

Taylor, Daniel T.

(1823–1899)

DOUGLAS MORGAN

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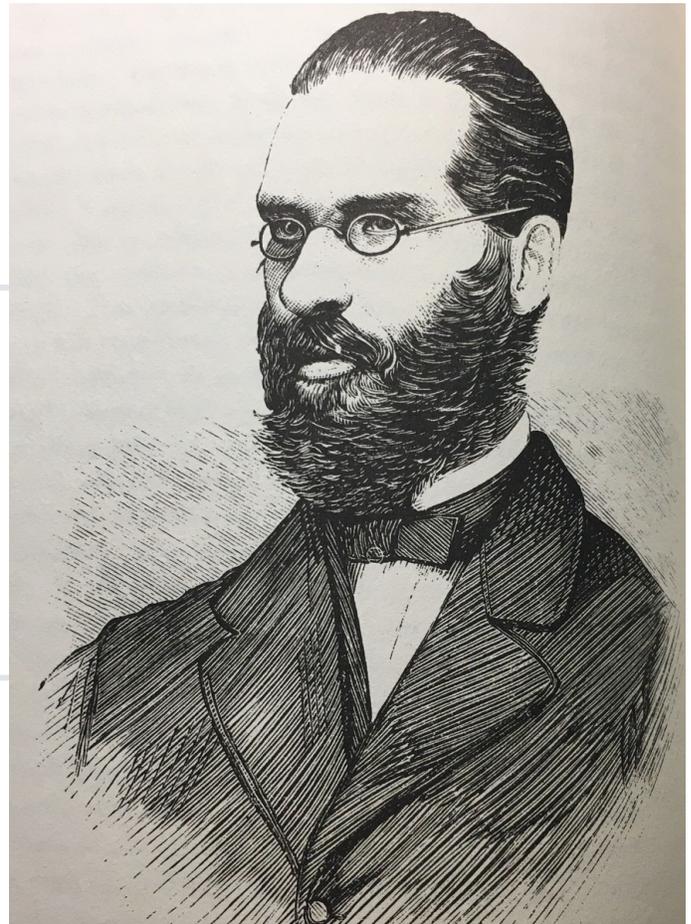
Daniel T. Taylor, Advent Christian preacher, historian, and hymn writer, published what has been called “the first Adventist census” in 1860.

Preacher of the Glad Tidings

Taylor was born on March 20, 1823 in Rouses Point, a village on the western shore of Lake Champlain in the northeastern corner of New York state, a mile south of the Canadian border. After experiencing conversion to Christ, Taylor joined the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1841. In early 1843 he became a “firm believer” in the imminent second advent of Christ as preached by William Miller. These convictions led Taylor to break his ties to the Methodist church in 1844.¹

The disappointed expectations about the return of Christ in 1844 did not defeat his faith. In fact, he felt called to preach “the glad tidings of soon coming redemption” and dedicated his life to gospel ministry in 1846. “I was persuaded, and still am, that there is an abundance of solid proof to show that the end of this age and coming of the Bridegroom is at hand, and to be witnessed irrespective of the passing of fixed dates that seemed likely to bring that day,” Taylor explained.²

He was associated with Levi Dudley in Canada for the first two years of his ministry, and was ordained by Josiah Litch along with other Second Advent ministers at Clarenceville, Quebec, on June 28, 1848. At some point between 1850 and 1855, Taylor married Augusta Mary Smith (1830-1902) and the couple made their home in



Daniel T. Taylor.

Photo courtesy of Isaac C. Wellcome, *History of the Second Advent Message and Mission* (1874).

Worcester, Massachusetts. They would have one son, Daniel Smith Taylor (b. 1870)³

Church Historian

Taylor pastored several churches in New England, New York and Canada for periods ranging from one to four years. He was an effective evangelist, credited with baptizing 160 believers as of 1874. Also, he was "a firm, uncompromising Abolitionist," according to William J. Watkins, assistant editor of *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, who lectured at Taylor's church in Worcester, Massachusetts, in 1854. Watkins added that the same was true of "all the Advent ministers with whom we are acquainted."⁴

Taylor's most outstanding work was as a writer. Taylor's foremost literary achievement was the book *The Reign of Christ on Earth; or, The Voice of the Church in All Ages, Concerning the Coming and Kingdom of the Redeemer*, first published by H. L. Hastings of Boston in 1855.

As would the Seventh-day Adventist scholar Le Roy Edwin Froom a century later in the four-volume *Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, Taylor traced teachings about the Second Advent of Christ throughout the entire history of the church. In so doing, he sought to demonstrate that the premillennialist doctrine of "the personal reign of Christ over a redeemed and restored earth" has been predominant among "the most eminent fathers, teachers, preachers and commentators" of Christian history, particularly during "the primitive and purer ages of the church."⁵ The 545-page work sold well, going through several reprintings and new editions as late as 1893.

Reporter

In 1860 Taylor published a study, called the first Adventist census, in which he reported a total of 584 Adventist ministers and estimated the number of adherents at 54,000. These totals included all the different Adventist groups or denominations that by then were coalescing around disputed doctrines. Those who held to the immortality of the soul organized in 1858 as the American Evangelical Adventist Conference. A larger group who advocated conditionalism (immortality conferred only on those who are in Christ) and annihilationism (the lost cease to exist rather than suffering eternal torment) formed the Advent Christian Association in 1860. The latter position was shared by the Sabbatarian Adventists, who formally adopted the name Seventh-day Adventist in 1860, but neither of the other groups accepted their position on the perpetuity of the seventh day Sabbath.⁶ The Adventist lines of division apparently ran through the Taylor family: Daniel was an Advent Christian but his brother Charles (1817-1905) would become one of the earliest Seventh-day Adventist ministers to work in the South.⁷

Taylor did not attempt a breakdown of members in the different camps, but he did survey the views of the ministers. He reported that 365 of the 584 ministers held conditionalist-annihilationist views, 67 believed that a conscious immortal soul survives after bodily death, 9 were undecided and the other 143 did not respond. On

the Sabbath-Sunday question, the majority, again numbering 365, supported Sunday, 57 stood for the seventh day, and 162 did not respond.

Taylor also reported estimated subscription totals for the periodicals representing the competing camps. The *World's Crisis*, published by the Advent Christians, with 2,900, had the largest number of subscribers, but the Seventh-day Adventist periodical, *Review and Herald*, at 2,300, and the *Advent Herald*, issued by the Evangelical Adventists, at 2,100, were not far behind. The *Review* represented, in Taylor's words, a "decided minority" among Adventists but he added that they were "very devoted, zealous, and active in the promulgation of their peculiar views of the Sunday and Sabbath."⁶

Hymn Writer

In addition to his historical and analytical writing, Taylor distinguished himself as a poet and hymn writer. Hymnary.org identifies Taylor as the author of eight hymn texts, including "Cross of Christ, O Sacred Tree," published in 18 hymnals and "We're Going Home, we've had visions," in 14 hymnals, including three published by Seventh-day Adventists.⁹ One verse from "Lift your glad voices in triumph on high" must suffice here to illustrate his hymns as expressions of fervent Adventist faith:

Lift your glad voices, your banners unfurl,
Sin, death, and hell shall to ruin be hurled;
Christ shall come down in his chariot of fire,
Bethlehem's beauty and Israel's Messiah;
Prince, ever glorious,
Strong and victorious,
Lion of Judah and King of the world.¹⁰

Incapacitated by a stroke during his latter years, Daniel T. Taylor died at his home in Hyde Park, Massachusetts, on November 6, 1899 at the age of 76.¹¹

SOURCES

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NOTES

1. Isaac D. Wellcome, *History of the Second Advent Message and Mission, Doctrine and People* (Boston: Advent Christian Publication Society, 1874), 519.
2. Ibid., 520.
3. H[enry] P[ollard], "Daniel T. Taylor obituary," *Our Hope*, November 29, 1899, 13, at *Find A Grave*, Memorial ID 67894654, April 4, 2011, accessed January 25, 2022, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/67894654/daniel-thompson-taylor>.
4. "Notes by the Way," *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, December 1, 1854, 2.
5. Daniel T. Taylor, *The Reign of Christ on Earth; or, The Voice of the Church* (Boston: H.L. Hastings, 1882), 631.
6. George R. Knight, *Millennial Fever and the End of the World* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1993), 283-287, 324.
7. *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, 2nd rev. edition (1996), s.v. "Taylor, Charles O."
8. Taylor's census in World's Crisis, January 25, 1860, discussed in Knight, *Millennial Fever*, 328.
9. "Daniel T. Taylor," Hymnary.org, accessed January 25, 2022, https://hymnary.org/person/Taylor_DT1.
10. Reprinted in Wellcome, *History of the Second Advent Message and Mission*, 521.
11. P[ollard], "Daniel T. Taylor obituary."

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