

## Big Jim Taylor, Leader of Sect (\* internal links)

The following obituary appeared in The New York Times on October 17, 1970.

### BIG JIM TAYLOR, LEADER OF SECT

'Archangel' of The Brethren Group is Dead at 71

Big Jim Taylor, "archangel" of an exclusive and secret religious sect known as The Brethren, died on Wednesday at his home, 470 East 26th Street, Brooklyn. He was 71 years old.

While the family would give out no information, nor even talk to newspaper reporters, it was learned that Mr. Taylor had been in failing health in recent months. Death was attributed to a heart attack.

Mr. Taylor figured in the news in London last July, when he was linked by some of his followers with a 32-year-old mother of four. The incident, in which Mr. Taylor was traced to Scotland, drew headlines and led to a secret "summit" meeting in this city about a month ago, at which 500 persons were present. The purpose, it was said, was to clear the air and to explain the events in Scotland.

Mr. Taylor's death leaves leadership of the religious organization vacant. Until recently it had been believed that Stanley McCullen, a Scotsman residing in Detroit, was the heir apparent. However, it was reported that Mr. McCullen had "disagreed" with Mr. Taylor and so had counted himself out. Mr. McCullen, known in the sect as "Angel," was present at the recent meeting here.

Mr. Taylor, although visibly failing, still made an impressive appearance, packing 200 pounds in a 6-foot frame.

### Rules of Sect

One of the beliefs of his sect was that no member should have anything to do with non-Brethren, should not talk to them, do business with them, employ them, or marry them.

That is why Mr. Taylor's reported liaison with a non-Brethren woman was so disturbing to the members.

In their daily life members live plainly without television or radio and decline to answer questions from strangers.

The sect's churches are not listed, the leaders are not named, and their titles are not disclosed.

The sect was started about 1827 in the British Isles, when a minister of the Episcopal Church of North Ireland, John Nelson Darby, formed a religious society that eventually was called The Plymouth Brethren.

This group developed a number of offshoots, all using the term Brethren but varying considerably in their beliefs.

### View Based on Epistle

While Mr. Taylor's Brethren are fully as doctrinaire as the other sects, his speeches were regarded as excessively harsh, especially one in which he said members must not associate with anyone who would not keep the Lord's Commandments, "and if this meant divorce, so be it."

He based his view on the Second Epistle of Paul to Timothy, in which Paul wrote, "In a great house there are ... vessels of wood and of earth, and some to honor and some to dishonor; if a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work."

Mr. Taylor was denounced in Parliament in 1964 and by angry British crowds, who charged that his preaching caused, among other events, four suicides, several broken marriages and "untold misery" to many Christians who belong to The Brethren.

When Mr. Taylor left England that year the Daily Mall editorialized:

The harsh tenets of this sect have broken up homes and led to misery and suicide. Now he has gone home. Britain's parting message is: 'Good riddance--and don't come back.'

It was learned from sources close to the sect that Mr. Taylor is survived by his widow, Irene, two sons and three daughters.

## Errata

The appellation "archangel" is an invention of the writer's. The brethren have no system of "archangels" and "angels".

There was no Stanley McCullen. Stanley McCallum of Detroit was at Aberdeen and was one of the two men who discovered Mr. Taylor in a compromising position. Mr. Taylor arranged for Mr. McCallum to be withdrawn from before he even reached home. His departure was accompanied by trumped-up charges. He was widely respected among the brethren. I knew him personally and thought him a very kind man. He passed away in 1987 after a long bout with Parkinson's and Alzheimer's.

James Symington of Neche, North Dakota, was unofficially designated as Mr. Taylor's favorite before Mr. Taylor's death.

The woman in the Aberdeen incident was not a "non-Brethren woman" as reported. She and her husband were in the Harrow assembly. I have been given her name but have chosen not to post it. She reportedly traveled to New York after the Aberdeen incident and was photographed by the press with Mr. Taylor.

The "secret summit meeting" in August of 1970, was one of several. Hundreds "withdrew" from one another and started breaking bread in new assemblies.

For more information on James Taylor, Junior, see my biographical sketch and my article on Aberdeen.