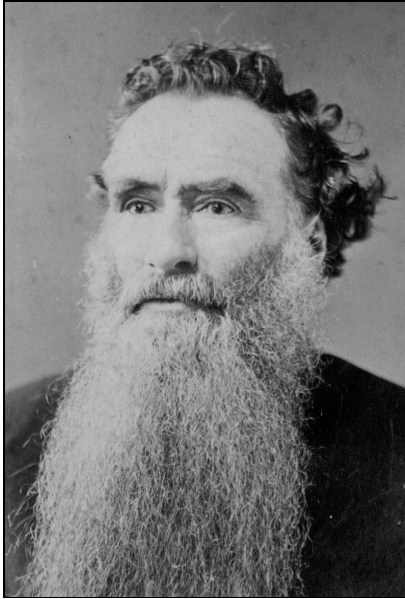


Ralph Vinton (R.V.) Lyon (1809-1891)

R.V. Lyon was born in Dudley, Massachusetts. He was married to Hester. In his lifetime, he resided in various places in Connecticut and Massachusetts, but he ministered primarily in Canada West, Michigan, Wisconsin and Indiana. He often jeopardized his health and suffered fatigue from the exhaustive schedule he maintained. Like Christ, Lyon was a man of sorrows. He signed one letter, "Your brother in sorrow's vale."

Lyon was contemporary with Joseph Marsh, and like Marsh, came out of the Millerite movement. He had been ordained a Baptist pastor, but he left that movement when he heard of the second coming of Christ. Lyon was first and foremost a believer in the second advent of Christ, and he accepted the Age-to-Come understanding of Bible prophecy promoted by Joseph Marsh.

Lyon wrote a lot of copy for Joseph Marsh's publications, but he was decidedly non-sectarian. He said he encountered in his travels many "sectarian names of this degenerate age of the world" such as Christian, Methodist, Baptist, Adventist, but he did not want to be known by any of them. He said he was a member of the school of Jesus of Nazareth but had not yet graduated, "Consequently, I am a disciple of his, and a learner and a follower."

R.V. Lyon toured with a tent for evangelistic meetings. Marsh published the meeting schedules for all evangelists weekly, first in *The Voice of Truth* and later in *The Advent Harbinger* and *Bible Advocate*. People loved hearing Lyon preach so much they would write to Marsh weeks before the tent ministry season began to schedule Lyon to preach.

When Marsh died so did his publishing empire, and R.V. Lyon turned to the most available

Age-to-Come medium for reporting his evangelistic efforts. He began writing and reporting for *The Gospel Banner* and *Millennial Advocate* published by Benjamin Wilson in Geneva, IL.

R.V. Lyon did not fully agree with Joseph Marsh, since Lyon also agreed with Dr. John Thomas that there will be no resurrection of the wicked, a doctrine Marsh found unbiblical. This doctrine, annihilationism, states that when a man dies in his Adamic sins without acknowledging Christ as his Savior, he will be dead forever. Thus, the righteous only will be raised from the graves; the result of annihilationism is limited resurrection.

R.V. Lyon was the first to admit that Christadelphian uproar over annihilationism had been the undoing of the once-flourishing church at Liberty, IN. Even Old Union church had been upset by it, and he said, "Yes, Indiana has felt the shock and an age will not repair it!" While he accepted annihilationism, he believed it should not be a reason to split a church.

In 1861, Lyon wrote, *The Scattering and Restoration of Israel* in which he clearly explained the three reasons that Israel and Judah would be united again as one nation. These reasons are 1) That the prophet (Ezekiel 21:25-27) takes the position that this kingdom will be overthrown. 2) That it should be no more until its rightful heir shall come. 3) That it would then be given him. The rest of the tract is devoted to explaining the teaching of the restoration of Israel to its homeland before the return of Christ. In no way does it suggest the teaching of Anglo-Israelism. A copy of this tract is in the Archives of Atlanta Bible College.

The emerging Church of God Abrahamic Faith was embryonic following the Bitter Disappointment. Joseph Marsh attempted to clarify doctrines by focusing on interpretation of prophecies regarding the return of Christ. The Age-to-Come doctrine necessarily involved discussion of Israel.

Ralph G. Orr, a Seventh-day Church of God writer has written: So strongly did this group emphasize their belief in Israel's restoration, that they have also been known as the Restoration Church of God. While restorationism creates a receptive atmosphere for Anglo-Israelism, we know of no one from among the Church of God (Abrahamic Faith) who was Anglo-Israelite. [Orr's emphasis.]

R.V. Lyon wrote a tract, "The Sanctuary," in which he discussed the Sabbath question and pointed out weaknesses in the theology of both the first-day Adventists and the Seventh-day Adventists. He said the sanctuary will be on earth where the throne of God will be. God will return to earth when the New Jerusalem comes down from heaven in the new heavens and new earth, at the beginning of the eternal age.

In 1863, Lyon served as the evangelist for the General Association of the Church of God in Syracuse, NY. This association may have been the first formal regional Age-to-Come organization on record. It covered New York and New England, Ohio and Canada West. During the first eight months of the year, Lyon worked in Canada West, and for shorter periods in Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut and New York. In that year, he preached 350 sermons, baptized 43 members and brought one church into existence. He furnished copy for five religious papers. It's not known which titles, but certainly one of them must have been Newman's *Millennial Harbinger*. Lyon also published three tracts, wrote or revised three more works (a total of 218,000 pages) and received \$3 for his work from Newman.

R.V. Lyon took a western tour during the autumn of 1866 that brought him south into Indiana and Illinois. He spent time in Vermillion County, Illinois, and met many fine people to whom he preached. This neighborhood is south of Danville near the Casey and Marshall Churches of God. In 1867 Lyon reported to *The Prophetic Watchman* that he had spent ten weeks in Indiana, Illinois and Michigan "presenting the truth, the Gospel, the Good News, the Word of reconciliation, which he has commanded to be proclaimed among all nations, in order to the obedience of the 'Faith'."

When Lyon reported his preaching activities and the results of the Gospel upon the hearts of his listeners, one of his favorite phrases was, "Truth took effect." In one case in Illinois, four persons were baptized after a funeral service. In another case, three were baptized in a nearby river. Men working in the field expected to reap a harvest of souls for Christ.

Lyon submitted a lecture to The Gospel Banner in 1869 in which he stated that he did not accept the preexistence of Christ. Lyon said: Neither did he pre-exist previous to his conception and birth, as a conscious being; for this would trample underfoot organic law, and contradict the teachings of the whole Bible. It is true, that in the beginning was the Logos—the Word—the promise—the seed of the woman, “the seed of Abraham” (Gen. 1:3, 3:15, 22:17, 18). And the Logos—the Word,—the promise—“was with God”, and the Logos— the Word—the promise—“was God”, because it is his Language or thoughts expressed—the development of the plan of redemption—the person named who is to bruise effectually the head of the serpent, and thereby remove the effects of the fall from the universe of God! “And the Logos was made flesh and dwelt among us”; And Luke informs us how it was done: “And the angel said to Mary, the Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God.”

Ralph and Hester Lyon resided at Niagara Falls and worshipped at the Fonthill, Ontario, Church of God organized by Peter Bouk. The circumstances of R.V. Lyon’s old age and death remain unknown, except that he predeceased Hester by seven years. They were laid to rest at the Oakwood Cemetery at Niagara, New York. Possibly, Pastor Melville Lyon was R.V. Lyon’s descendent.

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