

# **Life and Sayings of Sam P. Jones:**

A Minister of the Gospel

The Only Authorized and Authentic Work

By his wife

Assisted by

Rev. Walt Holcomb, a

Co-worker of Mr. Jones

Copyright © 1907

## **CHAPTER EIGHTEEN**

### **IN TORONTO AND CANADA**

Mr. Jones's fame as a revivalist had spread beyond the boundaries of his own country, and his marvelous work had been discussed throughout the entire North American Continent. Some of the prominent ministers of all denominations in Toronto, having become familiar with his work in the States, decided to put forth an effort to get him to visit some of the prominent cities in the Dominion of Canada. Rev. Hugh Johnson, D.D., one of the most prominent ministers in Toronto, wrote on behalf of the Evangelical Ministers' Alliance, asking Mr. Jones to hold a series of revival services in that city.

While his engagements were made for months ahead, it was some time before he could give Dr. Johnson a definite answer, but the Toronto ministers were so solicitous that finally he arranged his dates, so as to begin his work October 7, 1886. Dr. John Potts was elected chairman of the executive committee. A grander and nobler man can scarcely be found in the Methodism of the Dominion.

As the time approached for the beginning of the meeting, some of the members of the Alliance gradually withdrew, and one or two of the papers began firing into the movement. In a letter just a week before the meeting began Dr. Johnson wrote to Mr. Jones that everything would be in readiness, and requested that I accompany him, saying, "We will give her a royal Canadian welcome." Mr. Jones's visit was under very favorable auspices, as the executive committee had advertised judiciously, and his coming had been discussed by the preachers in their pulpits.

The two Sabbaths before the meeting began a great many ministers took for their subject "The Coming Revival." The committee had labored in perfect accord, and had the work in a good condition when he arrived. The newspapers had given some notoriety to the meeting, but had not been as kindly disposed to Mr. Jones as the papers in other great cities. The city was very well covered with large pictures of the evangelist, with the date and place of the meetings announced.

On Saturday evening Mr. Jones reached the city, and the committee on entertainment met him at the station and conveyed him to his room at the Rossin House. A reporter of the *Toronto Globe* obtained an interview with him, in which he asked: "What are your methods of conducting meetings?"

Mr. Jones replied: "I depend largely upon the Gospel to do the work. There is very little manipulation of the congregation, such as asking them to stand for prayer, or calling them to the altar — though I do that kind of work at the proper time. If you will bring home the plain truths of the Bible in a common-sense way, they will move a man every time. I preach at the conscience, and not the hearts of the people."

"What do you do with infidels," inquired the reporter.

"I do not deal with infidels; at least in an argumentative way," replied the preacher, "Ridicule is the only weapon I use against them. I have seen a great many infidels converted, and they have all said that they were never really infidels at heart. I can understand Ingersoll lecturing on infidelity at five hundred dollars a night, but I can't understand how a fellow would be fool enough to pay a dollar to hear him and board himself. Ingersoll was lecturing on the 'Mistakes of Moses' once, and a fellow asked me if I didn't want to go around to hear him. I replied 'No, I won't give a dollar to hear Bob on the mistakes of Moses, but if I could get a chance to hear Moses on the mistakes of Bob I'd pay any reasonable sum.'"

"Do you find any difference" in the character of the people in your meetings in different parts of the United States?" asked the interviewer.

Mr. Jones replied: "I find the people further south are more easily moved. They haven't the intellectual difficulties that curse other portions of the country. In the West I find more coldness and indifference, but once people are moved it is with a vengeance. In the East there is an enthusiasm borne by an intellectual agreement with the speaker."

The reporter inquired: "Do you preach against dancing and theater-going and card-playing?"

"Yes, I am fully persuaded that these things are hurting the church and sapping her life. It is the tide of worldliness sweeping over the homes of our country that is undermining the life of the church. The folks will hear from me on that subject."

"Were you ever in Canada before?" he inquired.

"Yes, I was here five years ago attending the International Sunday School Conference, and I carried away with me very pleasant memories of Toronto. Nowhere in America have I seen so quiet and orderly a Sabbath as I spent here. I believe Toronto is the cleanest city, morally and physically, I ever saw."

The meetings were conducted in the Mutual Street Rink. The morning services were held for several days at the different churches, but the ever-increasing audiences made it necessary to hold the day services in the Rink.

At the first service there were four thousand people in attendance. All of the Methodist preachers of the city and many of the ministers of other denominations were on the platform. Dr. John Potts presided. Some of the prominent men were Dr. Sutherland, missionary secretary; Dr. Dewart, editor of the *Christian Guardian*; Dr. Nelles, chancellor of the Victoria University, and Dr. Briggs, of the Toronto Methodist Book Concern. Just behind the ministers there were three or four hundred singers gathered from the different choirs of the city. Mr. Maxwell had drilled his large choir and had them in fine condition. Mr. E. O. Excell, who was traveling at that time as special soloist, was present and rendered a very effective solo, "I Have Found a Friend."

Mr. Jones came upon the platform a few minutes before time to preach, and as he entered the building there was no mistaking him, as his pictures had appeared in the windows of the stores, and had been published in the great dailies. He walked down the aisle amid a half-suppressed murmur of the crowd. Upon reaching the platform he was seated with the other ministers, the dissimilarity rather noticeable, as he was the only one without a clerical garb.

Dr. Potts presented him in a few pleasant words, and asked the prayers of all present for the success of the revival. Mr. Jones preached for about an hour and a half, and there was a great deal of plain speaking, but nothing was said in the discourse to which any one could object. He had a little amusement at the expense of the clergymen when he said: "Brethren, I don't ask for your endorsement now; if I didn't do any more good than you do, I would not care for your endorsement of my work."

This caused a look of mild astonishment on the faces of a few of the ministers, but most of them heartily relished his remarks. Dr. Johnson smiled his approval, and Dr. Briggs expressed the same sentiment by nodding his head and all of them went away very well pleased. An enthusiastic lady at the close of the meeting said: "Mr. Jones is just the sort of a man I expected he would be."

The interest in the services was marked from the beginning, and was peculiar in the religious history of Toronto. The people had been friendly to other great evangelists of America and England, whose manners and methods were of a more serious character. The crowds were immense at all the services, the men leaving their business, women their domestic duties, and the claims of society and flocking to the Rink two and three times a day.

The *Toronto Globe* said: "From six o'clock nearly to ten last night there was continuously a big crowd of people around the Mutual Street Rink. We are disposed to place Sam Jones's great power in four things: First, his intense personal conviction, and realization of the truths that he utters; secondly, his naturalness, directness and simplicity of speech; thirdly, in his keen and thorough knowledge of human nature and the temptations of life; fourthly, his unique natural gift of terse, pungent speech, with vivid homely illustrations. It is an easy thing for anyone who is disposed to indulge in adverse criticism, and to disparage any movement, to generally find some plausible pretense for doing so. We are free to confess that we do not feel bound to prove every sentiment expressed, but in spite of all this, the fact remains that no such widespread religious interest was ever before called forth in this city. Beecher was once described as irreverent, so was Spurgeon, so was Talmage, so was Moody, and so was Sam Jones.

“Is it possible that truth, religion and morality can be made too familiar to the people? As to his metaphors, there was one in Judea about eighteen hundred years ago, who taught by homely illustrations, which were down to the level of the fishermen and agricultural laborers. He was called irreverent by the formalists of that time, and their protests even went to the length of procuring His crucifixion.”

The attention of all the provinces of Canada was attracted to the meetings, and the people came from many of the leading cities to attend the revival. From the standpoint of attendance and genuine enthusiasm, there had not been such a meeting in the history of the city. Mr. Jones took several occasions to compliment them for their regard for the holy Sabbath. It was a real joy to him to see so large a city as quiet as a country hamlet on the day of rest.

He said: “There is one thing you people of Toronto take the blue ribbon for, and that is your God-fearing way in Sabbath observance. It gladdens my heart to see a great people in the busy city who can stop thinking of temporal affairs long enough to keep the Lord’s Day holy. You cannot buy a newspaper, run a street-car, open a theater, sell liquor, or do anything on the Sabbath that God would disapprove. You are a great church-going people, and that is another thing that I like about you. God will not withhold his blessing from a city that will keep the Sabbath and attend divine worship. I wish I could say as much for the cities in the United States, but the spirit of greed, worldliness and godlessness seems to have gotten such a hold upon us in our great cities that the hearts of our people are well-nigh eaten out.”

But he did not fail to find fault with them for legalizing the liquor traffic. In his preaching, he denounced the open saloon unmercifully; no one else ever had the conviction or the boldness to do so. In one of his sermons he said: “You will have whisky because you want it. Toronto could vote out the saloons and the places of shame that infest the city. If you would have the same respect for God’s word, ‘**Woe be unto you,**’ that you have for ‘**remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy,**’ with your sturdy manhood turned against these dives, the city could be freed from them. This is a free country, and you can have things just as you want them. You don’t want any trade on Sunday, and you don’t have any. If you want prohibition, glory to God, you can get it.

I said to the liquor dealers of my town two years ago, ‘If my boy should come to your grocery and ask for liquor, take him out in your back yard, and lay his head on a block, before you would sell it to him. If you kill him, his precious soul goes home; but if you make him drunk, he is ruined, body, mind and soul for both worlds.’ People say prohibition does not prohibit. Well, there are murderers notwithstanding the law against murder, but we have the fun of hanging a murderer every now and then. And so where there is a prohibitorial law that can put the lawbreakers into the penitentiary and have some fun, it is the next best thing to religion. There are three classes of men whom God has never been able to do much with — the lazy man, the stingy fellow, and the fool. I have seen the Lord do his best with them, and fail utterly. I say that reverently.”

While preaching in Toronto, there came to the notice of Mr. Jones, through the newspapers and other sources, a case which stirred the evangelist’s sense of justice as it had seldom been touched before.

There was on trial in the city a woman who had burned a saloon, and from the fact that the fire started by the woman had come near destroying the life of the proprietor of the dive, she was charged with arson, the penalty for which, in Canada, is death.

Mr. Jones gathered the facts of the case together, and while preaching against the evils of the liquor traffic before a vast audience of Toronto people, he said: "There is to-day a woman on trial in your court charged with arson, and who, although she has pleaded guilty to the indictment, is as innocent of any crime as a child.

"This poor woman, I learn, has an only son, and he is her all. He is the dependence and the hope of the widowed mother. That son fell into the habit of drinking, and it was at the groggery to which his mother stuck the fire that he would spend his hard-earned money and debauch himself day after day. The drinking of the son was breaking the heart of his good mother, and she pleaded with him to give it up and be the man she wanted him to make.

"When she saw that her pleadings with the boy were of no avail, she went to the keeper of the dive and laid the case before him. 'Please don't sell this stuff to my son anymore,' she said; 'he is all I have in the world, and I pray you not to ruin him for this and the world to come. If you will not sell my boy any more whisky I will bring you the amount he would spend at your place, and give it to you myself every Saturday night. It is not the money I want, but the soul of my precious boy.'

"Now, that bull-necked, white-aproned scoundrel drove that weeping, heart-broken mother out of his place, and with a laugh, said: 'As long as your son has the money, he can get what he wants at my place.'

"'I warn you,' said the good woman, 'that you cannot and must not sell that stuff to my boy again.'

"A few nights after that the boy came reeling home so drunk that he cursed and abused his mother, a thing he had never done before. He chided her with having attempted to interfere with his business in asking the saloon-keeper not to sell him any more whisky.

"The abuse of the drunken young man so outraged the mother that she gathered up a bundle of rags, soaked them with kerosene oil, and after setting them afire, placed the blazing bundle under the corner of the little groggery. The little dive was soon in flames, and it burned so rapidly that it came near getting the scoundrel that ran the place. He was sleeping in his establishment.

"Now, as I said before, this poor woman is on trial for her life, but if they will give Sam Jones just ten minutes before that jury, and they then bring in a verdict of guilty, I will gladly take her place and let them hang me." [Although the Canadian people are not demonstrative, and seldom applaud a public speaker, this utterance of the evangelist brought forth vociferous applause which lasted for many minutes].

“It has come to a pretty pass,” said Mr. Jones, continuing, “in this day of boasted civilization and culture, that the laws of our land will give a white-aproned scoundrel the right to burn up the souls of thousands of young men of this country, and will punish with death the woman whose only offense was the attempted protection of her only boy from a drunkard’s grave. God pity the country whose laws will give protection to the damnable saloon keeper, and will not aid the noble mothers in protecting their boys from the evils of the liquor traffic.”

The trial of the woman ended the following day, and the verdict of the jury was, “Not guilty.”

Conversions had multiplied day by day, until Rev. Hugh Johnson said in the public press that there had been at least six thousand people converted who had expressed themselves for church membership. Inquired the reporter: “Does this represent all the good that has been accomplished so far?” Dr. Johnson replied: “Oh, dear, no; not a tithe of it. Thousands have been impressed and started upon a new life, and have manifested it by rising in the congregation and remaining in the after-service.”

“Are the meetings coming up to your expectation?” he again inquired.

“They are, indeed,” said Dr. Johnson. “Such results seldom come so early in a meeting.”

“What about the opposition aroused?”

“Of course the devil and his crew, the drinking, swearing, gambling, theater-going, fast-living crowd hate him, and fight him for his awful invectives and powerful thrusts at sin, but the best people of this city stand by him. His hard hits and droll illustrations cause outbursts of laughter, which annoy some of the hidebound old fellows, who think it is a sin to laugh in a meeting, but his common sense, directness, and earnestness, manifested in every look and gesture, and his merriment carry instant conviction, and his way of putting things is simply inimitable and irresistible. His pathos is the most natural and tender that I ever listened to, and at times you will see the eyes of thousands suffused with tears.”

“Do you and the ministers endorse everything he says?”

“No, we don’t need to. To turn up our nose at what may seem irreverent to us is to put ourselves above God, who honors him so greatly in the salvation of souls, and the Holy Spirit, who seizes upon the marvelous combination of gifts and powers, and uses them for his own glory.”

“Are not the expenses of these meetings very heavy?”

“Yes, but you must remember that the Musical Festival in the Rink cost five thousand dollars a day, making a total of fifteen thousand for the three days. No one seemed to raise an objection to that. The comparatively small expense will be met by the collections and the generosity of friends.” “It seems that the other churches are falling into line.”

“Yes, good people cannot keep out of a great work like this.

“I saw the president of the Baptist College, Dr. Cassel, and a majority of the Baptist ministers of the city deeply interested in his afternoon service. Methodist fire and Baptist water when brought together give steam, propelling power to the gospel engine. The Church of England ministers and the Congregational and Presbyterian clergymen are taking interest. They generally go hand in hand in spiritual work of this kind. We expect to follow this evangelistic meeting by united services in every section and suburb in Toronto. We are bound to keep at it as the work reaches further and deeper each day.”

At the closing service of the meeting thousands of people left their homes early in the evening to secure seats for the final sermon. While six thousand or more were packed into the Rink by seven o'clock, the meeting commencing an hour later, there were as many who were turned away and suffered disappointment. By a mistake the Mutual Street Rink was opened fifteen minutes after six, and the crowd soon filled every seat in the spacious building. Most of the disappointed ones returned home, but hundreds remained on the outside, gazing eagerly at the windows and doors. Members of the choir, the reporters and policemen were crowded out of the meeting.

The dressing rooms of the Rink were filled with people, though none of them could see the preacher or hear a word of the sermon. The dressing rooms were so densely crowded that several women fainted, but the ushers were afraid to open the doors for fear the crowd would rush in, and at last a window was smashed and a number of half-suffocated men and women left the building. A hundred or more outsiders rushed to the window trying to get the places thus vacated.

In making closing announcements, Dr. Potts said: “Revival services will continue at the Methodist churches, Elm Street, Sherbourne Street, Carlton Street, Blewer Street, Burkely Street, Richmond Street, Queen Street, Agnes Street, Woodgreen Street, King Street, and Dundas Street. Other meetings will start soon at the St. Paul’s church, Spadina Avenue church, Gerard church, and Parksdale Methodist church.”

Dr. Potts then called on Dr. Hugh Johnson to lead in prayer. Then Mr. Jones arose and said: “Before I take my text, I will say that I have received many communications, more than I can read. It was impossible for me to answer them. I will turn them over to my secretary, and he will pick out such as demand answering, and I will dictate answers to him.

“It was scarcely possible for me to get in the door of this building to-night, owing to the great surging mass of people on the outside so eager to get in. I suppose, well, I might say thousands sought admittance here to-night and could not find it. Oh, how it bleeds my heart to see the hungry world. God feed them all with His truth and grace. I want to say, many of you I will never see again this side of the judgment bar of God. I want to say to you that I have been drawn towards you as a people. I came here with admiration in my soul for Toronto and her people, and that admiration has been turned into love, the divinest passion that ever stirred a human heart. I thank God I ever came to this city. I only wish that this association might be continued indefinitely. I say to you, I love you, and I trust that this love can be mutual. And, brethren, let me say to you, give me your prayers and your sympathy, as they have in other places.

“This work overwhelms me with the responsibility of it. I carry it as God may help me. I am glad I am a man. The sun without its spots would be a sight this world never saw. I am as frail as any of you. I have as many imperfections as any of you. I have as many faults and foibles as any of you. And yet understand, brother, that my heart is full of the love of God, my heart is full of love to my fellow man. I know I love God, and I know I love every man that walks this earth, and I love every woman, as much as my wife will let me.”

[Dr. Potts here whispered, “Precious wife”].

“As Dr. Potts would have me say, ‘precious wife,’ I have used the expression so much, he seems to like that term. I don’t know why.”

Dr. Potts said, “We approve of it. We are going to adopt it here in Toronto.”

In March of the following year Mr. Jones returned to Toronto for a four days’ mission, mostly in the interest of temperance and municipal reform. While his work took the character of evangelistic services and many were converted, his greatest work was in behalf of prohibition.

Many times afterwards he visited the city and lectured, and was always greeted by large audiences. He preached and lectured in many of the prominent cities of the Dominion, and some of his warmest, staunchest and truest friends were among the Canadians.

**~ end of chapter 18 ~**

<http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/>

\*\*\*