

[Smith, Stephen Rensselaer]

## Memoir of Rev. Stephen R. Smith

We copy the following from the "Trumpet;" we hope soon to see an extended biography of this truly great, and deeply lamented minister:

We announced to our readers last week, the death of that distinguished preacher of the Gospel, that firm and inflexible friend of truth and virtue, REV. STEPHEN RENSSELAER SMITH, late pastor of the First Universalist Society in Buffalo, N.Y. He died on Sunday, 17th ult., and was buried on the following Wednesday (20th) from the first Universalist Church.

Br. Smith was one of the earliest preachers of Universalism in the State of New York: and from the day when he first lifted up his voice in the proclamation and defence of Gospel truth, he had been an active, faithful, upright, and conscientious man. He has stood foremost in the contest for truth and right; traveling over wide circuits; preaching in private houses, schoolhouses, groves, and of late years in meeting houses. He was firm as a rock; decided in all his purposes; his eye was keen and piercing as an eagle's, and no dishonest man or truckling opponent could stand unmoved before his searching glance.

Universalism sprung up in Central New York about 1802, under the labors of Messrs. Edwin Ferris, and Miles T. Woolley. In 1805, the present venerable Nathaniel Stacy, then a young man, visited and preached in several of the Counties in Central New York, then just beginning to be settled; and in 1806, the ecclesiastical body known by the name of 'the Western Association,' was organized and received into the fellowship of the General Convention of Universalists. It was called by that name, as being the western limb of the Convention. The last named body sent out once in each year a delegate, or delegates, to visit the newly formed Association, to render it aid by advice, and by the preaching of the Gospel. In 1808 the present venerable Hosea Ballou, of Boston, went out as the representative of the Convention; and having attended the meeting of the Association during the week, he remained to preach on the Sabbath in a little muddy village now known as the city of Utica. Intelligence of the meeting had been circulated, and Stephen R. Smith, then nineteen years old, heard accidentally of it; and although living fifteen miles distant, he was induced, by some cause unknown, to attend. It was himself to whom he referred in the following extract:

By what means the intelligence that Mr. Hosea Ballou would preach on the following Sunday, in a place some fifteen miles distant, could have been conveyed to a very young man, who did not then know a single Universalist in the world, is not remembered. He went, however, and heard a discourse in the morning, from Zech. vi: 13—and for the first time in his life, felt that he had listened to a sermon that neither involved an absurdity nor a contradiction. The congregation was not large, and occupied a school house in the present city of Utica—then a meagre and muddy village. A larger congregation was anticipated in the afternoon, and arrangements were made for the service in the open air, under some trees, on the bank of the Mohawk River. There in due time a large auditory assembled, and listened to one of Mr. Ballou's best discourses, from Deut. xxxiii, part of 16th with the 17th verse. It was a glorious day, early in June—the silence of Sunday was around us—the bright blue heavens above us, partly veiled by the branches of a few scattering oaks—the clear, quiet river at our side—the ruddy and healthy preacher in all the vigor of manhood before us,

and pleading the cause of God and humanity with a group of the most attentive hearers. Such a scene is not to be forgotten; and altogether it was one in every respect calculated to make the most favorable, as well as lasting, impressions. And such certainly were its effects on the mind of the writer. For, while it left him without any pretension to the knowledge or belief of Universalism, as a system of religious truth—it entirely satisfied him that it was consistent with itself, and with all that we see and know of the Deity and his moral government. It is scarcely to be doubted, that similar impressions were made on many persons in that congregation. Historical Sketches, vol. 1 pp.20-22.

The doctrines heard by young Smith on that day undoubtedly formed the basis of his faith for his future life. They put him on the track of successful inquiry. But young as he was, he was not to be drawn hastily into the profession of any system of religious truth. He resolved to make the matter a subject of deep, honest, fearless, prayerful inquiry; and the result was that in a year or two he became rooted and grounded in the faith of final holiness and happiness of all men. He did not, however, become fully identified with the Universalists until the summer of 1811, and the effect of his new faith was so powerful on his soul that he could no longer remain silent. This was too great, too momentous a truth to be believed and enjoyed in himself alone. With all the discouragements and difficulties - with all the privations and obloquy that lay before him—but one all-pervading impression was on his mind, viz, he must preach this Gospel of illimitable grace to mankind. During long years of experience and trial, this feeling never once forsook him, and its indulgence never inflicted one pang of regret. On the contrary, every year added new reasons of confidence in the truth of universal salvation, and new assurances in the success of its ministry in the adoption of the truth by the human race.

In April 1812 Mr. Smith commenced his regular studies as a clergyman, and for that purpose entered the family of a Universalist clergyman, believed to be Rev. Paul Dean, who, at that time, was altogether the most celebrated Universalist clergyman in New York. Mr. Smith received a Letter of Fellowship from the Western Association in June 1813, then in session at the village of New Hartford. He continued for some years to travel as a missionary, preaching the Gospel, free of charge, wheresoever a door was opened, and hearers could be obtained. In the winter months he would engage as teacher of some school, and appropriate his Sabbaths to the work of the ministry. He received but slight compensation for his services as a teacher—almost nothing—yet such were the circumstances of the denomination to which he attached himself, that small gifts seemed large, and were offered with a generosity and received with a gratitude that larger gifts in our own day fail to inspire. He continued his studies as far as practicable, and his ministry by occasional appointments in the vicinity of his residence. He did not desire a settlement—he preached mostly in places where no organization had been effected by the believers—and occasionally supplied the desk for the clergyman whose hospitality gave him a home.

In the summer of 1816, Mr. Smith travelled west as far as Buffalo, then just beginning to rise from the ashes of the conflagration caused by the British forces during the war of 1812-14. He spent some time in Erie County, preaching the Gospel in different places. On the 24th of June he preached Universalism for the first time in the town above-named—his place of worship a barn, his auditory respectable, but not large—his text the 6th verse of the 26th Psalm, "He that goeth forth and weepeth,

bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." During these exertions he remained located at Williamsville, where he was sustained by one or two cherished friends. In 1817 he pressed out still farther west into the County of Chautauque [Chautauqua]. This was new ground; but there was the general disposition so visible in other places, to hear what was called 'the new doctrine'! The congregations, both on Sundays and weekdays, were usually large. This visit to Chautauque was the means of establishing a circuit which in its winding to and fro from Buffalo embraced about 250 miles. Thus we see the missionary spirit of the young and ardent herald of the Cross. His sermons were generally doctrinal, and were such as the spiritual and moral wants of the people seemed to demand.

In the year 1821, or about that time, Mr. Smith removed to Clinton, Oneida Co., to take the pastoral charge of the Universalist Society in that place, which had recently erected a meeting-house. Although he was now a *settled* preacher, yet his missionary spirit did not desert him. He labored in all the region round about, wheresoever hearers could be found, and a place of worship obtained. He attended also the meetings of all the Associations in New York, traveling for that purpose one or two hundred miles, over roads which, in wet weather, were the most wretched imaginable. Societies in different places were formed under his influence and direction, and were nourished by his attentions and visits.

Mr. Smith remained at Clinton several years, when he received an invitation to take the pastoral charge of the Universalist Society in Philadelphia. Here he continued with exemplary fidelity, shedding a lustre upon the cause he had espoused, by the purity of his life—the elegance and worth of his discourses, and his devotion to the welfare of his people. Afterward, we think he returned to Clinton for a time, whence he removed to Albany, to become pastor of the Universalist Society in that place. His labors there were deeply prized, but his health began to fail him. Although he run down [sic], so that many supposed his last days were drawing nigh, yet he continued to preach with almost unabated zeal. None who heard him on the occasion of the meeting of the General Convention of Universalists at Hartford, Ct., in 1835, will ever forget the discourse he delivered there—its power—the earnestness and fire of the preacher—and the full glow of enthusiasm which he excited by his thoughts, words, and appearance, in all the congregation.

Continued ill health made it necessary for him to resign his charge in Albany, and seek rest. But this his active spirit could not long endure; and we soon find him settled again in Buffalo. Here the eight last years of his valuable life were spent. He had indeed partially recovered his strength; but it was evident that his health could never be fully restored. His mind was as clear as a sunbeam; it had all the energy of his youth; but his body was evidently sinking under the effect of long-protracted disease. Nearly a year ago, he found he must, at least for a season, resign the charge of the pulpit. The Society saw the necessity for it, and acquiesced in his decision. The man of their choice as his successor was the man of his choice. And now, relieved of all care, he waited the events which Providence had prepared for him. He sunk gradually, — having full time to review his past life, his labors, the doctrine he had preached, the effects it had produced; and in view of all, (except that he had not been enabled to be more faithful,) he thanked God. His faith grew more and more bright. The doctrine he had preached was more than sufficient to comfort him. He feared no evil, not even in the valley of the shadow of death. God would support him, he said; yea, he *had* supported him.

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His last hours are thus described by one who was an eye witness of the scene:

Father Smith—Stephen R. Smith—is no longer with us. He expired last evening, about sundown. We had been expecting the calamity, and yet when it came, it did not come without a shock—a shock which will be felt, not here alone, but throughout the denomination. He had long been expecting, desiring to die. He viewed his work on earth as done, and longed to enter his new sphere of duty and enjoyment.

You know what his life was; and knowing that, you cannot be at a loss to imagine what his death would be. All the circumstances preceding and attending his last moments were in the fullest degree characteristic of him. He looked upon that ordinance which ends life as originating in the same benevolence with that which begins it. Death was, to him, a necessary event in existence, without which the great consummation of a glorious and happy immortality could not be achieved. Indeed, to one who saw him from day to day, it almost seemed as if he felt conscious that the invisible hand of his divine Father was leading him gently along into and through the dark passage between this and the future world, and impressing upon his confiding faith, the full conviction that it was leading him to his home.

He had wished to die on Sunday, and his wish was gratified. When the bells rang for Church in the morning, he listened to them with deep interest, and finally selected the bell of the Universalist Church from among the rest, and appeared to listen to it with unusual pleasure. In the afternoon, they rang again, but his senses had become more feeble, and he did not hear them. He waited until he thought they should have rung, and then asked for them—why they did not ring? The day was a very beautiful one, and closed with a beautiful sunset; and with its close, in accordance with his own wish, in calmness, in peace, in purity, closed the earthly career of one of the best of husbands—one of the best fathers—one of the purest and most upright and exemplary of men—one of the most consistent and devoted of Christians—and one of the most eminent and faithful of the disciples of Jesus, and servants of God. To his family he has left recollections most precious and consoling. To have had such a husband and such a father is no ordinary blessing for the bereaved. And how do they bear the stroke? As a family of Christians should. Excellent wife and excellent children—they have long since learned submissiveness to the dispensations of their heavenly father. As for them, there are many, very many, who will feel this blow with hardly less severity than they do.

E.D.V.

*Evangelical Magazine & Gospel Advocate*, New York NY, 8 Mar 1850  
[a Universalist newspaper]

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Brief Memoir of the Late Rev. S. R. Smith

...Though the event had long been anticipated by him, and he was fully prepared and fortified to meet it as the Christian should meet death; and though we had all been expecting it for many months, yet when the reality came, and the solemn tidings reached us that *Rev. Stephen R. Smith is no more*, the heart instinctively wept—wept for the irreparable loss of that bereaved family, so dear, and so worthily attached to the departed; for that society and large circle of friends among whom he had so long lived, and to whom he had become so much endeared; for the denomination, throughout all its borders, for which he had done so much and labored so faithfully and so long, who prized him so highly for his work's sake, and had his praise in their mouth continually; and for the State and country to which his talents and his life had done honor. Yet the grief that we feel for so great a loss is mingled with much joy and consolation—joy that he was allowed to live so long and do so much; joy that his death was so easy, so calm, so triumphant, and so happy a comment on his life and doctrine, and so conclusively proving what he had so often taught to others, that of all doctrines, this can and does impart the most cheerful resignation and the most consoling and satisfying hope in the hour of death—joy that what is our loss is his unspeakable gain, and that for him “to depart and be with Christ” was far better than to live in the flesh.

His demise having been several weeks announced in the public journals, and the first burst of grief having subsided, it is fitting that we should now sit calmly down and contemplate for a few moments the life, character and labors of this remarkable man—for remarkable he truly was in several respects, and in all respects his character was worthy of being studied attentively and treasured in the memory of all.

1st. The first thing which we remark in the life, character, and labors of the late Rev. Stephen Rensselaer Smith is that he was, speaking after the manner of men, self-made, self-educated, and self-elevated. He could boast of no nobility of ancestry, no aristocracy of lineage, no wealthy parentage, no powerful and influential patronage, no college diploma, no fortunate combination of circumstances that foisted him into eminence and notoriety in spite of himself. His parents, though respectable, were poor and in very humble circumstances, and had removed, if we are rightly informed, from the State of Rhode Island at an early day in the settlement of Oneida county, and located in the town of Western, near Rome (then Fort Stanwix), where Stephen R. was born in 1789. The country was then new, mostly a wilderness; the people generally poor, laboring hard and faring scantily as to money, schools, and social and intellectual privileges. Here were spent the infancy, childhood and youth of S. R. Smith. Of a slender and fragile form, but an active temperament and a vigorous mind, he was ever thoughtful and observing. He heard preaching of what were called the doctrines of Christianity; but to his clear and logical mind, though yet untutored by science, they appeared either dark and mystical and the oracles of Delphos, or contradictory and absurd, and gave him no satisfaction. At the age of about nineteen he, by chance, heard that Rev. Hosea Ballou was to preach on the Sabbath in a school-house where the city of Utica now stands, some fifteen miles from his residence. He attended that

meeting, and heard two discourses from that distinguished preacher, delivered with his accustomed vigor and power in the palmy days of his youthful manhood, the one in the school-house from Zech. vi: 13 and the other under the spreading branches of the luxuriant elms that lined the banks of the Mohawk, from Deut. xxxiii: 16,17. "And for the first time in his life," he says in his sketches, "he felt that he had listened to preaching that neither involved an absurdity nor a contradiction." And though "it left him without any pretension to the knowledge or belief of Universalism as a system of religious truth, it entirely satisfied him that it was consistent with itself, and with all that we see and know of the Deity and his moral government."

On a mind so vigorous and active as his, such an opportunity could not be lost. His mind was on the *qui vive*. He read, he heard, he searched the Scriptures, he inquired and investigated, till he became fully established in the faith of Universal Salvation as "the great doctrine of divine revelation, and therefore the truth of God. This was too great, too momentous a truth to be believed and enjoyed in silence. With all the discouragements and difficulties, with all the privations and obloquy which lay before him, but one all-pervading impression was ever before him—it was that he *must preach* this Gospel of illimitable grace to mankind." Without a classical education, without a knowledge of the languages, without resources or influential friends, he resolved on the great work of the ministry, and set himself about the work of preparation therefore. At the age of twenty-three he entered the family of the Rev. Paul Dean, then located at New Hartford, in this county, as a student. But so occupied was Mr. Dean with other duties, itinerating and preaching as he did all over this section of the country, and engaged in unceasing labors at home and abroad, that our young student derived but little advantage from his location in the way of study, not having enjoyed, as he says, three weeks' instruction during seven months' sojourn with Mr. D. But he *must preach*. And preach he did, and studied, and taught school, and itinerated (generally at his own charges), and pursued his profession and his studies together; not like many, who quit their studies when they enter their profession. He was a *student* through life—studying his duties, his powers, his moral and spiritual nature, studying mankind, reading the book of human nature, and often digging up truth where others would not have dug at all. He also made himself acquainted with the most valuable of the classics, the languages, history and science generally. And both as a writer and speaker his style was scholar-like, chaste, clear, forcible, and popular. And we have often heard it remarked by the members of the New York Legislature that during his residence in Albany, and while he, in turn with the other clergy of the city, officiated as chaplain to open the sessions of that body by prayer, no other clergyman was so eagerly and anxiously looked for, nor listened to during prayer with so fixed, absorbed, and devout attention as Stephen R. Smith. The eminence to which he arose as a man, a scholar, a speaker, a writer, was due, not to fortune or circumstance, but to the vigor and energy of his own soul.

2d. He was remarkable for his industry and activity. We do not mean by this that he performed a vast amount of manual labor, or bodily exercise; for he was ever of a feeble and slender frame, incapacitated for those severer toils of body of which many are capable; but considering his feeble and fragile form, even these by

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no means were inconsiderable. For some ten years of the first of his ministry, besides teaching school several seasons, he traveled long distances to preach, through a new country, and over the most wretched of roads, through dense forests, here and there varied by small clearings and log cabins; and wherever an opening was found and a few individuals could be gathered to hear the glad tidings of a world's salvation proclaimed, there was the young preacher found, ready to serve them. Speaking of this period of his ministry, towards the close of his life, and of writing sermons and extemporizing, he says the latter was a matter of "positive necessity." It was expected that young preachers would itinerate, and they usually did so a large portion of the time; not indeed as missionaries, to whom support and countenance were pledged by denominational funds, but as the messengers of a great truth, whose high calling was the guaranty of the care and protection of Heaven. And the young minister of the reconciliation literally went forth "without purse or scrip," to raise up friends and to gather congregations from the midst of inveterate opposers. To be so far sustained as to be able to do successful battle for God's truth and man's moral freedom, was all that was asked, or expected, or attained. For no man was so vain or absurd as to anticipate a living support in such a field of labor. The time spent in traveling from place to place; the irrepressible desire of both friends and foes for conversation with the preacher; and which he must indulge at whatever sacrifice, left no time and afforded no facilities for writing sermons. No matter how weary both in body and mind, he had no alternative. He must talk, he must explain difficult passages for the gratification of friends, and answer objections at the caprice of enemies. And he must continue to do this till the lecture hour came round, or he was permitted to retire for the night, or perhaps must commence another day's journey. Who could write sermons under such circumstances? And who except Universalist ministers ever found a similar state of things in which to study them? The wonder is, not that the sermons were no better, but that they were not worse than generally supposed, or that they really were."

On the morning of Nov. 23, 1847, as he writes a few weeks later, he had just preached five thousand sermons. These sermons, though few of them were written, were all studied and well arranged. There was always method, system, connection, design, in his sermons, that must have cost him time and deep thought. Besides his sermons, his journeyings to meet his appointments, to attend associations, conferences, conventions, ordinations, dedications, etc., of which he attended many, and the ordinary duties and cares incident to rearing, well providing for, and educating a large family of ten children, he prepared for the public many valuable articles. While in Philadelphia he published *The Universalist* one year, and, in company with Rev. P. Morse, the next year published the *Herald of Salvation*. He was for years a regular correspondent to the editorial columns of the *Evangelical Magazine & Gospel Advocate*, published in Utica, and wrote many labored and valuable articles for the *Universalist Expositor* and *Quarterly*. He wrote the interesting and valuable "Memoir of Rev. John Freeman" while in Clinton; published a course of very excellent "Lectures to Youth" while in Albany, and after his removal to Buffalo, wrote and published two volumes of his animated and

characteristic *Historical Sketches of the Rise and Progress of Universalism in the State of New York*.

He ever acted upon the maxim that it was "better to wear out than to rust out," and often when he went into the pulpit to preach, he looked more like a corpse than a living man. Yet, as he warmed with his theme, he forgot his weakness and his infirmities of body, and preached with a power and an energy, if not of a Boanerges, at least like a Barnabas or a Paul in full health.

Among the many and good fruits of his industry and toils, it must not be forgotten that the Clinton Liberal Institute stands out in bold relief. In the spring of 1831, we published an article in the *Magazine & Advocate* (see No. for April 30, 1831), setting forth the importance to our cause, and strongly urging the necessity upon Universalists, of establishing a literary institution of our own, which should be free from the intermeddling and control of the Orthodox sects, where we could send our sons and daughters for an education without their being insulted and kept under the perpetual surveillance of our religious opponents, and where our young men could receive a suitable education, preparatory to the ministry of reconciliation. Br. Smith heartily seconded the plan proposed in that article. We had several interviews on the subject, and he soon resolved to devote one season to the work of its establishment. Having succeeded in enlisting the feelings of several individuals of wealth and influence in Clinton, and fixed upon that village as its location, he went out during that season, traversed nearly the whole State, and so far succeeded in raising subscriptions as to encourage the Trustees to go on with the erection of the buildings in 1832. And though far less was done for the Institute than it needed or deserved, the most that was done for many years was effected through his active, energetic, and persevering efforts. And through life he ever felt for this excellent and useful institution the deepest and most parental solicitude. In short, few men of his feeble constitution and health, with so large a family dependent on them for subsistence and education, and so well provided for from such limited resources, have accomplished so much for the cause of education, truth, and religion, in the same time.

3d. He was a man of great originality. His thoughts, his words, his style were peculiarly his own. They belonged to no other man. He derived them from no other one. And though from his elevated stand and commanding influence many sought to imitate him in some particular, yet no one ever succeeded in fairly and justly personating him, either in thoughts or style. Speaking of the five thousand sermons before alluded to, which number he completed [in] Nov. 1847, he says: "Whatever may have been the defect of these sermons in respect to style, matter or manner, this one thing is claimed for them,—they were, under God's blessing, entirely my own. They were neither bought nor borrowed, begged nor stolen; though it is but justice to say that, as it regards systematic views of the great doctrine of the Restitution, much assistance has been derived from Universalist authors. But so far as mere sermonizing is concerned, I have thought and spoken for myself. I have neither marred, mutilated, nor garbled the composition of any man; for the reason that I had no ambition to render myself ridiculous by the mawkish assumption of a range of thought, nor peculiarities of style, to which I could make no legitimate pretensions. Neither have I laid the poets under special

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contribution and compelled them to speak in places, and on occasions, and under circumstances that they never contemplated. I shall not live to deliver another five thousand sermons. But whether the number be many or few, I pray God that they may bear the impress of truth, that their influence may be in favor of human happiness, and that they may be honored by the rational devotion and manly virtue of the writer."

It was perhaps this trait in his preaching that, more than any other one characteristic, gave to it the fascination and the charm that it possessed for so many. The hearer felt that he was listening to no copyist, no ape, no servile imitator, but an original thinker, a strong and vigorous mind, soaring, not with borrowed strength, but in its own native energy, or by the "inspiration of the Almighty," and he listened often in rapt amazement to the "thoughts that breathed and the words that burned," as they fell from the pale, thin lips of that feeble and emaciated form of the man of God that stood before him, clothed with the panoply of heaven and speaking "as one having authority and not as the scribes." Though his organ of language was not large, his discrimination of words was remarkable. He would often select words that few others would have thought of, and they would invariably express to the nicest shade the precise meaning he meant to convey. His illustrations and comparisons seemed always happily chosen. He was sure to leave an impress of his own original mind on all with whom he held intercourse. Of the many young men who studied with him, some for a longer and some for a shorter period, and with whom he always held the most free and cheerful intercourse, none who had a mind to improve ever left him without being benefited... They could not long remain in contact with such a mind as his without improvement. Without learning something worth remembering—something more of themselves and their own powers than they ever knew before...

Though he possessed a mind [illegible] and remarkable for its originality, yet he was familiar and easy in his conversation, and in his intercourse with others (unless they insulted or abused him) made them feel perfectly easy and comfortable. Though he was always instructing others and imparting to them new and valuable information, he almost made them feel that they had made the discovery themselves, so entirely unassuming and modest was he in imparting information to others. But did anyone presume to insult him, or treat him with contempt, or assume an undue *hauteur* in his presence, he was pretty sure to humble or shame them, and make them feel that he was not to be trifled with. An instance of this we recollect to the point. In the summer of 1827, if we rightly remember, on a visit to this county (Oneida) from Philadelphia, he stopped an hour or two in Utica, waiting for public conveyance to take him to his destination, and wishing to call on a friend during his tarry, inquired of the inn-keeper where he stopped if he could inform him where the Rev. S. resided. "Rev. Mr. S., who is he? I do not know him." "He is the Universalist minister of this place, sir, and you say that you do not know him?" "No, sir, and I have no desire to become acquainted with him, nor with any other members of that class." But why have you no desire to become acquainted with that class of people?" "Because I consider that no moral good could result from it." "Permit me to say to you, sir," replied Br. Smith, with his peculiar energy of style and the keen glance of his piercing eye, "that no moral evil could result from such

acquaintance, at least to yourself, for I venture to say *your morals are past being injured!*"

4th. A few miscellaneous observations on other characteristics in the remarkable man whose character and life we are considering, will close this very imperfect sketch. Stephen R. Smith was a man of great energy of mind, decision of character, and firmness of purpose. These traits were prominent in all his life and labors. He was never rash or hasty in making up his mind. But when once made up it was not easily changed, nor for any slight cause. From a purpose or resolution once taken he was not easily diverted, for the very reason that it had been adopted only after due and careful deliberation. But he was far from being obstinate or stubborn. He was as ready to receive truth from others, to correct any error into which he had fallen, or make amends for any wrong others had suffered by him, as any other man. Yea, he gloried in it, and deemed it true greatness and magnanimity to do it. And the reason why he so seldom did it was because he so seldom had occasion to do it.

His firmness and decision of character were often put to the test, not only when called to "fight with beasts at Ephesus," but frequently in "perils among false brethren." He was in Philadelphia when Abner Kneeland's defection occurred and that once popular man went over to the ranks of infidelity, and by artful and insidious wiles sought to draw others along with him. But Br. Smith, while kindly treating and pitying the deluded victim and leader in error, was fixed in his principles, firm in his purpose, and immovable as Atlas. And by his firmness and mildness he saved some and won back others from the path of delusion. He ever distinguished between an error of the head and corruption of the heart. He was keenly discerning, and generally highly judicious in adopting the best means to secure the desired end. Peculiarly sensitive, but not easily provoked; often excessively nervous, but never irritable, he could feel an insult keenly without getting angry, and retort with all the courteousness of the self-possessed gentleman.

He was ever hopeful in the darkest hour of adversity, patient under the severest suffering, and cheerful under the most trying of tribulations; ever looking up with confidence to the great Father of all, as too wise to err and too good to be unkind, and fully assured that in the end all would terminate well—God would bring light out of darkness, joy out of sorrow, good out of evil, health out of sickness, life out of death itself. We saw him many years ago, stretched on a bed of sickness for many weeks, that his physician and friends supposed to be the bed of death; but his cheerfulness, his serenity, and his [?] never once deserted him—all was well, and he was happy. Last June, when last we saw him, after he had ceased his public labors on earth, and he knew his end was nigh; and his pale face, emaciated form, and troublesome cough told us in unmistakable language that we should never see him again in this world, he was as "calm and unruffled as the summer's sea, when not a breath of air flies o'er its surface." Yes, he was even cheerful, full of pleasant conversation and instructive anecdote, and talked as calmly and cheerfully of his approaching exit as if he had been talking of a pleasant journey to visit some beloved friends. He smilingly remarked that he was the most comfortable sick man that he knew of in the world. And thus we bade him adieu, with tears in our eyes,

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but quiet calmness in his own, knowing we should see his face no more till we beheld it radiant with immortality before the throne of God. And thus he continued, calm and serene while life lasted, till that beautiful and quiet Sabbath evening—that happy and peaceful day on which he had prayed he might depart (February 17th), when the gentle current of his life had all ebbed away, and that great and good man, that sainted hero of the cross, sweetly fell asleep in Jesus....

As a husband and father, he was ever indulgent, affectionate, and kind; and worthily indeed were his affections bestowed in this direction, for he was singularly blessed in these relations. As a man, a neighbor, and a friend, honest, obliging, faithful, and true; always benevolent and liberal, but never wasteful or prodigal; strictly economical and prudent in all his expenditures, but never niggardly or mean; rendering to all their dues, and always providing for his own household. As a Christian, sincere and devout. As a pastor, vigilant, sympathizing, prudent, faithful. As a preacher of the Gospel, enlightened, liberal, energetic, and persevering—a workman that needed not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth, and giving to each a portion in due season. As an orator, eminent, but by no means perfect. His voice was not of the largest compass, nor of the richest tone, but, when in his usual health, clear, distinct, and silvery, and in its modulations and intonations managed with remarkable skill and effect. In person he was below medium size, and remarkably spare and thin. Naturally bashful and diffident, his confidence and boldness in speaking were derived from his position and theme, and the consciousness that God and duty called him thereto. In personal appearance (except in size) and especially in the expression of his eyes and countenance, there was a very marked resemblance between him and the great statesman of the West, Henry Clay. Though a strong resemblance in the expression of their countenances, there was a difference in their smile. That of the statesman had an archness, a wiliness, a cunning in that it was wanting in that of the preacher; while that of the latter was characterized by the artlessness and freedom of the little child, in its first outgushing joy and the innocent hilarity of its own nature. But accompanying that small and fragile, that diffident and childlike person, and that voice of limited compass, there was a power that could arouse the sleeper from his lethargy, the indifferent from his carelessness, and fix the undivided attention, and hold in breathless silence for hours the largest congregations. That power was the power of mind over matter—the power of intellect and soul over other souls. The hearer felt that he was listening to a message of a lofty intellect—of a soul of superior mould, that had come to him in demonstration of the spirit and of power, and he was riveted to his seat and forgot for the moment all other themes but that of the speaker before him.

Never shall we forget the first sermon we ever heard from the lips of that clear-headed, forcible, and effective preacher. It was delivered at an Association meeting held in Herkimer County in June 1825, just on the eve of his departure from this state for his charge in Philadelphia, from the text in Jeremiah VI: 14: "They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying Peace, peace, when there is no peace"...There are many hundreds, we doubt not, yet living, who well remember, for they cannot forget, the Occasional Sermon he delivered at the annual session of the General Convention of Universalists, in Hartford, Conn., in

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September, 1835,—the suppressed breathing, the deathlike silence that reigned throughout that vast assembly during the long space occupied by the delivery of the sermon; the sparkling eye of the preacher, its heavenward glances; his animated countenance, lighting up that pale face with divine radiance; the clear, ringing tones of that silvery voice, as they rung out over that dense mass of human beings, whom he held entirely at his control; the many tearful eyes in that assembly, moistened with dewdrops of joy and the deep sympathies of humanity, as the happy destinies of a world were so glowingly and gloriously portrayed—all together made an impression that will be as lasting as life on many minds, and demonstrated the power of the eloquence of truth even in so feeble a vehicle.

But that thrilling voice we shall hear no more; that eloquence is silent in death; it can only speak to us from the grave of the past. But “he being dead, yet speaketh.” He speaks to us by his virtues, by his example, by a pure and spotless life, and an untarnished reputation; by his faith, his hope, his charity; by his zeal and devotion, by his fortitude, his patience, and his resignation to the divine will; by his death as well as his life; and oh, may he not speak in vain to any of us. May we cherish his memory with gratitude, take fresh courage from his example, pursue the path of duty which he trod with fresh courage and renewed zeal, trusting in the same benignant Providence that guided his footsteps, and at last, die the same happy and peaceful death that he died, and go to our final rest with the welcoming plaudit of our great Master, “Well done, good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joy of your Lord.”

[Rev.] D[olphus] Skinner

*Evangelical Magazine & Gospel Advocate*, New York NY, 17 May 1850  
[a Universalist newspaper]

Transcribed on 2 Feb 2008 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY