

[Smith, Henry]

Death of Henry Smith

Another veteran has fallen from the ranks of our denominational army. I was called a few weeks since to Avoca, Steuben county, N.Y. to attend the funeral of the venerable and venerated Bro., whose name stands at the head of this article. The following sketch of his life has been furnished by one most intimately acquainted with him. He remarks that if his life could be fully written out, it would furnish the best commentary on Universalism that could be given to the public. His name and family will be remembered by very many of our preachers, for his house has ever been the home of all those who have traveled or visited in that section.

"Henry Smith was born in Dutchess county, N.Y., April 3d, 1785, and would have been 80 years old had he lived until the 3d of April next. His parents were Baptists of the strictest school of their day. They moved to Ulster township, Bradford County, Pa., when Henry was about six years old, where he remained and labored on his father's farm, subjected to the most rigid discipline in matters pertaining to his soul's salvation, until he grew up to manhood. But Henry being endowed with a highly religious and benevolent nature, could not harmonise [sic] the doctrine of endless misery with his sense of the wisdom, justice and goodness of God. Therefore he frequently resorted to the woods, where alone he could pray for light to guide him in the path of truth, and for deliverance from doubt and disbelief, for his young mind had never suspected that his preacher could be in error. Thus things continued until he was about fifteen years old, when an opportunity occurred for him to listen to a Universalist sermon from Bro. Moses Park, who had recently been converted from the Baptist ministry. Mr. Park having been a great favorite in the family of Mr. Smith, previous to his conversion to Universalism, had the entire confidence of young Henry, who listened with devout attention to the life-giving words until the close.

"Then, as he expresses it, the birds sang more joyfully and the world seemed more beautiful than ever before, and from that day the Scriptures possessed new charms for him; and from that day until the day of his death he lived in the pure sunlight of gospel truth with never so much as a doubt to darken the vision of faith.

"At the age of thirty-two, he married Miss Anna Spaulding of Sheshequin, Pa., and moved to Avoca, Steuben County, N.Y., where he lived nearly half a century, clearing land, improving his farm, never forgetting to teach the doctrine of God's impartial love by words and deeds... In rearing a family of four sons and three daughters (all of whom were at his funeral), he had the satisfaction of knowing that all of them believed and cherished his own religious faith.... Every Sunday morning found him surrounded by his entire

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family, listening to a sermon by one of our ablest writers, read by the father. And many times he has taken his wife and daughters to our meetings when superstition and prejudice ran so high that not a female could be found in church save his own. But he had taught them not to be ashamed of the Gospel of Christ. His wife died a little more than thirteen years ago, leaving him to finish his journey alone. This his strong faith in their re-union enabled him to do with Christian fortitude. He often expressed a desire to try the realities of his faith in the future, as he had but little to detain him here below. He had no regrets for the past, and everything to hope for in the future. It is true he took a deep interest in the welfare of the nation, especially since the war, and until within a year, had walked nearly two miles to the post office every day to get the daily news. Politically he was of the Salmon P. Chase school, and never failed to deposit his ballot in the right place on all occasions. Such is a brief sketch of the religious life of the Patriarch and Saint, who like a shock of corn fully ripe, the Lord has gathered to his rest in his kingdom. He departed this life on the 15th of Feb. 1865."

His funeral was attended in the Baptist Church in Avoca, by a large number of neighbors and sympathizing friends. The writer officiated.

It is pleasant to record so signal an instance of the power of our blessed faith. "He being dead yet speaketh." May God comfort the bereaved relatives.

A. SAXE [Rev. Asa Saxe of Rochester, NY]

Christian Ambassador, New York, NY, Sat. 1 Apr 1865
[a Universalist newspaper]

Transcribed on 28 Jan 2009 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY