



Uriah Smith (1832 – 1903)

Uriah Smith who became one of the most prominent figures in the early Adventist movement joined the Sabbatarians in 1852 at the age of 20, following the lead of his sister Annie and parents who were first Millerites in their home state of New Hampshire. The following year James White invited Uriah and Annie to join the staff of the Review and Herald in Rochester, New York. Two years later he became editor, a post he kept for more than 40 years.

Smith was a prolific writer. His first year on the job allowed him to publish a 35,000 word poem he had composed. In 1862 he began presenting a series of articles entitled "Thoughts on Revelation." It is of interest that this version made no comment on Rev. 3:14. But when he published these articles in expanded book form, the first printing included the following comments on the message to Laodicea:

"Moreover he [Christ] is 'the beginning of the creation of God.' Not the beginner, but the beginning, of the creation, **the first created being**, dating his existence far back before any other created being or thing, next to the self-existent and eternal God. On this expression Barnes makes the following significant admission: 'if it were demonstrated from other sources that Christ was, in fact, a created being, and the first that God had made, it cannot be denied that this language would appropriately express that fact.' " (Uriah Smith, *Thoughts Critical and Practical on the Book of Revelation*, Battle Creek, Michigan: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1865/7, p. 59).

But Uriah quickly changed his wording (or position) in the next edition, published 10 years later:

"Moreover he is 'the beginning of the creation of God.' Not the beginner, but the beginning, as some under-stand, of the creation, the first created being, dating his existence far back before any other created being or thing, next to the self-existent and eternal God. Others, however take the word to mean..." *ibid* 1875, p. 66.

In the next edition, which combined his work on Daniel and Revelation, he clarified his advancing understanding of Christ's origins. Thoughts on Daniel and the Revelation published in 1882 by Uriah Smith and the 1897 edition contained the following statement regarding the Greek word arche translated as "the beginning" of God's creation:

"Moreover, he is "the beginning of the creation of God." Some attempt by this language to uphold **the error that Christ was a created being**, dating his existence anterior to that of any other created being or thing, next to the self-existent and eternal God. But the language does not necessarily imply that he was created... Others, however, and more properly we think, take the word to mean the "agent" or "efficient cause," which is one of the definitions of the word, understanding that **Christ, is the agent through whom God has created** all things, but that **the Son came into existence in a different manner**, as he is called "the only begotten" of the Father. It would seem utterly inappropriate to apply this expression to any being created in the ordinary sense of that term." *Daniel and Revelation* p. 371, Para. 2.

Even more so "Uriah Smith's Looking Unto Jesus was the most comprehensive and carefully nuanced exposition of the non-trinitarian view among Adventists." (Jerry Moon, 'The Trinity', chapter 13 'Trinity and anti-trinitarianism in Seventh-day Adventist history' page 196, 2002). That Uriah Smith was indeed non-trinitarian is clearly demonstrated in the following samples:

"God alone is without beginning. At the earliest epoch when a beginning could be, -- a period so remote that to finite minds it is essentially eternity,-appeared the Word. 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.' John 1:1. **This uncreated Word** was the Being, who, in the fullness of time, was made flesh, and dwelt among us." **"His beginning** was not like that of any other being in the universe. It is set forth in the mysterious expressions, 'his [God's] **only begotten Son**' (John 3:16; 1 John 4:9), 'the only begotten of the Father' (John 1:14), and **'I proceeded forth and came from God.'** John 8:42." "Thus it appears that by some divine impulse or process, not creation, known only to Omniscience, and possible only to Omnipotence, the Son of God appeared." "And then the Holy Spirit (by an infirmity of translation called 'the Holy Ghost'), the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, the divine afflatus and medium of their power, representative of them both (Ps. 139:7), was in existence also." Uriah Smith, *'Looking unto Jesus'*, 1898, p. 10

"But while as the Son he does not possess a co-eternity of past existence with the Father, the beginning of his existence, as the begotten of the Father, antedates the entire work of creation, in relation to which he stands as **joint creator with God.** John 1:3; Heb. 1:2. Could not the Father ordain that to such a being worship should be rendered equally with himself, without its being idolatry on the part of the worshiper? He has raised him to positions which make it proper that he should be worshiped, and has even commanded that worship should be rendered him, which would not have been necessary had he been equal with the Father in eternity of existence." Uriah Smith, *Daniel and the Revelation*, 1897 edition p. 430.

The assertion is frequently made that Smith's belief in a literally begotten Son of God was merely his own personal view, was not shared by the majority of Adventists at that time, and particularly was at odds with Ellen White. However, since he employed the very same texts that Ellen White did as support for his theology, it is quite understandable that Ellen White not only failed to reprove him of his "error" but strongly endorsed the truths he presented.

"Especially should **the book Daniel and the Revelation** be brought before people as the very book for this time. This book contains **the message which all need to read and understand.** Translated into many different languages, it will be a power to enlighten the world. This book has had a large sale in Australia and New Zealand. By reading it many souls have come to a knowledge of the truth. I have received many letters expressing appreciation of this book." Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases* Volume one, No. 26. Page 60, "Thoughts on Daniel and the Revelation," MS 174 1899

"Let our canvassers urge this book upon the attention of all. The Lord has shown me that this book will do a good work in enlightening those who become interested in **the truth for this time.** Those who embrace the truth now, who have not shared in the experiences of those who entered the work in the early history of the message, should study the instruction given in Daniel and the Revelation, becoming familiar with the truth it presents."

"Those who are preparing to enter the ministry, who desire to become successful students of the prophecies, will find Daniel and the Revelation an invaluable help. They need to understand this book. It speaks of past, present, and future, laying out the path so plainly that none need err therein. Those who will **diligently study this book** will have no relish for the cheap sentiments presented by those who have a burning desire to get out **something new and strange** to present to the flock of God. The rebuke of God is upon all such teachers. They need that one teach them what is meant by godliness and truth." "**The great, essential questions which God would have presented** to the people are found in Daniel and the Revelation. There is found solid, eternal truth for this time. Everyone needs the light and information it contains." *IMR* page 61

"God desires **the light found in the books of Daniel and Revelation** to be presented in clear lines. It is painful to think of the many cheap theories picked up and presented to the people by ignorant, unprepared teachers. Those who present their human tests and the nonsensical ideas they have concocted in their own minds, show the character of the goods in their treasure house. They have laid in store shoddy material. Their great desire is to make a sensation." "As they receive **the knowledge contained in this book**, they will have in the treasure house of the mind a store from which they can continually draw as they communicate to others the great, essential truths of God's Word." *IMR*, page 62

"The interest in Daniel and the Revelation is to continue as long as probationary time shall last. God used the author of this book as a channel through which to communicate light to direct minds to the truth. Shall we not appreciate this light, which points us to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, our King?"

"I speak of this book because it is a means of educating those who need **to understand the truth of the Word. This book should be highly appreciated.** It covers much of the ground we have been over in our experience. If the youth will study this book and learn for themselves what is truth, they will be saved from many perils."

"Young men, take up the work of **canvassing for Daniel and the Revelation.** Do all you possibly can to sell this book. Enter upon the work with as much earnestness as if it were a new book. And remember that as you canvass for it, you are to become familiar with the truths it contains." *IMR* page 63

"The grand instruction contained in Daniel and Revelation has been eagerly perused by many in Australia. **This book has been the means of bringing many precious souls to knowledge of the truth.** Everything that can be done should be done to **circulate Thoughts on Daniel and the Revelation.** I know of **no other book that can take the place of this one. It is God's helping hand.**" (Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases* Volume 21 No. 1595 'Words of Instruction Regarding Camp Meetings, Soul Winning, and Truth Filled Books, 1901)

"Instruction has been given me that the important books containing the light that God has given regarding Satan's apostasy in heaven should be given a wide circulation just now; for through them the truth will reach many minds. 'Patriarchs and Prophets,' '**Daniel and the Revelation,**' and 'Great Controversy' are needed now as never before." Ellen G. White, *Review & Herald* February 16, 1905. 'A call for Active Work'

There is no indication here in these recommendations by Ellen White that Uriah Smith's theology was wrong or that he was teaching error. Quite the contrary. She said it contains the message all need to understand as never before; it is God's helping hand, presenting great, essential, eternal truths of God's Word for this time. Her approval of Uriah Smith continued until at least 1905, well after she wrote the Desire of Ages in 1898, her allegedly Trinitarian masterpiece that is said to have dramatically convulsed the Adventist church into mainstream doctrinal orthodoxy in harmony with the rest of the Christian majority.

In 1 Cor. 15, I find that it is not the natural man that hath immortality; yet Paul assures the Romans that by patient continuance in well doing all could obtain immortality and eternal life. ***The doctrine called the trinity, claiming that God is without form or parts; that the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, the three are one person, is another.*** Could God be without form or parts when he “spoke unto Moses face to face as a man speaketh unto a friend?” [Ex. 33:11] or when the Lord said unto him, Thou canst not see my face; for there shall no man see me and live? And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by; and I will take away my hand and thou shalt see my back parts; but my face shall not be seen. Ex. 33:20, 22, 23. Christ is the express image of his Father’s person. Heb. 1:3. (Uriah Smith, July 10, 1856, *Review & Herald*, vol. 8, no. 11, page 87, par. 33)

To the Lamb, equally with the Father who sits upon the throne, praise is ascribed in this song of adoration. Commentators, with great unanimity, have seized upon this as proof ***that Christ must be coeval with the Father***; for otherwise, say they, here would be worship paid to the creature which belongs only to the Creator. But this does not seem to be a necessary conclusion. ***The Scriptures nowhere speak of Christ as a created being, but on the contrary plainly state that he was begotten of the Father.*** (See remarks on Rev. 3:14, where it is shown that Christ is not a created being.) ***But while as the Son he does not possess a co-eternity of past existence with the Father, the beginning of his existence, as the begotten of the Father, antedates the entire work of creation, in relation to which he stands as joint creator with God.*** John 1:3; Heb. 1:2. Could not the Father ordain that to such a being worship should be rendered equally with himself, without its being idolatry on the part of the worshiper? ***He has raised him to positions which make it proper that he should be worshipped, and has even commanded that worship should be rendered him, which would not have been necessary had he been equal with the Father in eternity of existence.*** Christ himself declares that “as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.” John 5:26. The Father has “highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name.” Phil. 2:9. And the Father himself says, “Let all the angels of God worship him.” Heb. 1:6. ***These testimonies show that Christ is now an object of worship equally with the Father; but they do not prove that with him he holds an eternity of past existence.*** (Uriah Smith, 1882, *Daniel And The Revelation*, page 430)

When Christ left heaven to die for a lost world, he left behind, for the time being, his immortality also. but how could that be laid aside? That it was laid aside is sure, or he could not have died; but he did die, as a whole, as a divine being, as the Son of God, not in body only, ***while the spirit, the divinity, lived right on***; for then the world would have only a human Saviour, a human sacrifice for its sins; but the prophet says that “his soul” was made “an offering for sin.” Isa. 53:10. (Uriah Smith, 1898, *Looking Unto Jesus*, pages 23, 24)

1. We are baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Matt. 28:19. By this we express our belief in the existence of *the one true God, the mediation of his Son, and the influence of the Holy Spirit*. (Uriah Smith, 1858, *The Bible Students Assistant*, pages 21, 22)



God The Father, And His Son Jesus Christ

Titles of the Father

The following titles of supremacy belong alone to Him who is from everlasting to everlasting, the only wise God:

- “The Eternal God.” Deut. 33:27.
- “Whose Name alone is Jehovah.” Ps. 83:18.
- “Most High God.” Mark 5:7.
- “The Ancient of Days.” Dan. 7:13.
- “God Alone.” Ps. 86:10.
- “Lord Alone.” Neh. 9:6.
- “God of Heaven.” Dan. 2:44.
- “The Only True God.” John 17:8.
- “Who Only hath Immortality.” 1 Tim. 6:16.
- “The King Eternal, Immortal, Invisible.” 1 Tim. 1:17.
- “The Only Wise God.” 1 Tim. 1:17.
- “Lord God Omnipotent.” Rev. 19:6.
- “The Blessed and only Potentate.” 1 Tim. 6:15.
- “Besides Me there is no God.” Isa. 44:6.
- “God the Father.” 1 Cor. 8:6.
- “The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory.” Eph. 1:17.
- “God and Father of all, who is above all.” Eph. 4:6.
- “The Almighty God.” Gen. 17:1.
- “I Am that I Am.” Ex. 3:14.
- “Lord God Almighty.” Rev. 4:8.

Declarations Concerning the Son

- He is the beginning of the creation of God. Rev. 3:14.
- The first born of every creature. Col. 1:15.
- The only begotten of the Father. John 1:18; 3:18.
- The Son of the Living God. Matt. 16:16.
- Existed before he came into the world. John 8:58; Micah 5:2; John 17:5, 24.
- Was made higher than the angels. Heb. 1:14.
- He made the world and all things. John 1:1-3; Eph. 3:3, 9.
- Was sent into the world by God. John 3:34.

- In Him dwells all the fullness of the God-head bodily. Col. 2:9.
- He is the resurrection and the life. John 11:25.
- All power is given to him in heaven and earth. Matt. 28:18.
- He is the appointed heir of all things. Heb. 1:2.
- Anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows. Heb. 1:9.
- God has ordained him to be judge of quick and dead. Acts 17:31.
- Reveals his purposes through him. Rev. 1:1.
- The head of Christ is God. 1 Cor. 11:3.
- Jesus had power to lay down his life and take it again. John 10:18.
- He received this commandment from the Father. John 10:19. God raised him from the dead. Acts 2:24, 34; 3:15; 4:10; 10:40; 13:30, 34; 17:31; Rom. 4:24; 8:11; 1 Cor. 8:14; 15:15; 2 Cor. 4:14; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:20; Col. 2:12; 1 Thess. 1:10; Heb. 13:20; 1 Pet. 1:21;
- Jesus says he could do nothing of himself. John 5:19.
- That the Father which dwelt in him did the works. John 14:10.
- That the Father which sent him, gave him a commandment what he should say and what he should speak. John 12:49.
- That he came not to do his own will, but the will of him that sent him. John 6:38.
- And that his doctrine was not his, but the Father's which sent him. John 7:16; 8:28; 12:49; 14:10, 24.

With such inspired declarations before us, ought we to say that Jesus Christ is the **Self-existent, Independent, Omniscient and Only True God; or the Son of God, begotten, upheld, exalted and glorified BY THE FATHER?** (Uriah Smith, 1858, *The Bible Students Assistant*, pages 42-45, This is also found in *Review & Herald*, June 12, 1860, page 27, par. 3-48) [Emphasis in Original]

J. W. W. Asks: “Are we to understand that the Holy Ghost is a person, the same as the Father and the Son? Some claim that it is, others that it is not.”

Ans.—The terms “Holy Ghost”, are a harsh and repulsive translation. It should be “Holy Spirit” (hagion pneuma) in every instance. ***This Spirit is the Spirit of God, and the Spirit of Christ; the Spirit being the same whether it is spoken of as pertaining to God or Christ.*** But respecting this Spirit, ***the Bible uses expressions which cannot be harmonized with the idea that it is a person like the Father and the Son. Rather it is shown to be a divine influence from them both, the medium which represents their presence and by which they have knowledge and power through all the universe, when not personally present.*** Christ is a person, now officiating as priest in the sanctuary in heaven; and yet he says that wherever two or three are gathered in his name, he is there in the midst. Mt. 18:20. How? ***Not personally, but by his Spirit.*** In one of Christ's discourses (John 14-16) this Spirit is personified as “the Comforter,” and as such has the personal and relative pronouns, “he,” “him,” and “whom,” applied to it. ***But usually it is spoken of in a way to show that it cannot be a person, like the Father and the Son. For instance, it is often said to be “poured out” and “shed abroad.”*** But we never read about God or Christ being poured out or shed abroad. If it was a person, it would be nothing strange for it to appear in bodily shape; and yet when it has so appeared, that fact has been noted as peculiar. Thus Luke 3:22 says: “And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him.” But the shape is not always the same; for on the day of Pentecost it assumed the form of “cloven tongues like as of fire.” Acts 2:3, 4. Again we read of “the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.” Rev. 1:4;

3:1; 4:5; 5:6. This is unquestionably simply a designation of the Holy Spirit, put in this form to signify its perfection and completeness. ***But it could hardly be so described if it was a person. We never read of the seven Gods or the seven Christs.*** (Uriah Smith, October 28, 1890, *Review & Herald*)

Five months after this article appeared in the Review & Herald, Uriah Smith delivered a sermon before the General Conference. In this sermon he comes to a place where he realizes the necessity of explaining some things about the Spirit of God.

It may not then be out of place for us to consider for a moment what this Spirit is, what its office is, what its relation to the world and to the church, and what the Lord through this proposes to do for his people. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God; it is also the Spirit of Christ. It is that divine, mysterious emanation through which they carry forward their great and infinite work. It is called the Eternal Spirit; it is a spirit that is omniscient and omnipresent; it is the spirit that moved, or brooded, upon the face of the waters in the early days when chaos reigned, and out of chaos was brought the beauty and the glory of this world. It is the agency through which life is imparted; it is the medium through which all God's blessings and graces come to his people. It is the Comforter; it is the Spirit of Truth; it is the Spirit of Hope; it is the Spirit of Glory; it is the vital connection between us and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; for the apostle tells us that if we "have not the Spirit of Christ," we are "none of his." It is a spirit which is tender; which can be insulted, can be grieved, can be quenched. It is the agency through which we are to be introduced, if ever we are introduced, to immortality; for Paul says that if the spirit of Him that raised up Christ from the dead dwell in you, he shall quicken also your mortal bodies by that Spirit which dwelleth in you; that is, the Spirit of Christ. Rom. 8:9....

Romans 8:9 9 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his

Uriah Smith described the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ. He referred to this Spirit using the word "it" rather than "He" sixteen times in this one paragraph. Just seven paragraphs later he makes the following statement.

You will notice in these few verses the apostle brings to view the three great agencies which are concerned in this work: God, the Father; Christ, his Son; and the Holy Spirit. (Uriah Smith, March 14, 1891, *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, vol. 4, pages 146, 147)

This statement is very interesting as it explains that the Pioneers understood the use of the term, "three great agencies" in a way that is in harmony with the teaching that the Holy Spirit is not a third, separate being, but rather the Spirit of the Father and His Son.