

Bourdeau, Daniel Toussaint (1835–1905)

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Daniel T. Bourdeau was a pioneer pastor-evangelist in northern Vermont, among French-speaking communities in Canada and the American Midwest, in California, and in Europe.

Pioneer Evangelism

Raised in a French Canadian Baptist family in northern Vermont, Bourdeau became a Sabbatarian Adventist in 1856 shortly after his brother, Augustin presented to him the scriptural basis for observing the seventh-day Sabbath. At the time, Daniel was a teacher at the Grande Ligne Mission, a French Baptist institution in Canada. In succeeding years, Bourdeau devoted his life to working for the Seventh-day Adventist church. With his brother, Augustin, and Alfred Hutchins, he helped raise churches in Canada and Vermont in the 1860s and 1870s. On August 21, 1861, Daniel married Marion Elizabeth Saxby (1842-1929), a sister of Charlotte Saxby, his brother Augustin's wife.¹

In 1866, Daniel joined with his brother Augustin at first and then with George I. Butler to help strengthen Seventh-day Adventist churches in Iowa after the defection of the Marion Party. In 1868, he joined John Loughborough in opening the Adventist work in California.² Bourdeau also devoted many years working in the Midwestern states, particularly among the French-speaking communities of Illinois and Wisconsin for which he felt a special burden. He was successful in raising a church among the French Canadian community of Ste-Anne-



Daniel T. Bourdeau

Photo courtesy of Ellen G. White Estate, Inc.

de-Kankakee, in Illinois, a community of former Roman Catholics who had immigrated to Illinois from Quebec with former priest Charles Chiniquy.³

Bourdeau assisted in the work in Europe begun in 1874 by the denomination's first official overseas missionary, John N. Andrews. During his first stint there, in 1875-1876, Bourdeau wrote articles for the new journal *Les Signes des Temps* and conducted evangelism in France and Switzerland. During his second period of service in Europe (1883-1887), he engaged in evangelistic labor, at times in collaboration with his brother, Augustin, that led to new congregations in Switzerland, France, Italy, and Romania.⁴

Guidance From Ellen White

D. T. Bourdeau was an energetic person with a powerful mind, who wrote numerous articles for church papers and translated into French many articles, pamphlets, and books. In 1870, Ellen White readily recognized the gifts that Daniel and his wife, Marion, showed in their work among French people in the Midwest. In reference to Daniel and Marion Bourdeau, she commented, "I wish there were more Frenchmen who could labor where the Americans can do nothing."⁵

Ellen White's genuine interest in the few experienced pastors who spoke French led her to take an active role in attempting to shape the ministry of the Bourdeau brothers -- Daniel in particular. She believed both of the brothers had missed opportunities to work among the French population in Canada, and that they should have been more aggressive in this work.⁶ She regarded Daniel's first year in Europe in 1875-1876 as a disaster for the work that was just getting off the ground there. Bourdeau's impulsive temperament, his constant interest in himself and his accomplishments, and his independent spirit and mindset brought intolerable burdens on John Andrews. She felt strongly that Bourdeau should not go back to Europe unless other church administrators invited him to do so.⁷ In fact, Andrews wrote to Ellen White asking her to intervene when he heard that Bourdeau was planning to go back to Europe.⁸

When Bourdeau finally went back to Europe in 1883, a few weeks before John Andrews died, White continued to send letters encouraging him to be more patient and self-controlled. She also felt he worked too hard at times and did not take enough time to relax. This disposition also burdened his wife. She also counseled him to be gentle in preaching against Catholics and other denominations, and to not unnecessarily arouse antagonism from other ministers.⁹

Final Years

Upon their return to North America in 1888, Daniel and Marion Bourdeau worked in many places, including Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, Dakota territory, Manitoba, Quebec, and Louisiana.¹⁰

They had two children: a daughter, Dr. Patience Bourdeau-Sisco (married to Dr. Henry N. Sisco), and a son, Augustin J. S., a writer and editor who died from a lightning strike in 1915. Daniel Bourdeau died in Grand Rapids, Michigan in 1905. Marion lived her last years in the home of her daughter Patience in Takoma Park, Maryland and died in 1929.¹¹

SOURCES

Ellen G. White Correspondence. Ellen G. White Estate, Silver Spring, Maryland.

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NOTES

1. GCA, Secretariat Missionary Files, RG 21, Record 114881, Daniel Touissant Bourdeau Biographical Information Blank, September 5, 1905.
2. Daniel Touissant Bourdeau Biographical Information, GCA.
3. D.T. Bourdeau, "Progress Among the French in Illinois," *ARH*, July 22, 1875, 30.
4. G.W. Morse, "The Passing of the Pioneers," *ARH*, July 13, 1905, 17; Daniel Touissant Bourdeau Biographical Information, GCA.
5. Ellen G. White to George I. Butler, ca. 1875, Letter 49, 1875, Ellen G. White Estate.
6. Ibid.
7. Ellen G. White to Daniel T. and Marion Bourdeau, June 28, 1879, Letter 21, 1879; Ellen G. White to Daniel T. Bourdeau, May 14, 1881, Letter 4, 1881, Ellen G. White Estate.
8. Ellen G. White to Augustin and Charlotte Bourdeau, May 21, 1881, Letter 5, 1881, Ellen G. White Estate. See also, Gilbert Valentine, *J. N. Andrews: Mission Pioneer, Evangelist, and Thought Leader* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2019).
9. Ellen G. White to Daniel T. Bourdeau, ca. 1887, Letter 39, 1887, Ellen G. White Estate.
10. Daniel Touissant Bourdeau Biographical Information, GCA.
11. E.R. Palmer, "The Passing of the Pioneers," *ARH*, November 14, 1929, 29; Morse, "The Passing of the Pioneers," 17-18.

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