

Stockman, Levi S.

(1812–1844)

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Levi S. Stockman was a respected Methodist minister who began preaching the Second Advent message in 1842 and helped Ellen Harmon (White) understand the love of God during her conversion process.

Methodist Ministry

Stockman was born to Robert and Thankful Davis Stockman in 1812, in Minot, Maine.¹ He was converted at the age of 15, and he married Abigail H. Ayers in 1835. Together they would have one son and three daughters.² In 1836, Stockman began

ministry in the Methodist Episcopal Church, assigned to Kittery, located on the coast of Maine, 52 miles south of Portland. Subsequent assignments in his itinerant ministry took him to South Berwick, somewhat inland, 40 miles south of Portland, 1837; South Paris, 41 miles northwest of Portland, 1838; Alfred, 31 miles southwest of Portland, where he was ordained an "elder," 1841; and East Newfield, 39 miles west of Portland, 1842. In 1843, he served in a "supernumerary relationship"—the designation for ministers unable to fill a full-time appointment, usually for health reasons, but still in good standing.³

His ministry was well-received. Stockman came to be regarded as a "man of deep piety," and as "one of the best and most acceptable preachers in the ranks" of young Methodist ministers.⁴ Methodist conference records further describe his preaching as "surpassed by few in originality" and the same is said for his "success in winning souls to Christ."⁵



Tombstone.

Source: *Find A Grave*,

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/116681400/levi-stockman>

Second Advent Proclamation

Stockman accepted the Second Advent message after hearing William Miller preach at Casco Street Christian Church in Portland in November 1842.⁶ Stockman's younger brother, Edward Ainsley Stockman, who entered the Methodist ministry around 1841, also embraced Miller's prophetic teaching. Later, Edward became a Free Baptist and then joined the Advent Christians, serving as an editor of *The World's Crisis and Second Advent Messenger* in Boston.⁷

At the Adventists' invitation, Levi Stockman moved his family to Portland at the outset of 1843 to promote the Adventist message, as his health allowed, while still occasionally laboring in surrounding towns.⁸ He preached at Beethoven Hall in Portland with other Millerite ministers and also preached at the Exeter camp meeting that opened in late September.⁹

In an autobiography, Ellen White later referred to Stockman's effective preaching and the deep impression he made on Samuel E. Brown, pastor of the Christian Chapel on Temple Street, on one occasion. Brown was deeply moved while listening to one of Stockman's discourses and, reeling in his chair, fell to the floor. Stockman caught him just in time and laid him down on a sofa behind the pulpit, "where he lay powerless until the discourse was finished." Afterward, he arose and "entreated the ministers present not to feel themselves injured by the direct and searching manner in which Elder Stockman had presented the solemn subject that interested all minds."¹⁰

It was sometime while Stockman was serving in Portland that teen-aged Ellen Harmon was directed to him by her mother for counsel in her religious experience. He listened thoughtfully to her and said: "Ellen, you are only a child. Yours is a most singular experience for one of your tender age. Jesus must be preparing you for some special work." A childhood misfortune in which a rock struck her in the face had left her unable to pursue her educational plans. But Stockman suggested that she would later see it as a providence and that she should go home "trusting in Jesus, for he will not withhold His love from any true seeker." The session meant a great deal to her and she reflected on it often for years to come (See also "Levi Stockman's Counsel to Ellen Harmon," in Related Content).¹¹

Heresy Trial

Stockman's own circumstances worsened in 1843.¹² In addition to suffering from tuberculosis, he paid a great price for his convictions. With some 30 of its ministers by then preaching the soon return of Christ, the Methodist Maine Conference, in the Bath Resolutions issued on July 19, 1843, condemned Millerite "peculiarities" and required Methodist pastors to refrain from promoting them. When Stockman refused to comply, he was tried for heresy. He was charged with "disseminating doctrines contrary to [the Methodist] articles of religion," which included the belief that the millennium will commence at the personal appearing of Christ, that the time of the millennium is revealed in the Bible as 1843, and that there will be "two resurrections,

one thousand more or less years apart."¹³ Stockman objected that no official statement of Methodist belief precluded these teachings. He "appealed to the Discipline of the Methodist Church as the only law by which he could be tried, and asked that the article of Methodist faith be brought forward to which his teachings were contrary." The presiding elder threatened him with loss of his position and expulsion from the church, and also warned him that his widow and children would be denied the benefits that the Conference provided to families of deceased ministers."¹⁴ Stockman refused to be intimidated and stood firm in his Second Advent beliefs.

According to Advent Christian historian Isaac C. Wellcome, Stockman was expelled from the church a few months before his death on June 25, 1844.¹⁵ The minutes of the annual conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, on the other hand, include an obituary stating that Stockman was "for nine years a successful minister of Christ in the Maine conference, of which body he was a member at the time of his departure." It gives high commendations to Stockman's ministry and contains no criticism. The statement that "a widow and three children are commended to the sympathies and prayers of the church" at the conclusion of the obituary leaves in doubt whether the conference took formal responsibility for the family or simply encouraged sympathetic action on the part of its members.¹⁶

Legacy

The phrase, "He giveth his beloved sleep," from Psalm 127, is inscribed at the top of Stockman's tombstone at the Evergreen Cemetery in Portland. The epitaph reads, "Calm on the bosom of thy God, Fair spirit, rest thee now! E'en while with us thy footstep trod, His seal was on thy brow."¹⁷

At the end of 1844, Ellen Harmon had a vision of events after the Second Coming in which she saw Levi Stockman and Charles Fitch, another beloved Adventist who had died just days before the expected October 22nd return of Christ. In the vision, the two ministers asked about the trials that the Advent band had gone through, and, in the light of glory, the Advent believers couldn't call anything to mind.¹⁸ The vision marked the beginning of Ellen White's prophetic ministry and her account of it gave Stockman a place of lasting honor in Seventh-day Adventism.

Decades after his death, Stockman was still commended within the Methodist Episcopal Church as well for his excellence in academics, preaching, and spirituality. According to an historical sketch published in *Zion's Herald* in 1878, Stockman "acquired a large store of useful knowledge, besides making for himself a good style both as a writer and public speaker" and that some of his sermons were said to be "models of clear thought, refined expression and elegant delivery." Although his adoption of the "Millerite theory" had, from the Methodist standpoint, "slightly clouded" his ministerial career, "his soul was sincere, his life pure, his work good."¹⁹

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NOTES

1. "Levi S. Stockman obituary," *Minutes of the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, for the Years 1839-1845*, (New York: T. Mason and G. Lane, 1846), 3:584; birthplace derived from his son Charles' death certificate in "Maine Vital Records, 1670-1921," *FamilySearch*, accessed March 6, 2022, <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33S7-9RYV-FDY?cc=1803978>.
2. *Town records 1805-1851, intentions of marriage 1806-1858*, *FamilySearch*, accessed March 6, 2022, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-C9BL-CG15>; the 1840 U.S. Census has one male under age 5 and two females under age 5, *FamilySearch*, accessed March 6, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33SQ-GYY2-343S?i=26>.
3. Katharine Dickson, *Stockman-Garrison ancestral lines: 114 lines of early New England settlers and the descendants, as of 1984, of John Garrison and Martha Moore of Harrington and Steuben, Maine and New Orleans, Louisiana* (Katharine Brown: Henniker, NH: 1984), 220-221; "Maine Conference, July 21, 1841," *Minutes of the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 3:170. In Methodist ecclesiology, a "Supernumerary Preacher is one who, because of impaired health, is temporarily unable to perform effective work;" *Journal of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, May 1-31, 1876, 167, accessed March 4, 2022, https://archive.org/details/journal1875meth_n0p4.
4. Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches of James White and Ellen G. White* (Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1880), 180; B. F. Tefft, "Rev. L. S. Stockman," *Zion's Herald*, July 24, 1844, 120.
5. "Levi S. Stockman obituary." *Minutes of the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church*.
6. "Mr. Miller's Influence Upon the People," *Midnight Cry*, November 21, 1842, 1.

7. Dickson, *Stockman-Gallison ancestral lines*, 220. E.A. Stockman wrote *Our Hope, or, Why Are We Adventists?* (Boston: Advent Christian Publication Society, 1898), Internet Archive, accessed March 6, 2022, <https://archive.org/details/E.A.StockmanOurHopeOrWhyAreWeAdventists1898>.
8. "Letter from Bro. J. Pearson," *Advent Herald and Signs of the Times Reporter*, July 24, 1844, 194.
9. White, *Life Sketches*, 180; J. Pearson, Jr., "A Short Tour Among the Mountains," *Advent Herald*, September 2, 1854, 274; "Second Advent Camp Meeting at Exeter, N. H.," *Signs of the Times and Expositor of Prophecy*, 27 September 27, 1843, 48.
10. White, *Life Sketches*, 181.
11. White, *Life Sketches*, 157-159, originally published in *Signs of the Times*, February 24, 1876. For more, see Related Content: "Levi Stockman's Counsel to Ellen Harmon."
12. John Pearson alerted readers to Stockman's poor health in "Correspondence," *The Midnight Cry!*, February 29, 1844, 249.
13. Levi S. Stockman, "Ecclesiastical Trial, Arbitrary Power of the M. E. Church, vs. Millerism," *Advent Herald*, February 14, 1844, 13; and February 21, 1844, 17-18; Le Roy Edwin Froom, *Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1954), 4:781-782.
14. Isaac C. Wellcome, *History of the Second Advent Message and Mission, Doctrine and People* (Boston: Advent Christian Publication Society, 1874), 295, 297.
15. Ibid, 297; John Pearson, "Letter from Bro. J. Pearson," *Advent Herald and Signs of the Times Reporter*, July 1844 10, 194; see also "Bro. Stockman, of Portland, Me.," *Midnight Cry*, July 11, 1844, 416.
16. "Levi S. Stockman obituary," *Minutes of the Annual Conferences*. In 1850, Stockman's 12-year-old daughter, Frances, was living in the home a Methodist pastor George D. Strout in Vassalboro, Maine, according to 1850 U.S. Census, accessed March 7, 2022, https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/8054/images/4198846_00490?pid=9418849.
17. "Elder Levi Stockman," *Find a Grave*, Memorial ID. No. 116681400, September 7, 2013, accessed March 7, 2022, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/116681400/levi-stockman>.
18. Ellen G. White, *A Word to the Little Flock* (1847), 16, Ellen G. White Writings, <https://m.egwwritings.org/en/book/1445/info>.
19. B. F. Tefft, "Worthley Brook Sketches," *Zion's Herald*, 14 February 14, 1878, 54.

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