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Discourse, Life and Religious
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DISCOURSE,

COMMEMORATIVE OF THE

LIFE AND RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

OF THE LATE

DAVID S. C. H. SMITH, M. D.,

OF PROVIDENCE, R. I., FORMERLY OF SUTTON, MASS.

DELIVERED IN THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, SUTTON, APRIL 24, 1859. ✓

BY REV. GEORGE LYMAN.

WORCESTER:

PRINTED BY EDWARD R. FISKE,

PRINTERS' EXCHANGE, - - FOSTER STREET.

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From Anna M. Smith. 60

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Sutton, Mass.
20,018
Washington, D.C.

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S E R M O N .

I Cor. xv : 10. " By the grace of God I am what I am."

The man, whose religious history and experience I propose to give in this discourse, was scarcely a less striking example of the grace of God than the apostle Paul. And it seems due to that grace, which made him what he was, that the great change which occurred in his religious views and feelings during the last years of his life, should be more fully presented to this people than could be done, on short notice, by the venerable father who officiated on the occasion of his funeral, two weeks ago.* With his former views on religious subjects you are well acquainted. With his more recent views, since his removal from this town, you are less familiar. The task before me is both a difficult and a delicate one. It is *difficult* because of my limited personal acquaintance with Dr. Smith, and the necessity of depending mostly upon others for my knowledge of the man—his history, character and opinions. It needs intimate acquaintance with the private as well as public life of such a man as he was, in order fully to understand him. It is a *delicate* task, because a truthful portraiture of the man,—of what he was, as well as of what he became, will require me to say some things which I would gladly pass over in silence. But difficult and delicate as the task may be, I have ventured to undertake it, in the hope of thereby honoring the grace of God, which wrought so wonderfully in him, and also in the hope

* The funeral of Dr. Smith was attended on the Sabbath, April 10, at the Congregational Church, in Sutton, by one of the largest congregations ever assembled there. Rev. David Holman, of Douglas, preached an appropriate discourse from Rev. 14: 13. " Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord."

of doing something, by a simple presentation of facts, towards counteracting the influence, which, for many years, he confessedly exerted here against religion, — which influence he desired, and, as far as he could, endeavored to counteract in the last years of his life. I have taken some special pains to ascertain the facts in respect to the change in his religious views and feelings, not only from those with whom he occasionally conversed on the subject, but also from those who were most intimate with him, and who knew most of his inner life, among whom is an intelligent Christian layman, in Providence, with whom, for the last year, he has conversed familiarly on religious subjects almost daily, with whom he deeply sympathized on doctrinal and experimental religion, and to whom he had probably more fully communicated his personal views and feelings on these subjects, than to any other person living. I may therefore, without arrogance, claim to speak with some degree of confidence, and assure you that the statements I shall make, in regard to the change in his views, are facts and not fancies. My inquiries have awakened a deep personal interest in the man, and a sincere regret that I could not have heard from his own lips, as others have done, the utterances of a spirit touched, as I cannot doubt, and tuned to harmony by the finger of God. And in standing here to-day, in this sacred place, from which his remains have so recently been carried forth, I feel that a peculiar responsibility rests upon me. I am to speak, as it were, in behalf of the dead, and to declare to you, his former neighbors and friends, what the Lord had done for him.

As introductory to the consideration of his religious views, which will occupy the greater part of this discourse, a brief biographical notice of him will not be out of place.

DAVID SOLON CHASE HALL SMITH, the eldest of ten children, — four sons and six daughters, — was the son of Dr. Nathan and Mrs. Sarah Smith, and was born in Cornish, N. H., June 27, 1795. His father, by persevering industry, rarely equalled, rose to the highest distinction in his profession, and acquired a very extensive practice. He projected the Medical School connected with Dartmouth College, at Hanover, — the fourth medical institution established in this country, — and it was, for several years, under his sole charge and instruction, and acquired a high reputation. Having been appointed Professor in the Medical School about to be opened at New Haven,

he removed to that city in the autumn of 1813. Here he held the highest rank, both as a teacher and as a practitioner, up to the time of his death, which occurred Jan. 26, 1829.

Prof. Knight, of New Haven, in a discourse pronounced on the occasion of his death, says, "he became more extensively known than any other medical man in New England. The poor knew him as their benefactor; the sick as their skillful, attentive physician: the rich were honored by his society: and the wise and the good received him as their friend and companion." As to his religious views the Rev. Dr. Allen, then president of Bowdoin College, where Prof. Smith gave several courses of lectures, in a commemorative discourse, says, "I am happy to be able to say, that, in the closing period of his life, Dr. Smith seemed to place a high estimate on the truths and consolations of religion. And when one of his friends asked him, whether, in communicating the sad intelligence of his death to one of his sons, he might say that he died in the faith and hopes of the gospel, he professed that such was the fact, and wished his friend thus to write." Dr. Allen mentions an incident which occurred in his last sickness, and which, as it illustrates his care and solicitude for his children, may very properly be introduced here. His three oldest sons had been educated for the medical profession by himself. His youngest son was yet to receive his education. The father was destitute of the necessary means, and was troubled and anxious. In this state of solicitude and anxiety the door of his sick chamber was opened, and there stood before him a respectable physician of Boston, formerly his pupil, who came to tell him to die in peace, because his son should be taken care of. These words sent a thrill of joy to the heart of the dying father, and his almost palsied tongue gave utterance to his emotions in expressions of thankfulness.

Mrs. Sarah Smith, the mother of Dr. David Smith, was the daughter of Gen. Jonathan Chase, of Cornish, and of Mrs. Sarah Chase, the daughter of the Rev. Dr. David Hall, for sixty years the minister of this town. Mrs. Smith was an intelligent, meek, modest, Christian woman, but did not make a public profession of religion until after the death of her husband, when she united with the North Congregational Church in New Haven. The father being almost incessantly occupied with the laborious duties of his profession, the care and training of the children, in their early years, devolved for

the most part upon the mother, though the father,—as the incident above mentioned shows,—manifested a lively interest in their education. He was also very strict, as I am informed, in requiring them, especially the older children, to attend public worship on the Sabbath.

Respecting the childhood and early life of the son, who is the subject of this notice, I have but little information. Born and reared near the banks of the Connecticut, in one of the most beautiful valleys in the world, he early acquired that love of nature which was strong in him to the last. He loved the scenes in which his boyhood was passed,—the winding streams along which he used to ramble, which pour their silver waters into the Connecticut, and the granite rocks and rugged mountains which he used to climb,—including the noble Ascutney on the west bank of the river, standing sentinel over the sweet valley and the smiling villages at its base. Three years ago last summer he revisited those scenes, and, not without peril, ascended that solitary mountain alone.

In his youth, botany, which in this country was then comparatively an unexplored field, became a favorite study, and he retained his love for it as long as he lived, though in after years he devoted his attention more to entomology, for which he had a special fondness. At about eighteen years of age he entered Dartmouth College and remained there about a year, when he prevailed on his father to let him go on a botanical excursion to the West. He made one or two excursions of this kind, traveling as far as Indiana, then the "far West," and was absent the greater part of two years, gathering specimens, and gratifying not only his love of nature, among the lakes, rivers, forests and broad prairies of the West, but also a spirit of romantic adventure. For weeks and months his parents heard nothing from him, and had nearly given up all hope of ever hearing from him again, supposing he had either perished by exposure in the wilderness, or on the pathless prairies, or had fallen by the hand of violence. He returned at length penniless, having been supplied by an English traveler, with whom he became acquainted, with money sufficient to enable him to reach his home, and was received with great joy. While absent he met with a narrow escape from death, having, by missing a boat, been providentially prevented from joining a party on a scientific and pleasure excursion, who proposed to penetrate the wild regions of the North as far as the Lake of the Woods, but were all killed by the Indians.

He never returned to College, but soon commenced the study of medicine under the direction and instruction of his father at New Haven. Having completed a thorough course of study with all the advantages which his father's knowledge and experience, and the Medical Institution with which he was connected could afford, at the solicitation of a medical student in New Haven from this town, he came to Sutton in the spring of 1819, when he was about twenty-four years of age, and commenced the practice of medicine. The next year, Sept. 3, 1820, he was married by Rev. Mr. Mills to Lucy C. Hall, daughter of Joseph Hall, A. M., commonly called "Master Hall," and granddaughter of the Rev. Dr. Hall. By this marriage he had five children, two sons and three daughters, one of whom, a son, died in early childhood, and the other son and the three daughters after they had arrived at mature age,—the daughters in rapid succession, within a period of twenty-two months.

Dr. Smith continued the practice of medicine here,—with the exception of a short time, during which he resided in Uxbridge,—more than twenty-eight years, until he removed to Providence, R. I., in the autumn of 1847. After remaining in Providence between two and three years, on account of the health of his wife, who thought the sea air injurious to her, he removed to Webster, where his wife died the same year, Sept. 23, 1850. He then returned again to this place with his only surviving daughter, who in a few weeks followed her mother to the grave. Thus bereft of wife and children,—one son alone remaining, and he in feeble health,—and broken up in his business by frequent removals, he was for a time without any certain dwelling place. After his second marriage, which occurred the next year, he resided for a time in East Douglas and Uxbridge, and at length returned to Providence, where, after the death of his second wife, he was married to his third wife, Dec. 2, 1855, with whom he lived most happily, and whose privilege it was to smooth his path-way to the grave.

For some time before his death he had been in a feeble state of health. Two years ago he had a severe sickness from which he did not recover for several weeks. Last June, while at Chepachet, on a professional visit, he was again seized with a sudden illness, paralyzing in a measure his physical powers. This left him in a debilitated state, from which he never fully recovered. He gave up for the most part

his business, giving medical advice however, as he was able, to those who called on him at his house, and occasionally making a professional visit to some friend. For several weeks before his death he had been rather better than usual. On Tuesday afternoon, April 5th, he had been out making calls on two or three medical friends, had walked considerable distance, and was returning to his house, when he fell in the street about four o'clock, and was carried home in a state of partial paralysis, unable to speak, and apparently unconscious. He recovered his consciousness in a measure, and was able to converse a little during the evening. The next day he seemed to be wholly unconscious, and gradually sunk away, until about eight o'clock in the evening, when he calmly breathed his last, at the age of sixty-three years and nine months.

Dr. Smith was no ordinary man. *Physically*, he was a noble specimen of a man. His tall and commanding form, his care-worn but intelligent and thoughtful countenance, and his flowing, snow-white locks, giving grace and dignity to his person, marked him out as a conspicuous man, and attracted all eyes.

As an *intellectual* man he was also remarkable. He was gifted with a mind of more than ordinary grasp and power—a mind of great penetration and of quick perception, which enabled him readily to comprehend the principles of any science or branch of knowledge to which he gave his attention, to detect the nature and symptoms of occult disease, and to understand the characters of men. He had also a ready wit, which in the form of keen sarcasm, or dry humor, he could use with great power. With a strong and discriminating mind, and a retentive memory, he united tender sensibilities and a generous and benevolent heart—qualities for which his father was distinguished. He sympathized deeply with the afflicted and suffering, and was kind and generous to the poor. At the bed of sickness and death, he often wept like a child. And when his little son, two years and a half old, was taken away, the strong man was bowed down, and his heart broken. At the same time he was a man of strong passions, quick tempered, and violent in his resentments, as he was strong in his attachments. His naturally irritable temper, perhaps not sufficiently restrained in his boyhood, was doubtless aggravated by pecuniary embarrassments and uncongenial domestic relations. A nature like his needed especially the softening influence of gentleness and

love. Had this influence always surrounded him, and his proud, sensitive spirit been brooded over by the angel of domestic peace and love, he would doubtless have been a different man from what he was. His views of life would have been brighter and more cheerful; and probably his religious views and character would have been different from what they were.

The *literary* and *scientific* attainments of Dr. Smith were more than respectable. He wrote and published some articles on natural history, mostly on entomology, which evince careful study, and accurate knowledge of the subject. He had also projected a work on this branch of natural history, and had commenced writing it, when it was interrupted by the sickness and death of a beloved daughter, who had acquired some skill in drawing, and who was expected to furnish illustrations for the work, and was never afterwards resumed.

As a *physician*, Dr. Smith stood confessedly among the first. He had a thorough knowledge of medicine, and was skillful in the treatment of disease. In what physicians term diagnosis, he especially excelled, readily detecting the nature, and accurately describing the symptoms of disease. When he differed from other physicians, his opinions, on post-mortem examination, were generally found to be correct. His judgment was therefore highly valued, and his counsel much sought for in difficult cases. His practice was very extensive throughout this region, and he was not unfrequently called to distant places. Hundreds, if not thousands, can testify to his skill and success as a physician, and will remember his services and cherish his name with heart-felt gratitude as long as they live. The same high standing which he had gained in this region, he retained also in Providence and the vicinity, after his removal to that city; and, though less known there, he was employed in families of the highest intelligence and respectability as long as he was able to practice, and, was consulted by physicians who stand at the head of their profession in that city.

I come now to speak of the *religious opinions and character* of Dr. Smith,—of what he once was, and of what he at length became by the grace of God. For in order to set forth the greatness of the change in him, and the greatness of the grace which wrought that change, it will be necessary for me to describe briefly, but faithfully as I can, the opinions and character of the man, as he was before the change took place.

It is well known that Dr. Smith was for some years a skeptic in religion. In conversation with ministers of the gospel and with Christian people, especially those whom he disliked, he professed to be an infidel. He ridiculed portions of the Bible, denounced the church and the ministry,—speaking of some, against whom he had conceived a prejudice, in terms of peculiar bitterness and violence. No language was too strong to be employed against them; no abuse too extravagant to be heaped upon them. For many years he rarely, if ever, visited the house of God, and seldom talked on the subject of religion but to cavil. He read infidel publications, and for a number of years took “The Investigator,” an infidel publication in Boston. At one time he went to Boston to attend an infidel Convention; but finding that most of those who took part in it were really atheists of the lowest kind, he came away disgusted. For, while professing to reject the Bible as a divine revelation, he never doubted the existence of God. In conversation, on one occasion, with a man who denied the existence of God, and who declared that he could himself make a world if he only had the means, he replied, “Well, when you will make one blade of grass and finish it all off, then I will believe there is no God.” The truth is he never was a confirmed infidel. This is the testimony of those who knew him best, and this was his own declaration within the last year. To the gentleman in Providence, before alluded to, he made this remarkable confession; “They said I was an infidel, and I thought I was. But I was never an infidel when alone. I have talked infidelity, and defended it when in company with others, and then have gone home and read the Bible for three hours together, and said to myself, this book is true.” This confession furnishes the key to the apparent contradictions in his religious opinions, and explains and harmonizes the conflicting views entertained by different persons respecting them. Like many other skeptical men he avowed sentiments which he did not from the heart believe. His deepest convictions, his conscience, his education rebelled against them. And yet he was a thorough skeptic. He had broken away from the authority and claims of the word of God, and was afloat on a dark and troubled sea of doubts and unbelief.

And it would not be difficult to point out some of *the causes of his skepticism*. It was not science. For though there have been many infidel philosophers and men of science, he knew that there is

nothing in true science, anatomical, astronomical, geological or any other, now known and understood, that is hostile to the Bible; and that it is only "philosophy, falsely so called," and science in its crude and unsettled state that have been arrayed against the word of God. He well knew,—for he was no charlatan in science, and hated all forms of quackery,—quackery in science, quackery in literature, quackery in medicine, and quackery in theology,—he knew that those very sciences, which have been either ignorantly or dishonestly pressed into the service of infidelity, really furnish new and increasing evidence of the divine origin of the sacred Scriptures; and that the most distinguished scientific men of this age admit the entire harmony of science and revelation,—the book of nature and the book of inspiration. He was too honest to pretend that true science is opposed to the Bible.

Nor was his skepticism the result of a careful and thorough examination of the evidences revealed religion. There is no proof that he had ever carefully read, weighed and pondered these evidences. No; it was not science,—not the study of nature, or of the human system; it was not his strong and investigating mind; applied to an examination of the evidences, external and internal, of the divine origin of the Christian religion, which made Dr. Smith a skeptic. Doubtless his acute and powerful mind discovered difficulties in revealed religion, which weak and unthinking minds do not discover. But that same power of discrimination which enabled him to discover, enabled him also to solve these difficulties.

He had read to some extent infidel writings, and was familiar with the popular objections against Christianity. And these doubtless had some influence upon him. Perhaps also he regarded religious skepticism as rather an evidence of an independent and inquiring mind. Pride of intellect, and a consciousness of intellectual superiority, might have led him to advocate infidel sentiments. Irreligious associates had also an unhappy influence upon him. Men who hated the church and hated religion did much, it is believed, to poison his mind against both. All these influences, in addition to uncongenial domestic relations, had their effect upon him. But the radical cause of his skepticism was doubtless a heart opposed to the high and holy claims of the gospel. This is the fruitful source of religious skepticism and infidelity. "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God."

But whatever were the causes of his skepticism, *the consequences* of it were most deplorable. Its influence upon himself and upon others was bad and only bad. He had great power over other minds, not only because he was the superior of most others in intellectual ability, but also because of the keenness of his wit and sarcasm. His ridicule was more powerful than argument. His words were quoted as the words of an oracle. His apt sayings were treasured up and passed round as circulating coin. The minds of many, especially young men, were poisoned by him. Some became skeptical through his influence, and not a few were morally injured and corrupted by him. He took no pains to conceal his opinions. He was no hypocrite. There was no duplicity about him. He resorted to no artifice, no cunning, no tricks, no disguises. He was frank and open in avowing his sentiments on all subjects, even though he might incur public odium in consequence. He did not conceal his skeptical opinions. He rather gloried in them, and liked to startle people, especially religious people, by avowing them. His boldness in uttering his sentiments everywhere, and in almost all places, extended his influence far and wide. He scattered broadcast the seeds of infidelity.

The influence of skepticism upon himself was also unhappy. It was injurious to his *mind*, depriving it of the support, the energy, the motive to high endeavor, which faith in Christ imparts to the intellect, and deranging the nice adjustment and harmonious action of its various powers. It was injurious to his *character*. Having cut loose from the restraints of piety, and cast off the fear of God, he gave reins to his naturally strong passions, and became violent and resentful in his feelings,—thrusting his professedly infidel sentiments, at unseasonable times and in improper places, upon the attention of pious people, especially those whom he disliked, for the very purpose apparently of injuring their feelings; and sometimes, when opposed in his views, or censured for his conduct, giving vent to his towering wrath in abusive and profane language. And yet he was by nature, and education, and habit, a gentleman; and his better nature would often triumph over angry passions. On one occasion, when, in conversation with a Christian man on religious subjects, he became excited and profane, as he was driving away, he stopped his horse, and, turning round, said: “There—I have made a fool of myself. You

have always treated me like a gentleman. I beg your pardon," and the tears flowed unbidden as he spoke.

His skepticism also made him an *unhappy man*. It was the spoiler of his peace of mind, and to a great extent also of his domestic happiness. There can be no doubt that he was an unhappy man, and was made so, in great part, by his unbelief. Such were the fruits of his religious skepticism. It injured his mind. It poisoned and corrupted his heart. It debased his manners and his morals. It spoiled his peace. Whichever way he turned he found no peace to his restless and troubled soul. At one time he attended on the preaching of a fashionable form of error, which was for a time maintained in this place, but found no rest there, and said the enterprise would fail and come to nothing for the want of piety to sustain it. He had sagacity enough to know that piety was necessary to sustain a Christian church, and even Christian worship. He tried to find rest in the doctrine of Universal salvation, and took "The Trumpet" for a time, but was repelled from that with disgust. He plunged at last, with a sort of reckless desperation and madness, into the abyss of skepticism, "taking a fearful leap in the dark," but found no rest there. He read the writings of Theodore Parker, the ablest representative of the latest form of infidelity, and professed to sympathize with him. But still his mind was not satisfied with any or all of these various forms of unbelief and error. His heart was not at rest. It craved something better. It cried out after God—after a Saviour—after peace. And at length he found it. After wandering long in the wilderness of error, seeking rest, but finding none, he was at last conducted through it, and permitted to see the land of promise. And with a feeling of relief and gladness we turn from his former to his later life,—from the darkness and gloom of unbelief to the light and joy of faith.

For several years before his death, his views had been undergoing a change. He was in a state of inquiry, and of more or less anxiety. He conversed freely with Christian people, ministers of the Gospel, pious physicians and others, in regard to his state of mind. He read the Bible and religious books, and expressed the hope that he might become a Christian. By slow degrees, darkness and doubts disappeared from his mind, until he became at length fully established in his belief of the divine origin, necessity and importance of

the Christian religion. This change was brought about, I believe, not so much by a more thorough examination of the evidences of the Christian religion, and the force of argument, as by providential influences. His own experience had taught him the emptiness of all forms of skepticism. His soul was starving on the husks with which he had been endeavoring to satisfy it, and was hungering for something better.

The great trials through which he had passed,—having followed all his family one after another to the grave, and passed through other trials even more severe,—trials which would have crushed a feebler soul than his, and under which, as he afterwards confessed, he had been tempted to take his own life,—these terrible trials had also taught him his need of the supports and consolations of the Gospel. His experience as a physician had also convinced him that there was a power in the Christian religion to sustain the soul and give it peace in the dying hour. He had witnessed the death-beds of believers and unbelievers,—the calmness and serenity of the one and the anxieties, fears, alarms and often despair of the other. “No man in my profession,” he once said, “who has seen what I have seen, can deny that there is a reality in religion.”

This change in his views he as frankly avowed as he had before avowed skeptical sentiments. He took pains to inform his friends of the change, sending verbal messages to some whom he could not visit in person. To a member of this church who met him in the streets of Providence, he said, “Tell your father that I am a firm believer in the Christian religion.”

The change in his intellectual views was followed, in the course of time, by a still greater change in his heart and life. Having become settled in his belief of the divine authority of the Scriptures, he had now “a lamp unto his feet and a light unto his path,”—a safe and sure guide in all matters of faith and practice. With awakened interest and earnestness he applied himself to the study of the Scriptures. He asked direction of God, and did not ask in vain. Led, as he believed, by the Holy Spirit, he came to feel his lost condition and to embrace Christ. His state of mind at this time is thus described in a communication, sent to me by the Rev. Mr. Conklin, of Providence, who seems to have been at this time his spiritual adviser. “I have known Dr. Smith,” he says,

“several years by seeing him in my congregation, and meeting him at his house and elsewhere. Some two years since I learned that he was sick, and immediately called on him. We had a brief conversation. I found his mind dark, but troubled about his situation. I prayed with him and left.” After stating that he visited him several times during this sickness, which continued a number of weeks, he goes on to say: “In the course of my visits he appeared not only anxious, but candid and desirous of knowing the truth. He confessed to me that his creed had been infidel, and that his life had accorded with his dark system of unbelief. He was much distressed with the thought of a mis-spent life, and was overwhelmed almost with the thought of dying as he had lived. At a subsequent interview I found him rejoicing in hope. His heart was so full that most of the time of the interview was spent in uttering the expressions of his own heart,—expressing his admiration of the Christian system, and confessing his indebtedness and obligations in view of the transcendent mercy and grace of God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

“I was deeply interested in hearing him vindicate Christianity from his old skeptical objections, and was astonished at the ability he showed in defence of the truth. I well remember that, at the time of my calling, he was taking some refreshments; but that he was so overjoyed to see me that he dropped every thing and gave up his time to conversation. That a great change took place in his views and feelings I have no reason to doubt. Nor do I know of any thing in his subsequent life up to the time of his death, tending in the least to shake my confidence. I considered the doctor’s case an extraordinary instance of Divine grace, and have so spoken of it to my ministerial and lay brethren.” It would appear from this communication that the change in him occurred about the time of the sickness referred to,—nearly two years ago. For some time after that, however, while he was always ready to speak of his views and feelings, and gave evidence, I think, of a great change, he was yet slow to acknowledge a personal hope that he was a Christian. He scarcely dared to hope, as he said, so great a sinner had he been. It was not, I think, until the revival last spring, a year ago, in which he became deeply interested, that his religious views and feelings assumed a definite and decided character, and he was willing to acknowledge publicly a personal hope in Christ. And even then he

seldom, if ever, expressed himself with confidence, so unworthy did he feel himself to be. But those who knew him, and have conversed with him since that time, on the subject of religion, give their united testimony to the reality and greatness of the change in him.

The Rev. Dr. Leavitt, of Providence, on whose ministry Dr. Smith frequently attended, says, "That after repeated religious conversations with him, within the last few years, I now feel the pleasant hope that he was so far removed from all essential skepticism, as to be truly a converted man, a penitent, now a ransomed soul."

The Rev. Mr. Goodwin, for many years the rector of the Episcopal church in this town, now city missionary in Providence, who has known Dr. Smith for more than twenty-five years, and who has called on him and conversed with him several times, on religious subjects, since his removal to Providence,—the last time only two days before his death—has personally expressed to me his conviction that Dr. Smith was really a new man. He stated to me some interesting facts illustrating his views and feelings. At one time, as the doctor met him at the door and welcomed him in, he said to him—alluding to a previous visit—"I did not understand what you said to me then about faith. Now I understand it. It's all plain to me." Either at this, or at another time, he spoke of the absolute necessity of a Saviour, arising from the lost condition of man, and said that we might almost infer beforehand, that a Saviour would be provided to meet the felt and acknowledged wants of man. "God's works," said he, "are perfect. He makes provision for every want." And he gave an illustration from his favorite science. "I once found," he said, "an insect living on the surface of the water. On examining it, I discovered two eyes on the top of the head, and thought, that, as this insect lived on the water, and needed to look down as well as up, this was a great defect. But on turning the insect over and examining the other side, I discovered two eyes also underneath."

All whom I have seen, who have conversed with him within the last year, on religious subjects, have expressed their deep interest in his conversation,—in his clear views of truth, his powerful arguments and striking illustrations, and in his earnest but humble expressions of his personal convictions and feelings. There are those before me who can testify to this, and to the evidence he gave of a regenerate

character. Less than a year ago, when he was here on a funeral occasion, coming from revival scenes and daily prayer meetings, in which he was deeply interested,—and in which, his religious feelings seem to have opened into the full-blown flower, drinking in the dews of heaven,—at that time his heart was full, and religion was the great theme of his conversation. To almost every one with whom he conversed he had something to say on the great theme which was uppermost in his thoughts. In reply to caviling objectors he vindicated the ways of God to man, and expatiated on the goodness, mercy, and condescension of God in giving his son to die for us.

On this occasion, as the funeral procession was forming, he took a brother by the arm, from whom he had once been alienated, and with whom for years he had refused to speak, and walked with him to the grave. He began at once to converse on the subject of religion, and with tears rolling down his cheeks, spoke of his former feelings towards him, and of the change which had taken place in him, acknowledging, at the same time, his obligations to him for the kindness he had shown him in seasons of affliction and of pecuniary want. He spoke with deep regret of his past life and influence, and expressed his sense of his great sinfulness and unworthiness, and of the abounding mercy of God towards him. In this change in his feelings towards those who, he thought, had wronged him, we have one of the best evidences of genuine conversion.

At this, same visit, in conversation with some friends, the subject of the great revival and the daily prayer meetings, then in progress, was spoken of, and he was asked what he thought of them. His reply was, “I am greatly interested in the prayer meetings, and attend them every day, when I can.” In the course of this conversation, he spoke also with great satisfaction of his freedom from debt, which had formerly been a source of trouble and perplexity to him, and said, “My name is in no man’s book, and I don’t mean to have it again. There is but one book in which I desire to have my name recorded—the Lamb’s book of life.” Many have spoken to me of this visit,—which occurred during my absence from town,—and of his deeply interesting conversation at the time, with great delight. It was, I believe, the last visit but one which he made to Sutton. The last, which was a professional visit, occurred about two and a half months before his death. It was in the midst of

winter, and his stay was short. But then, as before, his theme was religion. Returning from his visit to the patient whom he had been to see, on his way to the cars, he called and spent an hour or two at the house of a member of this church, to whom he had formerly avowed infidel views, and to whom he had apologized, as before mentioned, for using profane language. The whole time was spent in religious conversation. The brother, expressing his gratification at the good news he had heard respecting the change in his religious views and feelings, he confessed in reply, that his feelings were changed, and discoursed in a most interesting manner, on the nature and mysteriousness of conversion, declaring that it was more than a mere change of purpose, and was the effect of the special operation of the Spirit of God on the heart. And the brother quoting the words of Christ to Nicodemus, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth," he replied, "That's it." He could not explain the change that had taken place in him. It was not, he said, the effect of preaching, or of the personal conversation and influence of ministers, or of others. "All I can say is, it came to me." And at the same time he referred to a period of sickness,—probably the sickness above mentioned, about two years ago,—when, as he lay on his bed, he found his feelings strangely flowing out towards God and towards Christ. He spoke also to this brother of his past life, and of the great trials he had been through, saying "They were all needful. I would not have one of them notched out of my life."

He often spoke of these trials to others, and of late always in a spirit of submission, recognizing the hand of God in them, and his desert of them all. "I was to go through all these troubles," said he, "to punish me. It was so ordered. It was all for the best." He felt that he deserved nothing at the hands of God; and when asked, "What if God should cast you off at last?" he replied, "I submit to it. I deserve to perish, and shall perish unless God have mercy on me." He was meek and humble as a little child. The lion became a lamb. Meekly, and submissively, he is "sitting at the feet of Jesus clothed, and in his right mind." He came to love as well as believe the Holy Scriptures, and read them much during the past year, preferring the word of God to all other books. And next to the Bible he valued and read most a quaint old book on doctrinal

and experimental religion, written by "Ralph Venning, of Immanuel College in Cambridge," England, and printed in London, in 1650. It is a small book, but rich in doctrinal truth, and fragrant with the savor of practical godliness. He loved also plain and simple preaching, and once said to his minister, "You need not sugar over any pills for me." "As a new born babe he desired the sincere," simple, unadulterated, pure "milk of the word that he might grow thereby."

His doctrinal views were clear, and strongly Calvinistic. The doctrines of the native depravity of man, of atonement for sin by the sacrifice of Christ, of election, of unconditional submission, of regeneration by the Holy Spirit, of justification by faith alone, of the perseverance of saints, and of eternal rewards and punishments—each and all of them, he firmly believed. The sovereignty of God in the gifts of his grace was a theme on which he delighted to dwell, and the denial of it by any class of Christians was to him a matter of astonishment and grief. In a word, he was thoroughly Orthodox in his views, embracing the Calvinistic system of faith as set forth by the old divines of New England,—especially by Hopkins and Emmons. These great doctrines were the pillar of his faith and the support of his soul. He was also a firm believer in the doctrine both of a *particular* and of a *general* providence, often referring in illustration of it to incidents—some of them striking ones—in his own experience. The incident, before mentioned, when, by missing a boat, he was prevented from joining a party, all of whom were afterwards killed by the Indians, he regarded as a special providence. Some years ago he was urgently invited by his brother, Dr. James M. Smith, of Springfield, to attend with him a Medical Convention in New York, when his brother and several other physicians on their return were killed in the great railroad disaster at Norwalk, and he was prevented from going only by the severe sickness of a patient whom he thought it was not right to leave.

Three years ago last August he visited his native place, and ascended the Ascutney mountain alone, as before mentioned. Returning, he lost his way. Coming upon a rocky rivulet in the forest, he followed it for some time, thinking it would lead him out, and fell into the water, wetting himself to the skin. Night was at hand. He was weary and exhausted, and was apprehensive that he might perish on the mountain. In this extremity, though at that time a

stranger to prayer, he threw himself on his knees in earnest supplication. He arose calm and composed, and going on a little distance he unexpectedly came upon the path, and again threw himself on his knees and thanked God. This he regarded as a most providential escape; and it is believed that from that time he was not a stranger to prayer. Many other incidents in his own experience, illustrative of a special and particular providence, he used to relate. In several instances, when pressed for money, the unexpected payment of an old debt, or the call of some friend for professional advice, leaving him, as he departed, a five or ten dollar note, supplied him with just the amount needed at a particular time. He had a firm trust in Providence, and recognized the agency of God in every event, even the most common and insignificant. With tears of gratitude he acknowledged the good providence of God in his last marriage, and in his domestic comforts, at the same time confessing that he did not deserve such kindness as he received.

But I must pause. If what has been said,—and the half has not been told—does not furnish satisfactory evidence of a great and radical change in the remarkable man whose life and character I have endeavored to sketch, I know not what can furnish such evidence. I do not say that he became a faultless man, that he was free from all the sad effects of his former skeptical and irreligious life, much less that his personal peculiarities of disposition and character were eradicated. He had great imperfections and errors, no doubt, remaining; but no one, who is acquainted with the facts, can doubt, I think, that he was a renewed man.

He deeply regretted his past life, and especially the bad influence he had exerted upon young men, and took special pains to counteract that influence as far as was in his power. "I wish to go" he said, "to every man whom I have influenced against religion, and retract what I have said." He desired also to give his testimony in favor of religion, and to do it here, where his past life was known, and where his worst influence had been exerted. He seriously thought of returning to spend the evening of his days in this town, for the purpose in part of leaving here the testimony of his life as well as of his lips, in behalf of the faith which he once endeavored to destroy. And when talking of making a public profession of religion, which at one time he thought of doing in Providence, but which, for

particular reasons, he decided not to do at that time, he said that if he were here, where he was better known, he would do it. He was not ashamed to own Christ, or to stand up for his cause. "I do not wish," he said, "to hide my religion, nor to proclaim it on the house top." He shrunk from the notoriety of a public profession, and from the possible misconstruction of his motives. And yet he was willing the world should know what his religious views and feelings were. And there are not a few in this place, as well as in Providence, who are ready to stand up and bear witness for him, now that his lips are sealed in death. Thus in the faith of the gospel, and in hope of a blessed immortality, he passed away. Most emphatically may it be said of him, that "his last days were his best days." He once had, as he confessed, a terrible idea of death. But it had lost its terrors. He expected to die suddenly. And when death came, he was not taken by surprise. He was ready, for he had committed his soul with its immortal interests to an almighty Saviour, who, he knew, would keep what he had committed to him. Living or dying, "with a holy carelessness,"—in the words of the old book before mentioned—words which are underscored in pencil, as expressing doubtless his own personal feelings,—"with a holy carelessness he trusts himself with God's disposing."

This narrative suggests several instructive lessons, which I have only time to indicate.

1. It shows the utter failure of religious skepticism to satisfy the mind and heart. Dr. Smith, as we have seen, found no rest in it. No earnest and inquiring mind can find rest in it, or in any of the various forms of unbelief. The skeptic is of necessity a restless, dissatisfied, unhappy man. And thousands who have made trial of infidelity, in some of its forms, have renounced it at last, as utterly empty, unsatisfying, worthless, and worse than worthless, corrupting the heart, and destroying the peace of the soul.

2. This narrative illustrates the value of the Christian faith in contrast with the worthlessness of infidelity. In this faith the subject of this narrative found rest. When, weary in wandering from God, discontented with himself, dissatisfied, if not disgusted with the world, and crushed almost under the burden of trials and troubles, he asked,

"O, where shall rest be found,
Rest for the weary soul?"

then, in despair of finding comfort elsewhere, he turned to the Bible, embraced the Christian's hope, and found peace in believing. And here, where he found it, we can all find it, and in the same way, by a simple, childlike faith in Christ, as offered in the gospel. And we can find it no where else. What a treasure is the gospel to the believer, in life and in death. While multitudes have renounced infidelity and other forms of error at or before death, what Christian believer ever renounced his faith in the dying hour? On the other hand, how many have given their dying testimony to the reality, power and inestimable value of the Christian faith. This faith meets the wants of the soul in its greatest exigencies—in its deepest sinfulness, in its heaviest sorrows, and in the extremities of the dying hour, as nothing else does or can.

3. This narrative serves to strengthen our confidence in the Calvinistic system of doctrines. It was in these doctrines that Dr. Smith found support and comfort. In his view the alternative was between skepticism, on the one hand, and Calvinism on the other; and renouncing the former, he embraced the latter, and did it heartily. While he loved all true Christians of every name, he held tenaciously to, and earnestly contended for "the faith once delivered to the saints." Now when such an acute and powerful mind as his, comes intelligently, and after examination, to embrace the Calvinistic faith, as the faith revealed in the Scriptures, our confidence in this system of doctrines is strengthened and confirmed.

4. Finally, this narrative furnishes a remarkable example of the richness and power of divine grace, and teaches us never to despair of the conversion of any one. Dr. Smith was a miracle of grace,—“a brand plucked out of the fire,”—and the habitual feeling of his heart was,

“O, to Grace how great a debtor
Daily I'm constrained to be!”

How does the conversion of such a man, after a life of skeptical unbelief and of opposition to God, illustrate the riches of divine grace, and rebuke our want of faith? Let us never despair of the salvation of any one. John Newton said, “I have never doubted the power of God to convert any man since he converted me.” And so we may say in respect to the conversion of Dr. Smith. The grace that saved him, that saved John Newton, and that saved

Saul of Tarsus, can save any man, however hopeless his case may seem.

My hearers, I have now presented before you two pictures,—one representing Dr. Smith as he once was, the other, Dr. Smith as he afterwards became. Look at the two pictures,—now on that, and now on this,—and tell me which you would choose to be, Dr. Smith the skeptic, or Dr. Smith the Christian believer.

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