



Hiram Edson

Voices Out of The Silence

Luther Boutelle and Hiram Edson remember October 22, 1844, and the days that followed.

The most poignant voices actually heard the silence; voices that listened for on-rushing divinity and heard only their own breath. Before chatting on about the meaning of 1844, they listened to the quiet—as we should; heard the muffled sounds of grief and loss, as we might well do.

Eventually, the disappointed found their voices. Two of them begin the special section on Surviving the Great Disappointment. The first, Luther Boutelle, later joined the Advent Christian movement, the larger denomination of former Millerites. The second, Hiram Edson, shared an idea—Christ beginning in 1844 a new ministry in the heavenly sanctuary—that helped sustain the smaller, more radical “little flock.” Almost 20 years later, Edson’s group became the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The following excerpts, with brief historical notes, appear in the appendix to *The Disappointed: Millerism and Millenarianism in the Nineteenth Century*. They are reprinted here by permission of the University of Tennessee Press. The volume is edited by Ronald L. Numbers, chair of the History of Medi-

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—The Editors

“Unspeakably Sad . . . On the Wing Again”

Luther Boutelle, a Millerite lecturer from Groton, Massachusetts, later became a leader of the Advent Christian Church, a denomination that emerged from the main body of ex-Millerites. The following account from his autobiography, Sketch of the Life and Religious Experience of Eld. Luther Boutelle (Boston: Advent Christian Publication Society, 1891), pp. 62-72, describes his activities and emotions in 1844.

As we entered upon the year 1844, the interest, instead of decreasing, kept up; and during the summer the number of Camp-meetings, Grovemeetings and Conferences increased, and the work-

ers in the Lord’s vineyard had all that they could do.

In the early part of the summer our attention was directed to the fall as the time for the Lord to come, according to the types in the Old Testament, which began to be studied and preached. By July there was such a concentration of thought among the strong ones on time, that it was called “the midnight cry.” Thus a new impetus was created, and the work of holding meetings and preaching was increased. As we fell, one after another, into the current belief that the fall would witness the coming of our Lord, it became in faith a certainty—we believed it with our

whole souls. Thus the cry, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh!" was, by the "time argument," made to end in the fall of 1844, Jewish time, tenth day of the seventh month, supposed to be Oct. 20, 21, or 22. This brought us to a definite time, and in coming up to it, the works of Adventists demonstrated their faith and honesty, not to be questioned. As they moved on with the point of time before them, all grew more enthusiastic. Crops were left unharvested, their owners expecting never to want what they had raised. Men paid up their debts. Many sold their property to help others to pay their debts, who could not have done it themselves. Beef cattle were slaughtered and distributed among the poor. At no time since "the day of pentecost was fully come" had there been the like—a day when that pentecost was so completely duplicated as in 1844, when Adventism prevailed and reigned.

There was a great stir and talk, in many places, about putting the Millerites under guardianship. But this did not cause any to go back on their faith. They were firm and held fast, believing they should speak and act. Thus they were known by their fruits. There was some fanaticism, but the body of Adventists were sober, honest, a holy people, with strong faith and ready to meet their Lord—to see the King in his beauty. As the time to which all looked drew near, the Bible was studied even more, and a fuller consecration made. There was a harmony that made us a unit at this time, and the representatives of Adventism and the flock were all one.

The Great Disappointment

The *Advent Herald*, the *Midnight Cry*, and other Advent papers, periodicals, pamphlets,

tracts, leaflets, voicing the coming glory, were scattered broadcast and everywhere, like autumn leaves in the forest. Every house was visited by them. They were angels of mercy sent in love for the salvation of men. Everything now began to converge to a point. October was the closing time of probation! the judgment and rewards! A mighty effort through the Spirit and the word preached was made to bring sinners to repentance, and to have the wandering return. All were awake to this great end—salvation. The tenth day of the seventh month drew nigh. With joy all the ready ones anticipated the day. Solemn, however, were the last gatherings. Those of a family who were ready to meet the Lord, expecting an eternal separation from those who were not ready. Husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters separated, and that forever! The leading preachers of Adventism had all endorsed the tenth day of the seventh month as the time when the Lord should be expected. On Oct. 6, Mr. Miller accepted the argument as true, and wrote an endorsement to it.

Geo. Storrs, Sept. 24, 1844, in the *Bible Examiner* said, "I take my pen with feelings such as I never had before. Beyond a doubt in my mind the tenth day of the seventh month will witness the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ from heaven."

The *Voice of Truth*, of Oct. 2, stated that Elders Marsh, Galusha, Peavy and others had endorsed it.

In closing the *Advent Herald* office on the 16th of October, an immense edition of that paper was issued for free distribution in all parts of the land. This was considered the last edition ever to be published.

We now give an extract from Bro. S. Bliss. He wrote, "The time immediately preceding the 22nd of October was one of great calmness

of mind and pleasurable expectation on the part of those who regarded the point of time with interest. There was a nearness of approach to God, and a sacredness of communion with him, to which those who experienced it will ever recur with pleasure. During the last ten days secular business was, for the most part, suspended, and those who looked for the advent gave themselves to the work of preparation for the event as they would for death, were they on a bed of sickness, expecting soon to close their eyes on earthly scenes forever."—*History of the Second Advent Message*.

These quotations harmonize with what I knew to be at the time. Such a concentration of thought, such a oneness of faith was never before witnessed; certainly not in modern times. All that did speak spoke the same things. Solemn, yet joyful. Jesus coming! we to meet him! Meetings everywhere were being held. Confessions made, wrongs righted; sinners inquiring what they should do to be saved. Those who were not with us were mightily effected [sic]. Some were exceedingly frightened with awful forebodings.

But the end of October passed, making unspeakably sad the faithful and longing ones; but causing the unbelieving and wicked to rejoice. All was still. No *Advent Herald*; no meetings as formerly. Everyone felt lonely, with hardly a desire to speak to anyone. Still in the cold world! No deliverance—the Lord not come! No words can express the feelings of disappointment of a true Adventist then. Those only who experienced it can enter into the subject as it was. It was a humiliating thing, and we all felt it alike. All were silent, save to inquire, "Where are we?" and "What next?" All were housed and searching their Bibles to learn what to do. In some few places they soon be-

gan to come together to watch for some development of light, relative to our disappointment.

Not quite content with being housed, after such stirring times, I went to Boston. Found the *Advent Herald* office closed, and all still. I next went to New Bedford. Found the brethren in a confused state. Had a few meetings; comforted those who came as best I could, telling them to hold fast, for I believed there would be a good come out of this matter. Returning from New Bedford to Boston, I found the office of our *Herald* open, and Bro. Bliss there. He said he had hardly been from his house since the time passed. He inquired if there were any meetings being held. I told him there was to be one in the city that evening and that in other places they were coming together to comfort one another. Some fanaticism was seen, but the many were sober watchers for their Lord.

I learned of a company that had

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come together to stay until the Lord came. I felt like visiting them. Accordingly I took a carriage ride to the place. I found about seventy believers in a large house, living there and having meetings daily. They had put all their money in a milk-pan, and when they paid for anything they took the money from the pan. All was common stock. We held a meeting with them and advised them as best we could to keep the faith and separate, and see to their individual interests, and those of their families, which advice they kindly took, and very soon separated, going each to his or her calling.

After a time in looking over the way the Lord had led us, and bearing the reproach in consequence of our failure, we found there was to be a disappointment in the fulfillment of the parable. The words of Jesus were, "While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept." From the first of our experience as Adventists, we believed we were fulfilling the parable by going forth to meet the Lord in our faith and preaching of his coming, but we did not see that the Bridegroom—the Lord—would not come when we expected him. But it was not long after our disappointment before the light began to break in upon us, and we saw there was to be a waiting time, a midnight before the Lord would come. Turning to Rev., tenth chapter, we saw that after the "little book" was eaten, and sweet in the mouth, there was a bitterness to be experienced. Our disappointment was bitter, and it was by eating the word of God, or the little book. Since that time a new inspiration has been given us, and we have done even more than we did before our disappointment; for the little book was to "prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings." Thus the word of God is fulfilled by us, and we can still repeat:

In eighteen hundred forty-four,
We thought the curse would be
no more.
The things of earth we left behind,
To meet the Saviour of mankind.
With many we took the parting
hand,
Till meeting in a better land.
The day passed by—no tongue
can tell
The gloom that on the faithful
fell.
That what it meant they hardly
knew
But to their Lord they quickly
flew.
They searched the Word, and
not in vain,
For comfort there they did obtain.
They found "the bridge" they
had passed o'er;
Then they rejoiced and grieved
no more.
Their faith was firm in that blest
Book,
And still for Jesus they did look.

Resuming the Work With Good Courage

And now a new era was begun. These divine utterances were heard with such distinctness that it was easy to believe them; and with a zeal equal to our former one, we took hold of the work now given us to do. We found that the truth was not to be all learned at once. Thus we came into the tarrying time. This helped us to bear our disappointment, and put our feet on solid land. Prophecy again rang in our ears, and we were now on the wing again, and the world found Millerism, which they buried, still alive. So while the Bridegroom tarried, meat in due season was to be given. With the assurance of light and divine help we quickened our pace in itinerating, and soon found the whole body

was breathing more freely. We as a people righted up, and the sound of rejoicing was heard. The scattered Advent body was gathered again, and commenced anew their work of love.

In Jan. 1845, the *Advent Herald* appeared again in the field, acknowledging our disappointment, but urging the necessity of keeping

the signs of the Lord's soon coming before the people. Thus encouraged, our meetings, Conferences and Campmeetings were resumed with the former interest, while the way opened wonderfully before us for missionary work, scattering the light of the gospel in all directions. We now had calls as many as we could attend to.

“We Wept, and Wept, Till the Day Dawn”

Hiram Edson, a Millerite farmer from Port Gibson, New York, after 1844 joined the small group of sabbatarians who formed the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The following recollection, from an undated manuscript fragment in the possession of the Heritage Room, Andrews University Library, begins with the evidence that convinced him of the truth of Millerism and ends in mid-sentence in a discussion of the seventh-day Sabbath.

I began to muse on this wise; If all this is the fruit of the new doctrine, the evidence is clear that it is from heaven; for it is written, “by their fruits ye shall know them.” “A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit;” And thus this question was settled with me.

In this incident of my experience I also learned an additional lesson, namely, that God was ready and willing to hear and answer prayer for the sick, and to stretch forth his hand to heal and raise them up, and restore them to health. Since which time, I have shared in, and witnessed many incidents of like character.

The next morning the physician came to visit his patient, and to his great astonishment met him out of doors walking up and down the

lane, praising God with a loud voice. He gazed and listened with wonder and astonishment at the narration of what God had wrought. Pale, and trembling he returned home, relating what he had seen and heard, his residence being but a few doors from the church where the lectures were given.

When Monday evening came [both?] our [families?] went to the prayer meeting, appointed the night before at the close of the lectures. The meeting house, though large, was filled to overflowing as it had been during the lectures. It was judged best to have a short sermon and then a season for testimonies. The brother who had been healed, and myself, bore our testimonies: what God had wrought for us; which had its influence on the minds of the congregation. Before the close of the meeting, our preacher very hesitatingly gave a faint invitation, that, if there were any in the congregation who felt like seeking the Lord, and desired prayer for them, if they would make it manifest by rising on their feet we would engage in prayer for them; when some eighty at once arose, without being urged. And thus I saw literally fulfilled, what was presented before me the night before, when in prayer before the

manger. But the voice which said, “Go talk the truth to your neighbors, and fellow men,” and my promise to do so, was lost sight of, and did not come into mind.

I was endeavoring to walk carefully before the Lord. I did not want to loose [sic] the victory, the liberty, and freedom I had been sharing. But notwithstanding all my efforts darkness was stealing over me; the heavens became as brass, and I could find no answer from God—I knew not why, until I sought the Lord in persevering secret prayer, and, in earnest, to know what intervened and hid his face from me. At length while in prayer in the forest my mind was carried back to the voice which said, “Go talk the truth to your neighbors,” which I had promised to do, and that I could not share the light of his countenance, or freedom of his spirit, until I lifted that cross and discharged that duty. This seemed the heaviest cross which had ever been presented for me to lift. It seemed more than I could consent to do; but no relief came, till, at length, I consented to make the effort. And not until I reached the third family did much victory or freedom return to me, but here the cloud seemed to break, and old and young, the greyheaded and youth, were melted to tears; expressing their desire for saving grace. As I moved forward in this work day times; and attending the evening meetings; for they were protracted, until it was claimed that between three and four hundred professed conversion, the cross grew lighter, or, my strength increased in bearing it. There was one family I had passed several times without calling on them. The head of the family was dissipated, and I thought it would be but casting pearls before swine; so I passed them by.

After laboring as above, night and day, I became worn and felt I needed rest. I decided not to attend

meeting that evening, also, not to make any more calls but go directly home and obtain rest. On passing the above named house I was stopped in the road opposite the house, by some unseen power, and could not make progress. I know not what was the cause, and began to ponder whether it was duty to enter the house. While thus waiting a shadowy form in human shape stood before me, and led toward the house, at which I said, Can there be duty to call here? The form repeated the lead toward the house twice, or thrice, and I followed, gathering assuredly that the Lord's angel was accompanying me and leading me in the way I should go. I entered the house, was received kindly, had a free time talking and praying with them, learned that they were backsliders, and were desiring to return unto the Lord. The above revival and ingathering of souls, being the result and legitimate fruit of the above lectures, was additional evidence that this new doctrine was from heaven; for it is a good tree that brings forth good fruit. "A corrupt tree cannot

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During what is called the seventh month movement, in 1844, myself and several other Brn. were engaged in circulating publications on the coming of Christ, day times, and holding meetings at my own private house evenings. As we were about to commence our evening meeting on one occasion, a two horse waggon load of entire strangers came; and after preparing seats for them we commenced our meeting by singing, "Here o'er the earth as a stranger I roam, Here is no rest, is no rest." It was sung with the spirit and with the understanding, and the spirit which accompanied the singing gave to it a keen edge, and before the hymn was sung through, the entire company of strangers were so deeply convicted that rather than bear the reproach of being convicted, or converted at a Millerite meeting, they all started to leave the house. One man and his wife succeeded in getting out of doors; but the third one fell upon the threshold; the fourth, the fifth, and so on, till the most of the company were thus slain by the power of God. And such agonizing cries and pleading for mercy, is not often witnessed. Some thirteen, or more, were converted before the meeting closed. The man and his wife who left the house labored hard to persuade the rest of their company to leave at once for home; but not succeeding, and rather than remain through the meeting they went home on foot in a dark night, a distance of five, or six miles, carrying a child a year old. But this was not their heaviest burden. Their conviction was too deep to be easily shaken off; they were back again at the next evening meeting found pardon, and peace in believing. And, "so, mightily grew to word of God and prevailed."

Passing over other like manifestations of the power of God, we glance at our disappointment at the

tenth of the seventh month, 1844. Having the true cry, Behold the Bridegroom cometh, on the tenth day of the seventh month, and, having been early taught by modern orthodoxy that the coming of the Bridegroom to the marriage would be fulfilled in the personal second advent of Christ to this earth, (which was a mistaken idea) we confidently expected to see Jesus Christ and all the holy angels with him; and that his voice would call up Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the ancient worthies, and near and dear friends which had been torn from us by death, and that our trials and sufferings with our earthly pilgrimage would close, and we should be caught up to meet our coming Lord to be forever with him to inhabit the bright golden mansions in the golden home city, prepared for the redeemed. Our expectations were raised high, and thus we looked for our coming Lord until the clock tolled 12 at midnight. The day had then passed and our disappointment became a certainty. Our fondest hopes and expectations were blasted, and such a spirit of weeping came over us as I never experienced before. It seemed that the loss of all earthly friends could have been no comparison. We wept, and wept, till the day dawn.

I mused in my own heart, saying, My advent experience has been the richest and brightest of all my christian experience. If this had proved a failure, what was the rest of my christian experience worth? Has the Bible proved a failure? Is there no God—no heaven—no golden home city—no paradise? Is all this but a cunningly devised fable? Is there no reality to our fondest hopes and expectation of these things? And thus we had something to grieve and weep over, if all our fond hopes were lost. And as I said, we wept till the day dawn.

A second glance over past expe-

rience, and the lessons learned, and how when brought into strait places where light and help was needed by seeking the Lord he had answered by a voice and other ways, I began to feel there might be light and help for us in our present distress. I said to some of my brethren, Let us go to the barn. We entered the granary, shut the doors about us and bowed before the Lord. We prayed earnestly; for we felt our necessity. We continued in earnest prayer until the witness of the Spirit was given that our prayer was accepted, and that light should be given, our disappointment be explained, and made clear and satisfactory. After breakfast I said to one of my brethren, "Let us go and see, and encourage some of our brn." We started, and while passing through a large field I was stopped about midway of the field. Heaven seemed open to my view, and I saw distinctly, and clearly, that instead of our High Priest coming out of the Most Holy of the heavenly sanctuary to come to this earth on the tenth day of the seventh month, at the end of the 2300 days, that he for the first time entered on that day the second apartment of that sanctuary; and that he had a work to perform in the Most Holy before coming to this earth. That he came to the marriage at that time; in other words, to the Ancient of days, to

receive a kingdom, dominion, and glory; and we must wait for his return *from the wedding*; and my mind was directed to the tenth ch. of Rev. where I could see the vision had spoken and did not lie; the seventh angel had began [sic] to sound; we had eaten the littl [sic] book; it had been sweet in our mouth, and it had now become bitter in our belly, embittering our whole being. That we must prophesy again, etc., and that when the seventh angel began to sound, the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament, etc.

While I was thus standing in the midst of the field, my comrade passed on almost beyond speaking distance before missing me. He inquired, "Why I was stopping so long?" I replied, "The Lord was answering our morning prayer; by giving light with regard to our disappointment." I talked these things to my brethren.

In those days I was closely associated with O. R. L. Crosier; and Dr. F. B. Hahn, Crosier making his home with me a portion of the time. He examined the Bible on the subject of the sanctuary. F. B. Hahn and myself, was connected with Crosier in the publication of the paper called, "The Day-Dawn." Br. Hahn and myself, held a consultation with regard to the propriety of

sending out the light on the subject of the sanctuary. We decided it was just what the scattered remnant needed; for it would explain our disappointment, and set the brethren on the right track. We agreed to share the expense between us, and said to Crosier, "Write out the subject of the sanctuary. Get out another number of the Day Dawn, and we will try to meet the expense." He did so, and the Day Dawn was sent out bearing the light on the sanctuary subject. It fell into the hands of Elders James White, and Joseph Bates, who readily endorsed the view; and it was shown in vision to be light for the remnant. This number of the Day Dawn opened a communication between us and these Eastern brethren. We appointed a conference of the scattered brethren to be held at my house, and invited these our Eastern brethren to meet with us. Br. W. made the effort to come, but his way was hedged up. Father Bates came on. His light was the seventh-day Sabbath.

From my understanding of the opening of the tabernacle of the *testimony* in heaven, and the seeing of the ark of his testimony, and a few lines I had seen from the pen of T. M. Preble, I had been looking at the subject of the seventh-day Sabbath and talking it to my Brn. I had said to them, "If we abide by . . .