude that the church was wrong on all points.²⁴ The resultant confusion, argued Smith, would be devastating.

Rather than worrying about the potential confusion resulting from a different view of the ten horns, Jones saw the real danger in ignoring glaring contradictions and neglecting to establish prophetic claims on substantial evidence. This, argued Jones, would have devastating consequences when the church’s positions were subjected to the scrutiny of scholars and skeptics. In that case, the denomination would have to “present some better reason for our faith than that ‘it has been preached for forty years.’”²⁵ For Jones, mere tradition would not suffice.

To reassure Smith of his sincere intentions, Jones promised that if Smith could support his conclusions with clear historical sources, then Jones would change his own position and publish Smith’s view. Not only had Jones presented “the unanimous testimony of the best historical authorities,” but he also remarked that A. G. Daniells (1858–1935), who would later become president of the General Conference, and Professor Sidney Brownsberger (1845–1930), who was president of Battle Creek College and would later become president of Healdsburg College, both agreed with Jones’s position on the ten horns. Far from being on a fault-finding mission against Uriah Smith’s *Daniel and Revelation*, Jones added in his letter that it was a “grand book,” “a noble work,” and that with a few corrections, it should be “spread over all the world.”²⁶

On December 27, 1886, Jones wrote again, reiterating that “from the first I have asked you repeatedly for any references, or any evidences to the contrary, and as yet not a word have I received from you on this point.”²⁷ Jones pleaded with Smith that if he had evidence to support his view to “please send it to me and I promise you that I will put it in the *Signs* as soon as I can do it, and with it I will put a retraction of what I have printed. . . . Nothing would please me more than to have it printed in the *Signs*.”²⁸

In the absence of an amicable resolution, the point over the ten horns created a rift between the two men and would soon lead to further controversy in the lead-up to the 1888 General Conference in Minneapolis.

Righteousness by Faith

Around the same time that Jones was challenging the traditional position on the ten horns of Daniel 7, a far more significant theological subject would soon add to the tensions between Jones and the General Conference leaders, represented by Uriah Smith and G. I. Butler (1834–1918), president of the General Conference.

Along with his colleague, E. J. Waggoner, Jones had embarked on an in-depth study of righteousness by faith at a time when, as Ellen White put it, “many had lost sight of Jesus” and had settled for a lifeless religious experience.

²⁹ Ellen White lamented:

The commandments of God have been proclaimed, but the faith of Jesus Christ has not been proclaimed by Seventh-day Adventists as of equal importance, the law and the gospel going hand in hand. . . .

“The faith of Jesus.” It is talked of, but not understood.”⁸⁰

It is in this context that Jones and Waggoner immersed themselves in the message of the gospel and brought new life into Adventism. As editors of *Signs of the Times*, they used their position to emphasize to their readers the importance of accepting Christ and His righteousness as the central focus of the Adventist message. Beginning with Waggoner’s articles in *Signs of the Times* during the summer of 1884, the two men began a mission that would rattle the denomination, inspiring it theologically and experientially.

Controversy over Jones and Waggoner’s emphasis on the subject of the gospel began with Waggoner’s teachings that the law in Galatians 3, which Paul refers to as “our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ” (Galatians 3:24), was the Ten Commandments. Before 1856, this was the position held by prominent Adventist leaders such as J. N. Andrews, Joseph Bates, and James White. But in reaction to Protestants who were using Paul’s statements in Galatians to undermine the importance of the Ten Commandments, it became standard among the denomination’s evangelists and writers over the next three decades to interpret the “schoolmaster” to mean the ceremonial and not the moral law.

Publications under Jones’s and Waggoner’s editorship made some church leaders uncomfortable and aroused opposition, particularly from G. I. Butler and Uriah Smith, who held that the law in Galatians was the ceremonial law, not the Ten Commandments. The older brethren warned that Jones and Waggoner’s teachings undermined the importance of the law of God, including the Sabbath. In his articles, Waggoner maintained that far from undermining the importance of the Ten Commandments, his teachings on the law in Galatians actually emphasized “how thoroughly the majesty of the law is vindicated throughout, and its perpetuity shown, and also how beautiful is the harmony between the law and the gospel.”⁸¹

Provoked by the reintroduction of views contrary to that of some church leaders, G. I. Butler wrote to Ellen White to complain about Jones and Waggoner’s audacity in publishing and teaching these views at Healdsburg College. Ellen White then wrote to Jones and Waggoner, counseling them to refrain from publishing controversial views that were causing division and opposition with Smith, Butler, and the *Review and Herald*. Because they never received that letter, they continued to print their views. Unsatisfied with Ellen White’s approach in not explicitly condemning Waggoner’s views, and intent on countering their influence in the church, Butler prepared an 85-page pamphlet titled *The Law in the Book of Galatians: Is It the Moral Law, or Does It Refer to that System of Laws Particularly Jewish?* and arranged to have it distributed to the delegates at the upcoming General Conference of 1886. It was an attempt to undermine the teachings of Jones and Waggoner. Butler also took advantage of the gathering to propose resolutions that would prohibit the publications of any views not accepted by the leadership.

In early 1887, Ellen White wrote Jones and Waggoner again, not to criticize their beliefs but to caution them about publishing divisive views in the *Signs of the Times* and to urge them to be humble and meek about disagreements. Both Jones and Waggoner replied to Ellen White, thanking her for the rebuke and expressing regret for any division caused by their publications and teachings. Meanwhile, Ellen White also wrote to Butler and Smith to make clear to them that they were not to assume that their “ideas are all correct and Dr. Waggoner’s and Elder Jones’s are all wrong.”³² In fact, Ellen White would later write to Butler to confront him about his conduct during the 1886 General Conference in which he opposed the work of Jones and Waggoner.³³

In defense of Jones and Waggoner, Ellen White asked, “Shall we regard them lightly because they may differ with us, honestly and conscientiously, upon the interpretation of some points of Scripture? Are we infallible?” She went on to expose the “inexcusable” mistreatment of Jones and Waggoner by the very leaders who, instead of being closed-minded, should have exemplified a Christ-like spirit.³⁴

But the hostility that surfaced at the 1886 General Conference was a mere foretaste of the controversy that would erupt at the 1888 General Conference in Minneapolis. Debates over the gospel and the law—and their relation to the Adventist message—would take the church by storm, and Jones, along with Waggoner, would find himself right in the middle of it.

Minneapolis, 1888

Jones and Waggoner could not have imagined the resistance that awaited them at the Minneapolis General Conference in October of 1888. Prior to the official commencement, a week-long meeting, called the Ministerial Institute, began on October 10 to discuss church-related issues and urgent theological questions, including the issue of the ten horns of Daniel 7 and the law in Galatians. Regarding the subject of the ten horns, not only was Jones up against the authority of Uriah Smith, but he was also facing stern opposition from G. I. Butler, who made it clear that Jones was violating “the long established faith of our people taken forty years ago.” Frustrated at Jones’s interpretation, Butler concluded that “this thing needs to be publicly rebuked.”³⁵

In his series of lectures on the ten horns Jones suggested that the traditional view that the Huns were one of the ten kingdoms be corrected to harmonize with the historical evidence. Uriah Smith countered this and insisted that the denomination should uphold the traditional view that had been customary for the past forty years. He also claimed that to suggest otherwise would be to destroy the foundations with “ruthless hands.” The two went back and forth without any final resolution, and it was decided to leave the subject open for further study in the near future. Eventually, Jones’s position became widely accepted in the denomination.

After the week-long Ministerial Institute had concluded, the General Conference session began on Wednesday, October 17, at 9:00 a.m. There were roughly 500 attendees, 96 of those being delegates representing 27,000 members of a growing global movement.³⁶

Throughout the conference, both Jones and Waggoner gave presentations on righteousness by faith, which became the focus of attention. Emphasizing the “faith of Jesus,” they presented the love of God and the righteousness of Jesus as the central theme of the Word of God and the Adventist message. Ellen White later described her overall impression:

The Lord in His great mercy sent a most precious message to His people through Elders Waggoner and Jones. . . . Many had lost sight of Jesus. They needed to have their eyes directed to His divine person, His merits, and His changeless love for the human family. . . . This is the message that God commanded to be given to the world. It is the third angel’s message, which is to be proclaimed with a loud voice, and attended with the outpouring of His Spirit in a large measure.³⁷

Contrary to the opposition’s claims, Ellen White did not see any contradiction between the message of Jones and Waggoner and the Adventist message. In reference to their teachings she wrote:

There was evidence and there was reasoning from the word that commended itself to the conscience; but the minds of men were fixed, sealed against the entrance of light, because they had decided it was a dangerous error removing the “old landmarks” when it was not moving a peg of the old landmarks, but they had perverted ideas of what constituted the old landmarks. . . . All this cry about changing the old landmarks is all imaginary.³⁸

Though she was initially hesitant to fully agree with all of their interpretations, she did see the “beauty of truth” in that message. Several years later she would go on record stating that the law in Galatians is referring to “both the ceremonial and the moral code of ten commandments,” but that the apostle Paul was “speaking especially of the moral law.”³⁹

The General Conference in Minneapolis concluded on November 4, 1888. There was a mixed reaction to the conference, but, generally speaking, the leadership of the denomination resisted the message that was proclaimed by Jones and Waggoner. A. G. Daniells, who would become the longest serving president of the General Conference in the denomination’s history, maintained that “the message has never been received, nor proclaimed, nor given free course as it should have been. . . .The division and conflict which arose among the leaders because of the opposition to the message of righteousness in Christ, produced a very unfavorable reaction. The rank and file of the people were confused, and did not know what to do.”⁴⁰ Ellen White would add that it was “one of the saddest chapters in the history” of the movement.⁴¹ Jones internalized much of the opposition he faced at that conference, and the experience remained a sour memory well into his final years with the denomination.

Religious Liberty

From the late 1880s to the early 1900s, Jones distinguished himself as the most active Seventh-day Adventist in the advocacy of religious liberty. His denominational service in this field included his role as co-editor of the

church's religious liberty journal *American Sentinel* (1887–1897), president of the National Religious Liberty Association (1889), and head of the church's religious liberty department (1901). He was a force to be reckoned with for those who were attempting to Christianize America by merging religion and government. Operating from the premise that the gospel implies liberty of conscience, Jones applied Adventist eschatology to the legislative developments of his day—namely, the push for Sunday laws and the Christianizing of the public school system. Along with many Adventists, Jones believed that the world was witnessing events foretold in the prophecies of Revelation.

In June of 1882, while attending the Upper Columbia Conference camp meeting in Washington, Jones had his first recorded encounter with a Sunday law when a fellow Adventist was fined for the violation of working on Sunday.⁴² Other cases emerged in Arkansas and Tennessee, where more Seventh-day Adventists were arrested for working on Sundays. Even more troubling than the state-level legislation of Sunday laws was the major push for a national Sunday law. Since the 1860s, the National Reform Association (NRA) had orchestrated this national agenda, which advocated for a distinctively Christian America. Though primarily run by representatives from a wide range of Protestant denominations, the NRA also garnered the support of the Catholic Church, whose leading spokesperson in America—Cardinal James Gibbons of Baltimore—also joined the campaign to Christianize America by supporting Sunday-law legislation.

In early 1888, Senator Henry W. Blair, Republican from New Hampshire and chairman of the Senate Committee on Education and Labor, proposed a bill to “secure to the people the enjoyment of the first day of the week, commonly known as the Lord’s day, as a day of rest, and to promote its observance as a day of religious worship.” Jones was elected as a representative of the church to appear before the Fiftieth United States Congress to testify against the Blair Sunday law bill. On December 13, along with a few other dissenting voices, Jones made his case before the committee.

Continuing his zealous efforts, Jones embarked on a speaking tour through major cities to lecture on religious liberty. In addition to his visit to Congress for the Blair Sunday law bill of 1888, Jones also spoke before the Senate Committee on Education and Labor to testify against a proposal to amend the Constitution to Christianize the public school system (1889); and before the House Committee for the District of Columbia to testify against the Breckenridge Bill (1890), which proposed a Sunday law in Washington, D.C.

But it was the congressional developments during 1892 that particularly alarmed Jones and raised his dissent to an urgent pitch. In February of that year, associate justice of the Supreme Court David J. Brewer (1837–1910), in the verdict for the case *Church of the Holy Trinity v. United States*, summarized America’s long-established religious heritage, with its customs and traditions that included “the laws respecting the observance of the Sabbath with the general cessation of all secular business, and the closing of courts, legislatures, and other similar public assemblies on that day.” Brewer then famously declared that Americans are “a religious people” and that America “is a Christian nation.”⁴³

According to Jones, the issue further intensified during the debates over a Sunday law at the World's Columbian Exposition (Chicago World's Fair) that began in May of 1893 and attracted more than 20 million attendees from around the world. On August 6, 1892, the American Sabbath Union, which was a close ally of the NRA, celebrated the fact that President Benjamin Harrison, under pressure from various churches demanding a closure on Sundays, signed a bill that essentially "fixed in the law of the realm a provision that the gates of the Fair should be closed Sunday."⁴⁴

To argue against the Supreme Court's declaration of America as a "Christian nation" and the congressional decisions to observe Sunday during the Chicago World's Fair, Jones wrote *Appeal from the U.S. Supreme Court Decision Making this "A Christian Nation"* (1893). "What, then, is this," he pressed, "but the legal establishment of the very likeness of the papacy, and that by the supreme judicial authority of the national government?"⁴⁵ Now that the "image" of the beast was set up, Jones believed that the world would yet witness the time when the image would be "given life":

What more could be done to make the likeness of the papacy, in the *principle* of the thing? In *principle*, we say, not in its positive workings, for *life* is not by this given to it that it should speak and act (Revelation 13:15); but so far as the *making* of the evil thing, and the establishment of the principle of it, the thing is done.⁴⁶

During the General Conference Session of 1893, Jones reiterated his view that the "image to the beast" in Revelation 13 was already put in place by Congress adopting unconstitutional measures for government support of religion. Times had changed and now "it would be of no use for us to protest against Congress doing a thing which was already done."⁴⁷ The act of capitulating to the pressures of religious entities had now "put the government of the United States into the hands of the churches." Far from rendering the church inactive, it was now time for the church to trumpet the loud cry: "We are in the loud cry. Oh, then let that loud voice be heard."⁴⁸

Later in 1905, Jones was selected by the General Conference as one of forty delegates to visit the White House and present President Roosevelt with a statement of the church's position regarding "the American idea of civil government," emphasizing the Adventist belief in "religious liberty and in the total separation of church and state."⁴⁹ Several newspapers reported this visit. Even after his departure from denominational affiliation, Jones partnered with Adventist leaders in 1909 and 1910 to testify regarding religious liberty.

On certain issues related to the separation of church and state, Jones had a tendency to take his views too far, sparking disagreements with other church workers. When the denomination considered accepting a donation of twelve thousand acres of land from Cecil Rhodes's British South Africa Company, Jones denounced the plan as inconsistent with the church's position on separation of church and state. Writing in the *Sentinel* with his co-editor, C. P. Bollman, Jones insisted that accepting such a gift would be tantamount to an "imperialist land grab." He eventually dropped the issue after Ellen White counseled the church to accept the donation, but that case would forecast subsequent debates within Adventism over acceptance of government aid for schools and hospitals.⁵⁰

In addition to his religious liberty work, another example of Jones's political advocacy was his eloquent anti-imperialist dissent during the Filipino-American War (1899–1902). With the denomination's official journals as his platform, Jones produced a series of articles that invoked the Adventist view of prophecy to protest against the U.S. government's imperialistic policies in the forceful annexation of the Philippines. At a time when mainstream Protestant churches were rallying America for war, Jones declared it a "national apostasy" and denounced the nation's aggressive foreign policy in subjugating the Filipinos under American rule.⁵¹

Later Ministry and Falling Out (1889–1909)

For three years following the 1888 General Conference, Jones, along with Waggoner, travelled with Ellen White on preaching tours throughout the nation to present the message of righteousness by faith. In Massachusetts Jones's preaching, as Ellen White put it, was delivering "soul-nourishing food," so much so that even ministers saw the gospel in a light they had not known.⁵² In Illinois the people received "an education in faith as they had never had before" as they learned "that it was true religion to depend entirely upon Christ's righteousness, and not upon works of merit." Ellen White was so impressed with Jones's ministry that she declared that to deny him access to the people would amount to "robbing the churches" of the beautiful message he was sharing. Thinking of Jones's evangelistic potential, she pleaded: "Let the outsiders understand that we preach the gospel as well as the law, and they will feast upon these truths, and many will take their stand for the truth."⁵³

After his stellar performance at the 1893 General Conference, Jones made a serious mistake in identifying the writings of a young woman, Anna Phillips Rice, as a manifestation of the prophetic gift. At a revival meeting at the Battle Creek Tabernacle on December 30, 1893, Jones read from one of her written testimonies before an audience, thus revealing his endorsement. W. W. Prescott also came to the conclusion that Anna Rice had the prophetic gift, and both men took part in promoting her revelations. Jones then repented of his error and made earnest efforts to set things right by openly and widely confessing that he was wrong. Prescott also acknowledged his own error. Such a blatant lack of judgment on Jones's part played into the hands of his critics, who took the occasion to discredit his leadership qualifications. Ellen White, on the other hand, saw the whole debacle as an opportunity for the men to learn and grow. Optimistic that they would become better men, she wrote: "I have more confidence in them today than I have had in the past."⁵⁴

Throughout the remainder of the 1890s, Jones served the church in various capacities. He was a featured speaker for the General Conference sessions of 1895, 1899, and even 1901, taught at Battle Creek College, and was elected to the General Conference Committee.

One significant development was the transition in the editorship of the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*. Since the early 1890s Uriah Smith's editorial approach at the *Review* was criticized for lacking originality and relevance. Subscriptions were on a trajectory of decline, and it became apparent that boosting circulation would require replacing Smith. On October 5, 1897, the *Review* announced that Jones was voted in as the new editor (with

Smith as associate editor). Readers were assured that “now, instead of speaking to comparatively few of our people in annual gatherings, he will address *all* of them *every week*.” Jones was so successful in bringing new life to the paper that by January of 1898, General Conference president George A. Irwin was celebrating the bolstered subscription list with more than two thousand new readers since Jones had taken over the paper. “The brethren,” wrote Irwin, “are much better pleased with the general tone of the paper.”⁵⁵

But Jones’s zeal for much-needed reform in the church led him to express his convictions in an insensitive and confrontational manner. Leaders became concerned that his argumentative style jeopardized his influence within the church and could potentially discredit the church’s image in the world.⁵⁶ Ellen White pleaded with him: “The influence of your teaching would be tenfold greater if you were careful of your words. . . . Be careful that you do not make the words of the Lord offensive.”⁵⁷ By 1901, Jones was replaced, and Smith became editor once again.

From 1901 to 1903, Jones served as president of the California Conference, where he directed his efforts to reform the educational and medical institutions. His eagerness for improvements made him too intense and difficult for some to work with. During this time Ellen White encouraged him to be patient and tender in his leadership position and pleaded with him to renounce his aggressive and “dictatorial spirit.”⁵⁸

Toward the end of his ministry, Jones emphasized his belief in a radical individualism, which resulted in clashes with the church’s organizational leaders. Initially, his concerns about the need for church organizational reform were expressed in association with other leading voices in Adventism, such as Ellen White and A. G. Daniells. By the time Ellen White returned from Australia in 1901, she was urging the denomination about the urgent need for structural reorganization. She opposed a church structure in which centralized power granted too much control to a few men. Jones believed that White’s remarks about de-centralizing power supported his own views about protecting the freedom of individual members by eliminating positions such as the presidency of the General Conference. Though he sought to address legitimate problems, he would eventually take his convictions about organizational reform to more radical conclusions than White herself.⁵⁹

Jones would later further articulate his radical individualism in his book, *The Divine Right of Individuality in Religion or Religious Liberty Complete* (1908), in which he expounded on his opposition to any church organizational structure that in any way hindered the unlimited autonomy of individual members. He insisted that religious liberty was “man’s exemption from the domination of others, or from restricting circumstances: man’s freedom to make his choices and decide his conduct for himself, spontaneously and voluntarily: in his duty to his Creator, and in the manner of discharging that duty.”⁶⁰ He argued that individual church members should be answerable to God alone, an idea which no doubt would undermine positions of executive authority throughout the denomination.

Invoking the example of the apostles in Acts 4 who resisted the authority of church councils for the sake of preaching what they believed to be true, Jones pointed out that the apostles were willing to take that stand

despite the fact that it would be characterized as “disregard for established order” and “opposition to the organized work of the church.” From such biblical examples, he extrapolated that “the right of individuality in religion, in faith, and in teaching, stands supreme” and that no church authority had “any right to command or call in question any man of even the church’s own membership” concerning what that individual member shall “believe or not believe, or what he shall teach or not teach.” To deny this, he pressed, would be to stifle the advancement of knowledge and hinder progress.⁶¹ Such a radical view simply added, unsurprisingly, to the troubles with the organizational structure of the denomination.⁶²

At the General Conference session of 1903, things began to escalate for the worse between Jones and church leaders. Having fostered sympathy for J. H. Kellogg in the power struggle over jurisdiction of Battle Creek Sanitarium, and being himself a critic of church organizational structures, Jones opposed resolutions that would favor denominational ownership of institutions and the reestablishment of the office of the presidency. By the end of the session, Jones found himself on the losing side of the battle. During this time Ellen White warned him of the rebellious nature of Kellogg’s determination to open the Battle Creek College in defiance of all counsel from herself and the General Conference. In August of 1903, blatantly disregarding the counsel of Ellen White, Jones officially united with Kellogg and became president of Battle Creek College.

Between 1904 and 1906, several efforts were made to draw Jones back from the dangerous course he had embarked on in his alliance with Kellogg and his animosity toward the General Conference leadership. These efforts failed. At the Lake Union Conference session of 1904, Jones was called to account for writings and statements that criticized the church organization and spread doubt about the testimonies of Ellen White. The executive committee concluded that Jones’s allegations were merely “groundless assertions” and unanimously rejected his claims.⁶³ A further warning came when Ellen White wrote to him with a sobering message: “You have apostatized, and it becomes necessary to warn our people not to be influenced by your representations.”⁶⁴

On May 22, 1907, after careful deliberation, the General Conference Committee revoked Jones’s credentials as an ordained minister of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. For two years he carried on in his own autonomous work. Though still a member of the church in regular standing, he was restricted from preaching in conference churches. Hopeful to get through to him, A. G. Daniells made an emotional appeal to him at the 1909 General Conference session, saying, “Come, brother Jones, come.” But Jones would not open up. Ellen White also continued her efforts to woo him back, but to no avail. He was finally disfellowshipped by the Berkeley Adventist Church on August 21, 1909.

Later Life (1909–1923)

Having lost his membership in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Jones would continue his work in publishing material critical of the church’s organizational structure. He also founded, in 1915, a journal called the *American Sentinel of Religious Liberty*, through which he kept alive his insatiable passion for religious liberty advocacy and

the subject of righteousness by faith.

In January of 1923, Jones became seriously ill and would spend the remaining months of his life under medical care. Shortly before his death he confessed to a former student and colleague, "I have never given up the faith of Seventh-day Adventists." He passed away at his residence on May 12, at 6:30 in the morning.⁶⁵

Legacy

A. T. Jones has cemented a formidable legacy, despite his later departure from the organized structure of the Adventist Church. He was a tireless evangelist of the message of righteousness by faith and played an instrumental role--along with E. J. Waggoner and Ellen G. White--in re-focusing the Adventist experience of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century back to the centrality of the everlasting gospel. This was at a time when the church desperately needed it. As a prolific author and editor, his publications, though too numerous to list, include *Review and Herald* articles (1879–1904); *American Sentinel* articles (1886–1900); *Signs of the Times* articles (1877–1905); *The National Sunday Law* (1889); *Religion and the Public Schools* (1889); *Arguments on the Breckinridge Sunday Bill* (1890); *The Two Republics* (1891); *The Great Empires of Prophecy* (1898); *Christian Patriotism* (1900); and *Ecclesiastical Empire* (1901).

From the early days of his conversion and baptism, Jones was a voracious student of history and prophecy and left an excellent example of dedication to painstaking research. This characteristic not only made him an eminent expositor of biblical prophecy, but it also found practical application in his commitment to religious liberty advocacy. In both his ascendancy and his fall, Jones's life and work provide important examples of commitments to emulate and tendencies to avoid.

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