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Some papers the "Historical Society" by

E.G. White Research Center

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URIAH SMITH

June 1975

Old History

See also "Uriah Smith"

On Saturday morning March 7, 1903 the following obituary notice appeared in the Battle Creek Morning Enquirer:

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History*

"Our city mourns. The late Uriah Smith, Editor, Author, and Speaker who died suddenly yesterday A respected and greatly beloved resident of our city for nearly fifty years As was his usual custom he was at about 11.00 o'clock A.M. yesterday on his way to the editorial room of the Review and Herald Publishing Company. He had nearly reached the corner of West Main Street when he was seized by a apoplectic stroke from which he sank upon the Tabernacle lawn The suffering man was soon taken in the city ambulance to his home 65 University Avenue where he expired at 1.30 o'clock P.M. without having regained consciousness . . . a few moments prior to the attack he had remarked to friends how well and boyant he was feeling Though a greatly gifted man he was retiring and unpretentious in manner, ever having a kind word and pleasant smile for all who approached him, making everybody feel at home in his cheerful presence. He was one of the oldest ministers and wisest counselors of the denomination." The front page of the paper carried his picture and a short announcement. The following Sunday afternoon the funeral service was held. As a mark of respect the Review and Herald board met in Battle Creek and resolved:

"That we hereby express our high estimate of the Christian character and the faithful labors of Brother Smith and our deep sense of

¹Richard Hammond. "Life and Work of Uriah Smith," Thesis in the Seminary Library, H.227 (1944), p. 152 (Newspaper suppliment).

personal loss which we have sustained in his death."¹

The Morning Enquirer (March 9, 1903) carried the description of the funeral service. Between advertisements for Brown's Energy dyspepsia tablets, World famous Bucklin's Arnica Salve, and Ayer's Sarsaparilla was ^{inserted} found the following words:

"Impressive funeral service over the remains of the late Elder Uriah Smith were held at the Tabernacle yesterday afternoon. Never before since the funeral of Elder James White has so large a company of mourning friends, sympathetic neighbors and sorrowing fellow citizens assembled at the edifice . . . a constant stream of people passed before the kindly face of a man, whose heart it could be well said, have malice toward none, and showed broad and unselfish charity to all.

"Among the floral decorations was a superbly wrought floral pillow with the word "Father" arranged on its face. Beside it was an anchor piece of roses fully symbolizing the "hope" ever alive in the breast and bursting forth from the lips of the deceased. . . . Directly in front of the pulpit also neatly draped was a ripened shock of grain, befitting suggesting a well rounded life."²

The hymns for the service were composed by Professor F. E. Beldon^{e.} and were sung by a quartet consisting of Professor Barnes, Madames Dunlap Thomason and Beldon himself. Elder Prescott read the Scripture while Elder Daniels offered prayer and gave an extended biographical sketch.

¹Review and Herald, Vol. 80, No. 10 (March 10, 1903), p. 5.

²Richard Hammond, Life and Work of Uriah Smith, p. 153.

Then Elder Prescott followed with a just and loving tribute to the memory, words and works of the deceased. His remains were taken to the Oak Hill Cemetary where they were "tenderly and lovingly" confined to the tomb, to come forth with all the other immortals of earth whose happy lot it shall be to have part in the first resurrection.¹

Why was he so beloved? Why was he called "Father"? How was it that he had become so great as editor and writer in the Review?

For fifty years Uriah Smith was connected with the editorial work of the Review and Herald and for long periods of that time he was the editor in chief. His oversight, direction and planning contributed largely to its progress of the institution, and his solid, logical style of writing well suited the needs of the time.² In the eyes of the church today he has come to be known as the most conspicuous writer and editor of the growing movement.³ It would indeed be wrong not to call him "Father."

No doubt his Review articles and editorials and his book Thoughts on Daniel and Revelation brought him much recognition. He was an active writer to his very last day. He had an easy, logical, and convincing way as well as a smooth flowing graceful style of presentation.⁴ His edito-

¹The Review and Herald March 10, 1903 carried the full text of the funeral service.

²A. W. Spalding, Origin and History of Seventh-day Adventists, Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association (1961), p. 213.

³L. E. Froom, Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers, Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association (1954), p. 1111.

⁴Ibid., p. 1112.

Uriah Smith

rials frequently expressed a tremendous hope and confidence in Jesus Christ. That hope that he expressed in his editorials is well expressed in one of his hymns, "The Hope of the Soon Coming King."

"O Brother be faithful! soon Jesus will come
For whom we have waited so long
O soon we shall enter the glorious home
And join in the conqueror's song."¹

But most of all Uriah Smith was dedicated to God, his greatest interest being the onward progress of the cause. This is well illustrated by his words spoken at the beginning of his ministry.

"I do not enter upon this position for ease or comfort or worldly profit There are burdens to be borne, there are sacrifices to be made, and it becomes us each in the light of present truth, willingly and cheerfully to do what we can in the cause of God."²

How mightily God used Uriah Smith can scarcely be comprehended. His surrender to God made him a power for good wherever he went. His total surrender to God also resulted in his life being characterized by humility and modesty. Such a life is difficult to dislike.

Six and a half years before he died he wrote a letter to S. N. Haskell lamenting his own feeble efforts to contribute to the work which he believed was of God. He writes:

¹Church Hymnal, No. 137. Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association (1941).

²M. E. Andros, Story of the Advent Message, Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association (1925), p. 80.

"My whole life compared with what it might have been seems like a poor failure. I have to be sure written some books, but that is perhaps more owing to my having had friends back there than anything else. . . . I often wonder why circumstances should so have come around as to bring me into connection with this work, unless it was that I might be a trial to my brethren: in which case if that was the design I may have had something of a success, but I am thankful . . . that the Lord is pleased with those that 'hope in his mercy.' I certainly have need enough of it."¹

Uriah was not blind to his own limitations and furthermore he was very reluctant to praise his own accomplishments.

A. G. Daniells said of Uriah Smith, that it was his gentleness that made him great.²

The story is told that one day in Battle Creek Sands H. Lane, a young man who also walked with a limp like Smith, met Elder Smith and passed by greeting him. Elder Smith, obviously with his mind on other things, failed to return the greeting. Lane did not understand and harbored a slight resentment for some time. When Smith heard about it and desiring to correct the wrong impression he had given determined to make matters right. The next Sabbath happened to be the ordinances of humility and Uriah on seeing Lane headed directly toward him. Lane saw Smith

¹Letter of Uriah Smith to S. N. Haskell Nov. 18, 1896. E. G. White Vault.

²A. G. Daniells, quoted in "Editorial," Review and Herald Vol. 80, No. 10 (March 10, 1903), p. 5.

coming and flushed with embarrassment. In his mild inoffensive manner Smith asked brother Lane "May I wash your feet?" The young cripple burst into tears and said y-e-s. Their lameness gave them something in common and Elder Smith tactfully turned the conversation to the new earth where "the lame man shall leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb would sing."

This simple, unpretentious gesture won Lane's heart and he often repeated the story in his ministerial endeavors in Indiana.¹ No doubt this incident created a loving and friendly impression of the editor of the Review.

Uriah Smith was also a tireless worker. "Even on the day of his death" says J. N. Loughborough, "when smitten down with a paralytic stroke, he was on his way to the office with matter which he had prepared for print."²

W. A. Spicer gives us his impression of Uriah Smith in connection with his work. As a small boy he often passed Uriah Smith's editorial room and always noticed the sign on the door in deep purple ink:

Editors Room
Busy? Yes, Always
If you have any business
Attend to your business
And let us attend to our business³

¹Letter from Mrs. J. W. Canner to Richard Hammond, February 22, 1944, as taken from his M.A. Thesis 1944, pp. 138-140.

²M. E. Andros, Story of the Advent Message, p. 79.

³W. A. Spicer, Pioneer Days of the Advent Movement, Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, pp. 245, 246.

Uriah Smith

Uriah Smith no doubt was a man on the march. He was busy with the Lord's business and he wanted others to be about theirs in order that the coming of the Lord be hastened. But in it all he was a graceful and tenderhearted man. Indeed his life was well rounded as represented by the ripened stock of grain. He was a "Father" to the developing denomination and he was loved and highly regarded by all. The spirit of God had overflowed from his life. That same spirit which made his days so fruitful and fragrant filters down through the years, and as we see his life and character before us, it appeals to us to give all for the cause of Christ, and to those who know Him not.

CONCLUSION

Although Annie and Uriah Smith sleep waiting the resurrection morning, their names and deeds have lived on inspiring and encouraging those who take that backward look into the past.

The study of the last events surrounding their lives, and the insights received into their characters and lives are indeed inspirational. We as Adventists have a tremendous heritage to draw on and learn from. Annie and Uriah ~~had~~^{live} lives characteristics of the last day saints--lives of trust and confidence in Jesus Christ--lives characterized by humility and service for others and lives that grew in the hope of a soon coming Savior amid the everyday trials of life.

Their lives indeed present a challenge to everyone who is longing for that tremendous last day event--the Second Coming of Jesus.

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