

Life and Sayings of Sam P. Jones:

A Minister of the Gospel

The Only Authorized and Authentic Work

By his wife

Assisted by

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Co-worker of Mr. Jones

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CHAPTER TWENTY THE GREAT WORK IN BOSTON

The Methodist Union invited Mr. Jones to visit Boston. He had labored in every section of the country except the New England States, and Boston being the “hub” and the most renowned city from a literary and religious viewpoint, he accepted the call. The opportunity was great for him to impress himself upon that part of the Union. Mr. Jones believed that a great work could be accomplished in Boston, and gave them as the date for the meeting, January 1, 1887.

When the papers announced his coming, the *Associated Press* telegraphed the news throughout the length and breadth of the country. The eyes of the United States were upon him, and a great deal of speculation was indulged in in regard to his going there. His enemies and critics said he had at last come to the city that would be his Waterloo. They felt assured that Boston’s refinement and culture would not long tolerate the “slang” and “vulgarism” of the Georgia evangelist, and that he would fail utterly and ingloriously in the city of great learning. His friends studied the situation with great fear as to the final outcome of the proposed visit. Others, with faith in his ability and in God’s power, believed that he would capture Boston and succeed there as he had done everywhere else.

Those occupying a neutral attitude towards him said: “If Sam Jones can go to Boston and make his meeting a success, he can go anywhere in the world, for Boston is so full of ‘isms and religions,’ and the people have such a hypercritical mind toward every move that is not of Boston origin and stamp. If he can create an interest and impress Boston he will demonstrate to the entire world his mastery of assemblies, and make for himself a permanent place in the history of the civilized world.”

His correspondence was full of letters of advice from Boston and other cities, as to the most expedient way for him to preach to the highly-cultured audiences at the “literary hub of the universe.” Some of the correspondents expressed doubts as to the wisdom of his going at all. Mr. Jones received these suggestions kindly, but with a smile, and they did not for an instant disturb his equilibrium, or turn him aside from his determination to go and in the strength of the Lord conquer the powers that be.

He was conscious of the power with which God had endowed him. With an omnipotent faith in the Holy Spirit to be present and guide him in his work, he had every assurance that the campaign would result in great victory for the cause of his Master.

There was much curiosity and doubt among some of the ministers who invited him as to the probable success or failure of his work among them. They thought that perhaps his fearless attacks on the sins and vices of men in the cities in other parts of the United States by no means guaranteed victory in Boston. They were apprehensive of his methods, and would not have been surprised had his ministry there been an utter failure. However, one of the most prominent Methodist preachers of the city, who had heard him in Cincinnati and other places, was enthusiastic over his coming, and was sure of a great welcome and hearing in Boston. The pastors of other Protestant churches had not joined in the invitation and the fact that he was coming under the auspices of the Methodist churches made it possible for those who were not in the closest sympathy to be guilty of denominational jealousy.

It made the task much greater because other denominations were not united in his coming. These ministers had withheld their support, because they felt that they could not endorse Mr. Jones and his methods. Mr. Jones obtained the facts as to the conditions of affairs in the city, and made preparation for the campaign according to the conditions existing there. Before reaching the city he knew as much about Boston and its religious atmosphere as some of the oldest residents and ministers who had labored there the longest. He was thoroughly prepared for the work.

The press had had much to say about his coming, and many stories had been published of his work, which were absurd and ridiculous, but, nevertheless, had created much opposition against him. They thought that the refinement of Boston iniquity would allow him little room 'to vent his religious wrath,' and that his sermon matter would not interest and amuse his audiences, as it would be far below their standard of culture and intellectual attainment. The entire situation presented a psychological study of the deep religious problems and of the preacher who was to deal with them. The literati of Boston, including the great poets, philosophers and clergymen, indulged in much speculation and conjecture as to how his sermons would be received.

Phillips Brooks during a long career had preached in his great cathedral; Edward Everett Hale, the apostle of Unitarianism, had spent a long life indoctrinating his followers; the renowned Joseph Cook had stirred and thrilled the city at his noonday lectures; the professors and dignitaries of Harvard University had instructed and cultured the citizenship of Boston; the disrupting and disintegrating influences of Christian Science, occultism, theosophy and every other "ism" had been hatched out in the city. The city, religiously, was the greatest conglomeration of "isms" and "ologies" within the bounds of the United States. Just how the plain, simple, fearless and straightforward preaching of Mr. Jones would impress the crowd was a situation open to all manner of conjecture.

The opening service was held in the People's Temple, the largest and most commodious Methodist edifice in the city. The building was filled to its utmost capacity and many hundreds were turned away at the first service.

When he was presented to the congregation by the pastor, he arose and began his ministry just like he had done in every other place. As was frequently his custom, when the people had come through great curiosity, and wanting to hear rough and uncouth language, he completely changed his style and delivered some of his most polished and elegant utterances. The people, from the impressions that they had gathered, were expecting to see an uneducated and unrefined minister, who would shock them and amuse them with jokes with very little regard as to his subject matter. That morning his language was chaste, beautiful and abounding in choice similes and figures. They were a surprise, a revelation and a delight to his cultured listeners. Mr. Jones, who was always keen to see just how his messages were being received, was somewhat amused as he watched the expressions that played over the faces of his hearers; but as he proceeded his earnestness became more evident, and his words fell with such force and pungency that he won his audience completely, and they soon forgot their early attempts to analyze him, and were lost in the message that he was delivering. Some of them were a little stiff and indifferent at first, and tried to throw a damper upon his fervency, but soon yielded to his spirit and became as earnest and serious in receiving the Word as he was in delivering it.

The next day the *Boston Globe* had the following account of his first appearance.

“Rev. Sam P. Jones received a hearty welcome yesterday at the People’s Temple. He said at the close of his day’s work that he had begun to feel like he was ‘somebody,’ because of the cordial reception given him. Said he: ‘I felt some trepidation in coming to Boston, which I understood was the city of cold critics, but now I am convinced that the people of this city have not only brains, but very warm hearts. Now, we want to run the devil out of Boston. If you people think that the devil is going to let Boston alone, you are very much mistaken. I didn’t come here to look at its good side. You have looked at that side until you know all about it. I want you to see the other side. If you think that the devil is going to surrender this city without a fight you don’t know His Satanic Majesty as I do. Let’s go to work and take this city for Christ, and bombard the devil out of it. Now, all of you take hold and help, and don’t stand off and criticize. I will say nothing in Boston without a purpose. I’ll not preach like these other preachers do, because there is no use for me to do as other men.’

The press of Boston received him with great deference. They spoke of him very kindly in their editorials, and gave space for full reports of his sermons. The *Globe* and the *Herald* were particularly courteous, and through their columns he was enabled to speak to many thousands of people throughout New England.

Rev. W. N. Brodbeck, chairman of the arrangement committee for the evangelistic services, made a number of appointments for Mr. Jones in different parts of the city. Some of the most prominent places were Tremont Street Methodist church, Tremont Temple and Faneuil Hall. Arrangements were also made for him to preach to the ministers of the city, and the first service was held under the auspices of the Methodist Social Union. Dr. Brodbeck, of the Tremont Street church, presided and introduced him. In acknowledging the honor conferred on him, he created much merriment as he related an incident of a servant in the South whose boasting propensity called forth a rebuke of his master, who told him he was of no account anyway, and to which he replied:

“I know I’m no count, but I work for one of the biggest families in old Georgy.”

“So I feel,” said he, “as I look in the faces of you ministers, that I, too, belong to one of God’s big families.” He then talked to them of the movement that had been inaugurated, and urged each minister to assist in making the movement one of the most far-reaching ever held in Boston. The ministers had never heard just such a sermon before, and were completely captivated by the address.

At all the night services the People’s church was crowded to its limits. The day services held at the other churches were largely attended. The noonday service at Faneuil Hall was one of the most remarkable in the history of the city. In the “Cradle of Liberty” he spoke each day from twelve to one o’clock. There were no seats in the great building and the men came in, some in business clothes, many of them in butcher’s frocks, and market men in their aprons.

The men stood in solid mass from the platform back to the entrance, while the gallery was full of men and women. Some of his best sermons were preached on these occasions. At the Tremont Temple he spoke several times to a crowded house of business men, ladies and city visitors. The most intellectual people of Boston were in attendance upon these services. Here’s where the world-renowned Joseph Cook, D.D., addressed his week-day audiences. The sermon that he preached to the audience in the presence of Dr. Cook is described in an interview of one of the papers with Dr. Cook.

The interviewer asked Dr. Cook his impression of Mr. Jones. He replied: “I’ve only heard him twice, but I can say this much. He is a remarkable man, a genius, whose words are sharp and incisive, and he is earnest, and consecrated to his work. He was not half so rough as the papers had represented him. His sharp, epigrammatic style pleased the Bostonians, and interested them deeply. Boston loves intellectual sprightliness, and Mr. Jones captured them. Tremont Temple, where I heard him, was crowded from pit to dome with the most cultivated people of Boston, and they were moved and swayed as I never saw them before. I saw there great doctors of divinity whom I could not move either to smiles or tears, with eyes and mouth wide open, laughing and crying under Mr. Jones as they would do for no one else. Mr. Jones has completely captured Boston.”

Mr. Jones gathered up the impressions made at these extra services, and in his night sermons at the People’s church, where the great crowds who heard him at these special hours congregated; in this way he succeeded in focusing the attention of the people upon the services of the evening.

The People’s church became the center of the great evangelistic campaign. At each meeting the Lord was present and the people were deeply and pungently convicted of sin, and turned to the Lord in great numbers. The *Boston Globe* said: “Probably no man in Boston has been more talked about in the last week or so than Rev. Sam Jones, who is conducting a great revival in our city. There was a time when the question, ‘What’s the matter with him?’ was asked most frequently in Boston, and the answer was always, ‘He’s all right.’ To-day one hears most frequently the question, ‘Have you heard Sam Jones?’ and the reply is almost as invariably made, ‘Yes, several times.’ The truth of the matter is, there are very few who have not heard him, and the uniform testimony is that he interests his hearers.

“There never were such meetings held in this city, not even those of Elder Knapp, George Whitfield and Dwight L. Moody created such a sensation. Mr. Jones is original; he can be studied to advantage. At every meeting, almost, something new will develop in his striking manner which accounts for his forcefulness. His success is due to a composite whole; his work, his words, his methods form one complex system. His illustrations are riddles. Until he approaches the close, no one knows just how they will turn, and sometimes he stops a laugh by a sublime thought that will start tears by its contrast and force. There is but one Sam Jones.”

The *Herald* said: “The keen wit, sarcasm and apt comparisons and illustrations of Mr. Jones are enjoyed immensely. In the most intense manner he forces the plain truth upon the people. All the sermons and addresses are published in full in the *Herald*, *Globe*, *Journal* and some other daily papers; thus tens of thousands of people are getting some of the best religious reading they have had for many years. We never knew of such a widespread interest of religion in this city as is now sweeping over it. Hundreds are seeking God.”

The Boston Evangelical Ministers’ Association, which included all of the preachers of Boston, and a large number in adjoining cities, invited him to preach before that august body in the Tremont Temple.

That handsome auditorium was well filled with ministers and Christian workers from the city, and prominent clergymen came in from all parts of New England. Such men as Joseph Cook, Bishop Phillips Brooks, Edward Everette Hale and hundreds more of the most prominent ministers were present. When Mr. Jones was introduced, he slowly walked to the edge of the platform and looked out upon the most remarkable gathering that he had ever seen. There these church dignitaries sat erect, stiff and cold, as if they were determined not to yield an inch while he proceeded to talk. He spoke in a conversational voice, that those nearby could hear each word, while those far away began to lean forward to catch what he said. On and on he went, while they sat there like statues. He was never more conscious of his power and never took greater delight in addressing an audience than that day, when the theological learning and scholarship of Boston and New England sat at his feet. Seeing his opportunity, he made a thrust or two at them with some of his characteristic drollery, accompanying it with a twinkle in his eye, when the great audience unconsciously broke out into a hearty laugh.

The ice had been broken, and epigrammatic sayings and anecdotes full of wit, humor and sarcasm, followed each other in rapid succession, until the audience had yielded to his will, and were swayed as if by magic. He continued to preach and lecture to them until time was lost sight of, and finally he stopped and pulled his watch from his pocket and said: “Well, brethren, I have been talking something over an hour to you, and I bring this address to a close.”

Shouts of “go on, go on,” came up from all parts of the building.

Then he addressed them for a few moments with deep earnestness and pathos, closing the lecture with a most sublime and pathetic appeal, which brought the great audience to tears, and amid their sighs and sobs, while wiping the tears from their eyes, he bade them God-speed in their work.

Such an ovation followed that the most distinguished men in the church rushed to the platform and gave him a hearty handshake, and from that day he had the complete sympathy and cooperation of the ministers of Boston. The meeting continued for four weeks, and in the regular services for the mixed audience and in special services for men and women great appeals were made for the salvation of the lost, and the converts responded freely.

The last meeting held for the men at Faneuil Hall was crowded as before, and the *Boston Globe* said: "It was a touching scene in old Faneuil Hall yesterday at noon when Sam Jones closed his series of talks there to business men. He had just been describing the heavenly city toward which he was bound, the city with the pearly gates, the walls of Jasper, the streets of gold, when he suddenly asked: 'All those who have received good from the meetings raise your hands.' Up went hundreds of bronzed hands without the hesitation of a moment. Dr. Brady was on his feet in an instant, saying: 'All you who want to meet Mr. Jones in heaven put up your hands again.' Nearly every person present, the butcher, the baker, the candlestick-maker, the man in worn-out clothes, and good clothes, shot his arm upward into the air with eagerness and earnestness. The ladies in the gallery arose to their feet, expressing the same desire. Such a scene had never been witnessed within the walls of the historic building."

The closing meeting was held on Sunday in the Mechanics Hall. The great hall would accommodate between ten and twelve thousand. The press said: "The magic of Sam Jones's name drew an audience to Mechanics' Hall to listen to his shrewd, quaint and inimitable style of address that could only be estimated by the seating capacity of the immense building. Whatever that may be, it was demonstrated that the hall wasn't big enough to hold all who desired to hear Sam Jones. A multitude of people stood up during the services, and several thousands were altogether unable to gain admission to the hall. It is undoubtedly true, as was remarked by a member of the committee having charge of the service, that no place less spacious than 'The Commons' would furnish ample accommodations for one of the audiences of Sam Jones.

"Standing before this sea of faces, which seemed to extend far into the distance, Mr. Jones preached his farewell sermon on 'Conscience, Record, and God.'" This closed his first and great meeting in Boston. Just ten years later, 1897, Mr. Jones returned to Boston and conducted another revival. In front of the People's church was this sign: "The Wonder of the Ages, Sam P. Jones."

The services were held in practically the same churches, and the same way as at the previous meeting. The meeting continued for nearly three weeks, and was as remarkable in power and as far-reaching in results, if not surpassing, that of 1887. In his second visit, as well as the first, he was never received more cordially and supported more loyally, and did a greater work, than in Boston.

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