

# THE UNION SEMINARY REVIEW

---

Vol. LVII.

AUGUST, 1946.

No. 4

---

## BENJAMIN MOSBY SMITH AS A SEMINARY PROFESSOR—THE LATER YEARS

BY FRANCIS R. FLOURNOY, A. M., Ph. D.,

*Professor of History and Political Science,  
The College of Emporia,  
Emporia, Kansas*

This is the concluding article on the life of Dr. B. M. Smith, Professor in Union Theological Seminary in Virginia from 1854 to 1889, the preceding articles having been published in THE UNION SEMINARY REVIEW for November, 1943; November, 1944; August, 1945; February, 1946, and May, 1946.\* The last of these covers the years from 1866 to 1872. Certain of Dr. Smith's activities during that period, however, especially those relating to public education, it has been thought best to include in the present article. This course has been followed because of the intrinsic importance of the activities in question and because a comparatively small amount of space is needed for the narrative of the last twenty years of Dr. Smith's life as a result of the lack of source material

---

\*Reprints of these articles will be bound in book form in a limited number of copies soon after the issuance of the August REVIEW. When this is done, the biographies of the four men who have figured most prominently in the history of Union Seminary will have been completed: John Holt Rice, the founder of the Seminary, by William Maxwell; Moses Hoge, the scholastic founder of the Seminary, by John Blair Hoge, (in manuscript but soon to be printed); Benjamin Mosby Smith, the savior of the Seminary in the days following the War Between the States, by Francis R. Flournoy; and Walter W. Moore, the second founder and first president of the Seminary, by J. Gray McAllister.

relating to those years. For no entries were made in his diaries from 1870 to 1887, and almost all of his letters and papers were unfortunately destroyed.

In July, 1871, Dr. Smith wrote what he called a "Memorandum for My Dear Wife," which reads as follows:

"I am now sixty. My health is not good. I cannot expect in the course of nature to last long. I wish to put on record for you a few things.

"1—I desire you to submit with Christian temper to God's ordering if I am taken from you. Remember your blessings. Be thankful for all of them connected with our union. Do not mourn over those things which have given us trouble. Thank God He has by His restraining grace withheld from us more sorrow than has befallen us.

"2—I do not derive any comfort in view of death, from looking at myself or the recollection of any thing in me heretofore. In a far more literal sense than many use the phrase, 'I am a sinner.' My only proper epitaph is 'A Sinner.' If of God's mercy may be added, 'saved by Grace,' it will be a most remarkable trophy of that Grace. I have been a communicant in the church for forty years and 'My leanness, my leanness!' has ever been my lament.

"While there is nothing in myself to encourage me, I can truly say I have for several years felt more and more my need of a Saviour—a complete, sole Saviour and I can and do now and then, find comfort in a simple resting on an all sufficient sacrifice, an all teaching Prophet, and an all interceding and ever prevalent mediator and an almighty King. This is all my Hope. I say not there is comfort in the past nor do I rest on my resolutions or endeavors for the future but my sole rest is in Christ's finished work and in His daily hourly supply of grace. I have no raptures nor deep mournings or repentings on which to rest and would not rest on them if I had. Christ is all. If He rejects, I am rejected—if He accepts all is well. His infinite love encourages my trust while my infinite demerit discourages me and I fall back on a simple implicit unqualified trust. In that I daily seek to live and trust to die. . . .

"The meek will be guide in the judgment, the meek will He teach His way. 'Trust in the Lord and do good.' 'Blessed are all they who put their trust in the King in Zion.' May the God of the widow and the fatherless be the God of those I love, for whom I have laboured and to whom my heart will ever turn with ineffable fondness." . . .

The apprehension of his approaching end, however, proved groundless. His health improved, and his busy, useful life was prolonged until his eighty-second year.

## I. WORK IN THE CHURCH COURTS

As in his earlier years, Dr. Smith attended Presbytery and Synod with much regularity, and he was a Commissioner to the General Assembly in 1867, 1876 and 1877. In the Assembly of 1876 he served as Moderator. In those of 1867 and 1877 he acted as chairman of important committees and took a leading part in the promotion and the discussion of important measures, as will be shown on later pages of this article.

He had special gifts which fitted him to take a position of leadership in the work of these bodies. On this matter, Dr. W. W. Moore made the following interesting comments:

Dr. Dabney, in talking with me once about Dr. Smith, said that the chief characteristic of his mind was its alertness. There may have been more learned men. There may have been more profound men. But there were few quicker men than he in his mental processes. He was probably the most adroit debater ever seen in our church courts. He knew how to think on his feet and was never at a loss for an idea or a word. All his public speaking was marked by a readiness, an ease, and a copious fluency that I never have seen surpassed. He was master of that elaborate extemporaneous style, best known to our generation perhaps from the speeches of Mr. Gladstone, which was so perfect that one who did not know him, listening to the rolling and sonorous periods, inevitably received the impression that every word had been carefully written out beforehand, and committed to memory. On fifteen minutes' notice, he could stand up and body forth for an hour, without hitch or hesitation, elevated thoughts on important subjects, in language of the utmost propriety and dignity, in long and complete sentences, with almost innumerable ramifications, each worked out to perfection; and, after holding such a sentence in the suspense of construction for, perhaps, five minutes at a time, making matter sufficient to occupy a printed page, would bring the entire complicated structure to a triumphant finish. An accomplished literateur of his day said that Dr. Smith's off-hand oratory reminded him of a mighty river, flowing with broad expanse, without chafing or unseemly impetuosity, deliberate, smooth, majestic. His public prayers and his reading of hymns were hardly less notable.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Moore makes another comment on the characteristics of Dr. Smith's public speaking:

---

<sup>1</sup>W. W. Moore, *Appreciations*, pp. 121, 122.

A gentleman, who had heard all the foremost speakers of the world in his time, told me once that the four great living masters in that day of this elaborate extemporaneous style, which was so perfect as almost to make a man willing to take oath that it had been carefully written out beforehand and committed to memory, were: Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Spurgeon, Mr. Beecher, and Dr. Ben Smith.<sup>2</sup>

An interesting illustration of the readiness of Dr. Smith in public speech is given as follows by the late Dr. A. M. Frazer:

Mr. Addison Waddell told me that Dr. Smith was the readiest public speaker he had ever known. He told of one occasion, when a visitor was to deliver an address in the church. His subject was the history of the Jews between the Old Testament and the New. When the hour arrived the church was crowded, but the speaker failed to appear. Dr. Smith went up into the pulpit and delivered an address on the same subject. Mr. Waddell said he was satisfied Dr. Smith was as familiar with the subject as the visitor could have been and delivered as fine an address.<sup>3</sup>

Similar testimony to Dr. Smith's ability as a writer, a speaker, and especially as a debater is found in the Minutes of the Board of Trustees of Washington and Lee University of June 19, 1894:

He wrote rapidly and with consummate ease, and he spoke as he wrote. His off-hand speeches and his familiar letters might have been printed as they poured forth from his well-stored mind with scarcely a correction. His memory—until the closing year of his life—was remarkably tenacious, and he had a keen and ready wit, which with his mastery of facts and details of every sort made him formidable as a debater. As an off-hand speaker, when in his prime, he was unsurpassed by men of his own day, whether the field of contest was the church court, the parlor or the banquet-hall.

## II. RELIGIOUS AND ECCLESIASTICAL PROBLEMS

Through his work in the Assembly and the Synod, through public addresses and through articles in the church publications Dr. Smith was able to bring his influence to bear on the handling of many problems which were agitating the Church at this time. As Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Missions in the Assem-

---

<sup>2</sup>J. Gray McAllister, *Life and Letters of Walter W. Moore*, p. 79.

<sup>3</sup>Presbyterian of the South, Jan. 27, 1932.

bly of 1867 he offered a motion directing that an inquiry be instituted to determine whether the Church should confine its efforts to ground already occupied or should expand. He explained that the motion was designed to provoke discussion on the question in the Assembly and indicated the considerations involved on each side of the question. Discussion did result and was carried on in a vigorous manner. The predominant sentiment was obviously in favor of continued expansion in the foreign field. Then Dr. Smith withdrew his original resolutions on the ground that they had accomplished the purpose for which they had been introduced, and proposed in their place the following:

Resolved. That inasmuch as the work of extending the gospel through all the world is the great work for which the Church has been instituted by her great Head, and to which all other parts of its work are subordinate, the Committee on Foreign Missions be directed to press the enterprise intrusted to it with renewed energy and effort; assured that the means both of men and of money will be adequately supplied, in the all-wise providence of God, in proportion to the liberal method devised by the Church.

This was passed amid much enthusiasm.

One of the difficult problems confronting the Church in Dr. Smith's later life was that of preaching by laymen, a problem which had been brought into prominence by the extraordinary achievements of Dwight L. Moody. This question was discussed by Dr. Smith in articles in the *Central Presbyterian* in 1875 and 1876. He first declared that exceptions might well be allowed to the general principle restricting preaching to ordained ministers and that each of such cases should be decided on its own merits. Yet he felt that the principle was sound, as shown by the decline of lay preaching in the Methodist Church and the resulting growth in the effectiveness of that Church. The contemporary development of lay preaching had, he thought, many good results, notably its influence in counteracting the increase of ritualism and in strengthening the tendencies towards greater participation of laymen in church work. He finally recommended that laymen who might prove especial fitness for preaching should seek ordination,

while others should co-operate with ministers rather than attempt to usurp their functions.

A problem closely allied to lay preaching was the question of preaching by unlicensed candidates for the ministry. In discussing this matter in the *Central Presbyterian* for March 19, 1879, Dr. Smith recommended the careful observance of the Assembly's resolution of 1877 which he himself had drafted as Chairman of the Committee on Bills and Overtures and which provided that such candidates should be granted "permission for a limited period and a prescribed field of labors to conduct public religious services," etc., under "adequate superintendence" and "by leave of Presbytery."

On relations among the Christian denominations Dr. Smith appears in his later years to have been influenced by the growing tendency during that period towards the reduction of the denominational spirit which had been so strong in the period before the Civil War and which to some degree Dr. Smith himself at that time had shared.<sup>4</sup> In 1874 Dr. Smith gave as one reason for his great admiration for General Lee the fact that the latter was "uninfluenced by the slightest tincture of the bigot." In 1869 in the Educational Association of Virginia he declared with great emphasis, "I despise sectarianism," and urged that religious instruction given in the schools should be strictly undenominational. In discussing the problem of church-related colleges in 1874 he repeatedly expressed his abhorrence of sectarianism and asserted that any officer or teacher in such a college who exhibited in his relations with the students hostility towards other evangelical churches would thereby show himself unworthy to hold his position.

It might be argued that the sentiments thus expressed were hardly in accord with Dr. Smith's position on relations with the Northern Presbyterian Church, as explained in a previous article.<sup>5</sup> But it must be noted that Dr. Smith's feeling toward that Church was probably far more friendly than that of most of his brethren in the Southern Church and that his opposition to schemes of

---

<sup>4</sup>UNION SEMINARY REVIEW, August, 1945, pp. 376, 377.

<sup>5</sup>UNION SEMINARY REVIEW, May, 1946, pp. 194-200.

union such as those of Cyrus McCormick was based more on consideration of timing and expediency than on grounds of principle. He certainly hoped for the eventual restoration of organic union in the Presbyterian family.

Though opposing sectarianism, he believed strongly in the superiority of the Presbyterian to other systems of doctrine, worship and polity. This is shown especially in his series of fourteen articles entitled "What Is Presbyterianism?" in the *Central Presbyterian* from February to June, 1879. He consequently believed that with Churches of the Presbyterian and Reformed system, his own Church should maintain relations of especial friendship. This is the theme of his address as a fraternal delegate in June, 1874, from the Southern Presbyterian Assembly to the General Synod of the (Dutch) Reformed Church at Poughkeepsie, New York. In this address he also declared that the peoples who, as he thought, formed the original leadership in the Southern Presbyterian Church, namely, the Huguenots and the Scotch-Irish, were similar in history and character to the Dutch Calvinists. For all these national groups had alike "come out of much tribulation." In past times, they had been "chased and beaten," had "fled from burning homes . . . dragged from the side of murdered fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, wives or children to dungeons, and torture and fiery death."

It must of course be noted that Dr. Smith did not regard the feeling of distrust which he like most Protestant ministers of his day felt towards the Roman Catholic Church as involving sectarianism. There is no indication that he ever departed from the strong anti-Romanist position which he had assumed in his earlier life.<sup>6</sup> Yet the only expression which the present writer has found of this feeling during the later years of his life, at least up to 1888, is in his article, "The Brethren of Our Lord," appearing in the *Southern Presbyterian Review* for July, 1879. In this paper Dr. Smith sets forth the evidence that there were several children born to Joseph and Mary subsequent to the birth of Christ, so that the doctrine of "the perpetual virginity of Mary" which led to the dogma of the Immaculate Conception is unscriptural.

---

<sup>6</sup>UNION SEMINARY REVIEW, August, 1945, p. 376.

Another illustration of his use of his scholarly equipment in the defense of the doctrines of his own Church as opposed to those held by other denominations is to be found in his three articles in the Central Presbyterian for March 10, 17 and 24, 1875, presenting a careful review of Dr. Dale's four massive volumes in the meaning of the verb "baptidzo" as used in the New Testament and supporting the thesis that the verb means not to "immerse," as interpreted by Baptist scholars, but to "place in a changed condition."

He also utilized his scholarship in dealing with the questions brought to the front by the growth of archæological discoveries in the Near East. He published two comprehensive articles in the Southern Presbyterian Review for April, 1877, and July, 1878, on "The Cuneiform Inscriptions and Biblical History in the Old Testament." The articles were based on twenty-eight works published, chiefly in Europe, from 1832 to 1876. Interesting accounts are given of the investigations of Niebuhr, Grotefend, Rawlinson, Botta, Layard, George Smith and others. An estimate is made of the light thrown by these inscriptions on the narratives in the Old Testament. His conclusions on this matter were of course highly conservative, like his theology. But there were probably few Southern churchmen of his day who had given the question as much real study as was shown in these productions.

As a product of Dr. Smith's knowledge of Christian teaching and of his practical wisdom notice might be made here of his little book on *Family Religion*, which though published in 1859 has not so far been adequately reviewed in this series of articles. In some 35,000 words he develops his interpretation of Christian ethical teaching on all phases of life connected with the family and its interrelationships. Of especial interest is the chapter in which he sets forth the duties and responsibilities of the various members of the family towards each other. He countenances no modern heresies about woman's rights and stands firm for the authority of the husband and father. Yet he condemns unsparingly the evil practices which have been excused by the perversion of the traditional doctrines in these matters. Of interest also, in view of Dr. Smith's experience and special interest in the field of education, are the discussions of the problems of physical, mental, and religious education, in which he utilizes not only his understanding of Chris-

tian ethics but also the knowledge gained through his study of these problems and through practical experience. Finally, in his chapter on the relation of the family to the church, he speaks not only as a student of Christian teaching and tradition but also as a pastor of varied experience.

### III. WORK FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Dr. Smith's ecclesiastical and scholarly interests were balanced by his concern for practical educational problems. Possibly foremost among these in his mind was that of public schools. To present the full story of his work in this field in his later life, it is necessary, for reasons which have already been given, to begin the narrative at a point considerably earlier than in other divisions of this paper.

In previous articles some account has been given of Dr. Smith's part in the movement during the 'thirties and 'forties of the last century for improving the public school system of the state.<sup>7</sup> In 1856 and 1857 interest in the matter was again awakened, and in these years conventions were held in Richmond composed of leading citizens in the state to consider the educational problem as it then presented itself. These conventions, of which Dr. Smith attended only the second, were mainly concerned with the problem of obtaining greater public support for the colleges of the state other than the University of Virginia and the Virginia Military Institute, a project with which Dr. Smith was in sympathy and which he advocated. But on this occasion Governor Wise took the opportunity to make a vigorous presentation of his strong views on the need of reorganizing public education in the state. His views were very similar to those previously expressed by Dr.

---

<sup>7</sup>See THE UNION SEMINARY REVIEW, August, 1945, pp. 47-50, 51-53. Here an account is given (1) of Mr. Smith's Report of 1839 on the Prussian system of education with recommendations for the utilization of certain elements of this system with reorganization of the Virginia system; and (2) of the popular educational conventions of 1841 in which recommendations were made to carry out plans along the line similar to those suggested by Mr. Smith. In addition, it might be pointed out that Mr. Smith in the winter of 1842-43 wrote a series of letters to the Richmond Enquirer in which he discussed certain problems of educational policy and pointed out the defects of the existing system of public education.

Smith, especially on the abolition of the charity feature of the system, the development of training for teachers and the establishment of better supervision and inspection of schools. Dr. Smith expressed in his diary hearty sympathy with the Governor's views, and probably supported them in the convention of 1857. He also favored the proposals made at this convention for state assistance to the colleges, making a speech on the subject "which was well received." He made another speech in favor of forming a permanent Virginia Educational Society and was appointed a member of a committee to prepare plans for such an organization. Upon the proposal of this committee it was agreed to hold a meeting for this purpose in December of the same year, 1857. But it does not appear that the meeting was held, doubtless because of the absorption of the public in the political controversies which were to lead to the Civil War.

The efforts made by Dr. Smith and others in behalf of educational progress prior to the Civil War cannot fairly be regarded as altogether unfruitful. By 1860 Virginia stood first in the proportion of college students to the whole population, though it may be that these students were in many cases hardly as advanced as the college students of some of the Northern states. Her secondary schools, with all their defects, were probably the best in the South. Though, like most of the other states, without facilities for the college education of women, she had many excellent "female seminaries," doing approximately the work of the junior colleges of today. Though there were many excellent private primary schools in Virginia, the schools of this type for the "poor" left much to be desired. Yet it must be noted that, under the Act of 1846, "district free schools" had been established in several counties and cities and formed the nucleus of a real state system of public schools. Indeed, there is every indication that Virginia was on the road towards the early formation of such a system. But this progress was stopped by the war. All the funds previously assigned to the schools were appropriated for military purposes and the schools were consequently suspended. In the wreckage of the post-war years it was at first impossible to recover the lost ground.

In 1866 there were only 60,000 white and 11,000 colored children in school, as compared with 110,000 white children in 1860.

In the meantime the popular movement for a thorough-going reform of the school system had continued during the war. In December, 1863, the Educational Association of Virginia was organized and included distinguished educators from various parts of the state. Dr. Smith was asked to attend but was unable to do so on account of illness. He did, however, send a letter embodying his views on what he considered to be the most important questions that would come before the meetings. This was published with the minutes of the Association. Dr. Smith was also appointed chairman of a committee to prepare and publish an address to the teachers and parents of Virginia on "the importance of a more perfect understanding of the relations and responsibilities of teachers and parents to each other, and of a more efficient co-operation between them." He was in addition made a member of a committee to arrange for the publication of text-books for use in the primary schools.

No record has been found regarding the steps taken by Dr. Smith to carry out the duties assigned to him by the Association. Indeed, because of war conditions no further meetings of that body were held until 1866. In the meeting of that year Dr. Smith was not present but was enrolled as a member and appointed chairman of one of the committees, that on Spellers and Readers, the function of which was to ascertain what text-books in this field were then "in common use in Virginia or such as (might) be brought before the public, and report on their relative merits."

When the Association next met, in 1867, it had come to include in its membership the principal educational leaders in the state, among them General Robert E. Lee, and other college presidents, the Superintendent of the Virginia Military Institute and prominent professors in the University of Virginia, the colleges, and Union Seminary, together with principals and teachers in some of the more important secondary schools. One of the most eminent educational experts of the time, Dr. Barnas Sears, the representative of the trustees of the Peabody Fund, was much impressed by "the dignity of the Assembly and the high character of its leading and most active members." Dr. Smith was in attendance and pre-

sented the report of a committee of which he was chairman, and it was accepted. He took a leading part in the discussions, which were exceedingly animated and were pervaded by a feeling of hopefulness and of deep responsibility for the future educational welfare of Virginia. A noteworthy debate arose upon a report by the President of the Association, Professor Minor of the University of Virginia, proposing "The Institution of a Department of Public Instruction in Connection with the State Government." The discussions upon this report, which advocated a state system of education for all the people, were, in the opinion of Dr. Sears, among the most valuable he had ever heard, and he had "rarely witnessed more enthusiasm on the subject [of universal education] than was manifested on that occasion." It was decided that a memorial embodying the views expressed in the Report should be presented to the General Assembly of Virginia. There were also appointed committees to prepare reports on "Universal Primary Education and the Best Means of Accomplishing It" and on the "Education of the Colored People and How It May Be Best Effected." A committee under the chairmanship of Dr. Smith was directed to make a report on "The Subjects of Education of Most Value and Importance in Virginia."

There was every evidence therefore that the Association was ready to co-operate fully, though unofficially, in the thoroughgoing reform of the educational system of the state. By the next meeting, that of 1868, this attitude seems to have changed. None of the four important committees mentioned as having been appointed in 1867 made any report. This was to be explained, according to Dr. Charles W. Dabney,<sup>8</sup> by the course which Reconstruction had taken in the South, and particularly by the election of a Constitutional Convention in Virginia composed in great majority of "Radicals," including a number of Negroes. This was of course the result of the disfranchisement of 10,000 whites, the enfranchisement of the Negroes and their efficient organization under "Radical" leaders. The Convention included in the new Constitution a clause providing for a system of public schools for both races, though the efforts of some of the Negro delegates to establish mixed schools

---

<sup>8</sup>*Universal Education in the South*, I, 138, 139.

was defeated. It looked as though the new educational system was to be imposed upon Virginia by groups who in no way represented the real leaders of the people.

Conditions were modified, however, by the first election under the new Constitution, in July, 1869, which resulted in the decisive defeat of the "Radicals." It was now at least possible that Virginia's real leaders might have their due share in shaping the new school organization if they were willing to act in the matter. Hence in the meetings of the Educational Association of 1869 a renewed spirit of hope in the future of education in Virginia was manifested. There were in attendance General Robert E. Lee, Commodore Maury, General Smith, Superintendent of the Virginia Military Institute, and many other prominent educators. The President of the Association, Professor Minor, declared that the educational leaders of the State ought to take their part in dealing with the problems arising from the institution of the new "system of free schools," and a resolution was presented calling for the appointment of a Committee under the chairmanship of Professor Minor,

. . . to take into consideration the whole question of Popular Education, and . . . do what they [should] deem expedient touching legislation on this subject.

In the course of the debate on this resolution, Professor Minor declared himself as emphatically in favor of a system of public schools such as Dr. Smith and others had long advocated. Consequently it would appear that the Committee would probably have interpreted its terms of reference to include the duty of appearing before the General Assembly to present to it the views of the Association on the nature of the public school organization to be adopted. Dr. Smith was "warmly in favor" of this resolution, but opposition to it developed and it was finally laid on the table. There was, however, a committee appointed under the chairmanship of Dr. Smith to bring in a report at the next meeting on "The Merits and Defects of the Prevailing System of Common School Education in the South."

By July, 1870, when the Educational Association again met, there seemed a fair prospect that people of the sort represented

in that body might have a very real part in controlling the public school system, since the state officers elected in 1869, including a conservative Republican Governor and a General Assembly with a majority of conservative Republican and Democratic members, were left free to govern the state with comparatively little outside interference. Indeed, in the appointment of the first Superintendent of Public Instruction, Dr. W. H. Ruffner, many of this group had had a large share. Dr. Ruffner was an alumnus of Washington College, of which his father was President for several years, and of Union Seminary. He had been a Presbyterian pastor, a student of geology, and a farmer. In January, 1870, a paper recommending him for the position of Superintendent of Public Instruction was signed by General Robert E. Lee, several professors in Washington College, other citizens of Lexington, and Dr. Smith. Similar recommendations were signed by the Superintendent of the Virginia Military Institute and by several professors of the University of Virginia. To these recommendations, as his papers indicate, Dr. Ruffner attributed his election in large measure.<sup>9</sup> As soon as he was chosen he was directed by the General Assembly to prepare a plan for the school system within thirty days. In doing so he followed closely the plan formulated by his father thirty years before. With this program, Dr. Smith, as might have been expected from his earlier utterances, was in general sympathy, and indeed both the Ruffners might well have been influenced by him in the development of their plans. Dr. Smith's attitude towards the whole problem and his mature convictions at this time on the question of public education are set forth in the report of his committee at the meeting of the Educational Association in July, 1870, of which he seems to have been the real author. Hence it deserves to be analyzed in some detail.<sup>10</sup>

The report was largely concerned with the defense of the public school system, such as was now being instituted in Virginia, against the arguments commonly brought against it in the South. First is

<sup>9</sup>Dabney, *op. cit.*, I, 145-6. For text of the recommendations, see pp. 530-31.

<sup>10</sup>The text of this report on the Merits and Defects of Prevailing Schemes of Common School Education in the United States is given in the Educational Journal of Virginia, I, 318-29.

taken up the notion that the system in question was an alien institution forced upon the South as a result of her defeat. It is clearly shown that as a matter of fact all the states of the Union, with possibly one exception, had recognized in their Constitutions the duty of their governments to provide for the education of the children at least on the primary level; that in doing so they were following the recommendations of the Fathers of the Republic, including Washington, Jefferson, Madison, Pinckney and Patrick Henry; and finally that many of the more enlightened countries of Europe, notably Scotland and the German states, had long since established public schools.

Then the Report discusses the argument that the cost of primary education per individual is so small that "the interest may be safely left to the operation of the ordinary principle of supply and demand." The answer given to this is that while in material matters demand creates supply, in the case of education the very opposite is true, for those who are most in want, i. e., "the utterly ignorant," do not "feel their need" and hence make no effort to supply it. In such cases it is only through "supply" that "demand" can be created. Furthermore, the cost of primary education, however small it may be, is in fact prohibitive to the impoverished masses.

Next is considered the *laissez-faire* theory,—which was held by Dr. R. L. Dabney in Virginia and in an even more extreme form by Herbert Spencer in England,—that education is "a private and personal interest" like food and clothing and should be dispensed by the state only to the needy "as a matter of charity." In answer it is pointed out that popular ignorance is injurious, while popular intelligence is beneficial, *to the state*, and hence it is to the interest of the state to combat the one and promote the other. Furthermore, the theory in question was condemned by its fruits. For it was the theoretical basis of "the so-called system for the education of poor children, so long prevalent and so long useless in Virginia."

Next is dealt with the assertion that public education was positively harmful, since the populations in which it had been most fully established were precisely those which, according to the view then prevalent in the South, exhibited many undesirable characteris-

tics. The Report attributed these latter however to factors unconnected with the educational system, and held that the whole theory involved "a confounding of the *post hoc* and *propter hoc*."

Finally, the argument that the state is under obligation only to educate leaders was met by the declaration that with respect to education

. . . the state owes a duty to every citizen alike the performance of which as to results is to be measured by the ability of each to receive and improve the proffered benefit.

Furthermore, even in the training of leaders in the higher institutions, general education in the lower schools plays a great part.

Let all the children be taught and there will be a larger proportion of youth prepared for academical, collegiate and university education, and of these a larger proportion better fitted for such advantages.

After reading the report Dr. Smith offered the following resolutions:

1. That the Educational Association of Virginia hails with great satisfaction the inauguration in this State of a system of common school education, which with some obviously desired modifications, is calculated greatly to advance the interest of popular improvement.

2. That the proposal ultimately to provide for the establishment of institutions for the education of teachers, is especially a reason for the concurrence of all the lovers of every grade of education in its support, inasmuch as there is thus afforded a pledge for the rendering of the wise provisions of the system adequate to the wants of the State, in securing the best instruction in the lowest and fundamental department of education.

After the discussion of the report, Dr. Smith withdrew the resolutions, not because of any change in his own views or in those of the other members of the committee in regard to them but because of objections from certain members based on the ground that the Association had "uniformly adhered to the policy of not committing itself, as a body, to any opinions whatever upon contro-

verted points." The resolutions, however, had "met no expressed dissent" in the meeting.

Besides advocating the general principle of public education, Dr. Smith in 1870 made an address to the Association on the "Duties of Educated Men and Educators in Virginia." In this address he endeavored to awaken the classes in question to their responsibility for the success of the new system of education as a means of inculcating in the minds of the people ideas which would be for the betterment of society.

In the debates of the Association in 1869 and 1870, Dr. Smith set forth his theory of the place of religion in public education. According to the report of one of his speeches in the Richmond Dispatch,

. . . he was of course in favor of having the Bible taught in our schools, but it should not be done by legislative enactment. If the Legislature is permitted to say that the Bible shall be taught in our schools, it may also say that it shall not, or may attempt to prescribe exactly what doctrines may be taught.

In this difficult matter he especially opposed any form of sectarianism:

. . . By all means those plans which distinctly forbid all sectarian control of public schools commend themselves to all true lovers of a real religious liberty.

On the burning question of the education of Negroes, Dr. Smith expressed himself as in general agreement with the views of Professor C. L. Cocke, who advocated in a speech before the Association in 1869 "manual labor schools" for teaching "elementary knowledge" and "some skill in the various trades or mechanic arts" but not imparting "culture which was to fit them to enter upon the professions of the legislatures." On the other hand it should be recalled that he signed the recommendation for Dr. Ruffner, who, as Dr. Smith must have known, believed that the education of the Negroes was as important as that of the whites and was opposed to "discrimination in respect to their schools as to management, usefulness, and efficiency."<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> Annual Report of Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1871.

In spite of Dr. Smith's relatively progressive views on most aspects of educational policy, some of the opinions expressed by him at this period were inclined towards conservatism. When some of the speakers recommended a much larger amount of scientific and vocational study in the Virginia schools, Dr. Smith, according to the brief and unsatisfactory digest of his speech in the Richmond Dispatch, said:

Mind is the stature of the man and rules the world. The development of mental power is the best thing and this is done best by studying the classics. Let us develop our material resources, but let us not forget that it is more important to raise up men and women.

On one question of educational and social policy Dr. Smith was an impenitent traditionalist. During the meeting of 1870 it was proposed that women be invited to join the Association in full membership. This aroused much opposition. One of the ministers present declared that he

. . . would have woman remain queen of the home circle. When she starts out to attend and take public part in conventions, she will cease to be a Virginia woman. [Such action] would drag woman down from her Empyrean height of purity and modesty. Let not the garment of Southern womanhood be soiled by the dust and dirt of dingy surroundings, but rather allow the women of the South to remain custodians of our Lares and Penates. (Applause of the lady spectators.)

Dr. Smith did not go as far as this, but he did oppose the motion on the ground that it savored of the woman's rights movement, for which he had not "the most infinitesimal sympathy." He accordingly proposed that three outstanding women teachers be selected and each be asked to write an essay on some important educational problem, the three papers then to be read "by some gentlemen before the body." This proposal was adopted.

In the meantime Dr. Ruffner had set to work on carrying his plan for public schools into execution. With far more adequate financial resources than ever before, and with a relatively centralized system of supervision functioning through a state department, county superintendents and local boards, the great enterprise of supplying Virginia with general education got under way. The

total expenditure of public funds amounted annually to less than \$1,000,000, scarcely as much as is now spent in each school day for public schools by New York City, and between two and three per cent of the current annual expenditures for this purpose in Virginia. The teachers received an average salary of less than \$30 per month for a term averaging less than six months out of each year. Evidently much more needed to be done. But a great step in advance had been taken.

One more service was now performed by Dr. Smith for the cause of public education. It was extremely important that the county superintendents should be as capable men as it was possible to obtain. Dr. Smith agreed to accept this position in his own county, Prince Edward, and held it until 1881, when he had reached the age of 70.

It was a hard job. "His (the county superintendent's) cares are boundless, his labors unending," wrote Dr. Ruffner in his Report for 1872. He must

. . . promote an appreciation and desire of education among the people. . . . His duty is to see that everything is done, and done properly; and owing to the neglect of other officers, he is often compelled to perform their duties. . . . He should become an expert in school architecture. . . . He is largely responsible for everything that enters into the organization and conduct of each school. . . . All appeals and complaints within his territory come to him for settlement, and their name is legion. . . .

He had to examine the teachers, "encourage them in every way to improve themselves," examine their reports to him and make up his own reports to the State Superintendent. For all these varied duties the Superintendents received in a large proportion of the rural counties salaries varying between \$200 and \$400 per year, with no allowance for traveling expenses, though the cost of a horse and vehicle might equal the entire salary for one year. Their work, of course, for the most part was on a part-time basis, many being ministers and college professors.

In Dr. Smith's case he was accustomed each year to travel some 400 miles in carrying out his duties, to pay some fifty visits to schools, to write 120 or more official letters, and to hold school

teachers' institutes. He was careful in making his reports to the State Superintendent. Dr. J. D. Eggleston, when he became County Superintendent of Prince Edward in 1903, found all of Dr. Smith's reports "in neat form and clearly made out." His work was rendered difficult by the general lack of interest in public education in his county and by the fact that the Negro population greatly exceeded the white, so that the majority of the pupils in school were Negroes. For his services he received \$400 or less per annum.

It is probable that Dr. Smith was instrumental in a great forward step in public education that was taken in Virginia in the early 'eighties. In his report of 1839 and on subsequent occasions he had advocated the establishment of institutions for the training of teachers. He was accustomed to discuss the problem with Dr. Ruffner after the latter had become State Superintendent. In 1883 Dr. Ruffner induced the Legislature to make an appropriation for establishing a Normal School at Farmville and, having retired from the position of State Superintendent, he became the first president of the new institution.

#### IV. WORK FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

As has been noted in previous articles, Dr. Smith's interest in education extended to the college level. In this field he felt a primary responsibility for Washington College, for he had been a member of its Board of Directors since 1842. The College suffered severely during the Civil War. Its buildings were looted. Its library books and laboratory equipment largely disappeared. However, a few students, chiefly in the preparatory department, had been in attendance and several members of the faculty had remained at their posts. The revival of the institution was brought about principally by General Robert E. Lee's acceptance of the position of President.

With the beginning of General Lee's administration, Dr. Smith's interest in the College appears to have increased, in spite of the exacting labors undertaken by him in connection with the revival of Union Seminary. This is shown by the following excerpt from his letter to Mrs. McCormick of June 29, 1869:

I returned on Saturday from attending the meeting of our Board of Trustees of W. C. We had a session of three days—pretty hard work. The fact is the growing importance of the Institution & its widening field of usefulness is constantly devolving more work on the Board. We are considering the propriety of appointing some time for an annual meeting, during the Session, when we can have more leisure for the business crowded on us.

It is probable that Dr. Smith's admiration for General Lee was due in part to the latter's advocacy of the establishment in the South of the policy regarding public education for which Dr. Smith had stood so long. Thus in a letter of December 30, 1867, to General Gordon, Lee said:

The thorough education of all classes of the people is the most efficacious means, in my opinion, of promoting the prosperity of the South. The material interests of its citizens as well as their moral and intellectual culture, depend upon its accomplishment.

Another characteristic of General Lee's educational policy which met with the emphatic approval of Dr. Smith is indicated in the following passage in one of his speeches before the Synod of Virginia in 1874:

General Lee said he wished the authorities of Washington and Lee to make the boys good Christians. That great and good man, who was the Christian gentleman, unimbued with the slightest tincture of the bigot, held that the history and traditions of that institution made it perfectly proper that its Professor of Moral Philosophy should be a Presbyterian clergyman, thus showing his confidence in our Church for the right influence on the youth of the institution.

As Dr. Smith felt so strong an admiration for General Lee, it is not surprising that he was profoundly shocked at the news of his death, as is shown in the following excerpt from his letter of October 27, 1870, to Mrs. McCormick:

I am on my way to Lexington to a meeting of our Trustees convened to provide in some way, so far as it can be done for the irreparable loss sustained in the death of Gen. Lee. My heart sinks at the prospect before us. We are truly a bereaved—desolated people. Our dear old state has truly suffered. . . . Scarred & blistered as she was left after

the war—drought has added to her impoverishment. Then last spring the terrible tragedy of her Capitol sent mourning thro her borders & left many bereaved & destitute orphans. On the night in which our beloved & venerated President was smitten the most terrible rain ever known in our borders fell along the Blue Ridge of Mountains for a breadth of fifty miles extending from the Staunton River to the Potomac. The deluge carried the destruction of I suppose \$5,000,000 worth of property—and the loss of scores of lives—some under most heart-rending circumstances—and to crown the whole, our pride & glory, the crown of our rejoicing & our Hope has now been laid in the tomb.

Dr. Smith's interest in Washington and Lee, as the college became after General Lee's death, appears to have continued without diminution in his later years. He attended the meetings of the Board with constant regularity. He worked hard on committees and took an active part in the discussions and work of the Board. Referring in 1874 to his relationship with Washington and Lee, he declared: "I have labored with what ability I have for that institution for nearly thirty-two years, during which I have been honored with a seat in its Board of Trustees. *I expect to do so while I live.* Often have I ridden in harsh winter weather to attend its meetings, when it was necessary to make a quorum. In some of the hottest days of July I have spent hours overhauling papers and examining into its finances. And now shall I turn my back on it? No, never."

Dr. Smith's remark which has just been quoted was made in the course of a notable speech in support of a proposal made by him with regard to a matter of general educational policy. In the Synod of Virginia of 1872, he had presented a motion that a committee be appointed

to present to the next Synod a report setting forth the relations of the Church to secular Education in its various stages, as defined by the principles derived from the Holy Scriptures and our Standards and illustrated in the History of the Presbyterian Church in the United States.

The motion was adopted and Dr. Smith was appointed chairman of a committee of eight members who drew up an elaborate report and resolutions which were published in the minutes of the Synod of 1873 but were not considered until the following year,

when a spirited debate took place upon them. The most important of the resolutions were the following:

1. That it is in accordance with the teachings of the Holy Scriptures, the spirit of the Westminster Standards and the history of the Presbyterian Churches, in all times and places, for the Church to found and control educational institutions of all grades, whenever such action is required for the full performance of its spiritual functions.

3. That whenever the authorities of any literary institution within our bounds, may desire to form, with this Synod or with any Presbytery or session under its care a relation giving to such ecclesiastical court a supervision of such institution, on terms consistent with the first resolution, such connexion may lawfully be constituted; its precise conditions to be the subjects of future and appropriate consideration by the court specially interested.

To these there was added an additional resolution from the floor to the effect that the Synod should reserve a veto power on the election of the Trustees of Hampden-Sydney College, which up to this time, though under strong Presbyterian influence, had no organic connection with the Church. The proposed measure was designed to "assure the Synod of the Presbyterian character" of Hampden-Sydney. While Dr. Smith was not particularly in favor of this additional resolution, he did not oppose it, though his chief effort in the debate was to defend the general principles which had been laid down in the resolutions presented by his own committee. In large part his speeches, indeed, were directed towards answering the objections raised by Dr. R. L. Dabney against these principles and to defend the proposition that the Church was in duty bound to furnish "means, not otherwise provided for, by which her youth [might] be trained under the religious influences and in the faith she professes."

In answer to the argument that his resolutions would imply a duty on the part of the Church to establish a complete public educational system, which of course would be totally impracticable, he pointed out that in the case of elementary education, ordinarily "children attend school from their homes, in which they spend most of their time under parental tuition and control." Hence the Church did not need to provide schools of this type, except in special cases. But a different situation arose in the case of higher

education. In this stage the students are likely to be withdrawn from their parents' supervision, and "unless existing institutions of higher education should provide for the ministration of Christian teaching, discipline and influence," it becomes the duty of the Church to do so. Answering the argument that in church-related colleges there were some unworthy students, he maintained that this was in spite of and in no way because of the religious character of these institutions. On the other hand, he pointed out that the latter furnished a far larger proportion of ministerial candidates than did other institutions which had no church relationship and that in colleges with such a connection the influence of Christianity was maintained at a notably high level:

I never heard [he declared] of frequent revivals of religion in any state institution. In Davidson College a student who has passed through the full course has rarely failed to be brought under the influence of those precious seasons.

In reply to the contention that church courts were not suited to manage the affairs of colleges, he answered that the form of indirect control envisaged by the resolution was totally different from actual management, and might be carried on quite as efficiently by a church Synod as was the supervision maintained by state legislatures over state educational institutions. Finally he asserted that the opposition within the Church to the policy which he was defending was in large part responsible for the failure of many efforts to obtain adequate support for church-related schools and colleges. This he thought was illustrated by the situation that had arisen some years earlier when the Presbytery of Lexington formed a connection with the Augusta Female Seminary and some members of the Presbytery attacked this action.

The effect of the opposition [he declared] was sadly felt when we went to ask money of the people. It does not require very stringent urgency or very strong arguments to convince men that they *ought not to give money*.

Dr. Smith succeeded in obtaining approval for the resolutions with a slight amendment. But the church relationship with Hampden-Sydney, which as has been pointed out was not proposed in

the resolutions as he had originally drafted them, was not established at this time, since the trustees of that institution considered it unwise under existing conditions to ask the legislature to make the change in the charter of the college that would have been necessary to carry out the plan. Hence it was deferred until many years later, though Hampden-Sydney remained in effect closely attached to the Presbyterian Church.<sup>12</sup>

Among the religious problems which engaged Dr. Smith's attention, those connected with Seminary education were necessarily prominent. In 1872 he had laid down the burden of raising money for Union. But two years later he was made chairman of a committee appointed by the General Assembly on the Theological Education of Candidates for the Ministry. The report of this committee, which was drafted by Dr. Smith in correspondence with the other members, was an ably drafted document, setting forth a number of highly controversial proposals regarding Seminary education.<sup>13</sup> The most important of these were embodied in resolutions presented to the Assembly of 1877 and providing, *inter alia*, (1) that the Presbyteries should use greater diligence in supervising the work of candidates under their care, and in examining them for license; (2) that the Seminaries should make arrangements enabling candidates to "abridge or extend the time of scholastic study, according to previous preparation and ability for its successful prosecution"; (3) that Seminaries should in certain cases "provide a course of 'vacation study,' of such a character that they can be successfully prosecuted in private, and on which the student shall pass a satisfactory examination."

Some of these proposals, especially the second, were subjected to severe adverse criticism, especially from Drs. Howe and Adger of Columbia Seminary. Dr. Smith defended the propositions made in the report and successfully opposed several amendments offered to them. Finally, an amendment to make the proposed action ad-

<sup>12</sup>Dr. J. D. Eggleston has called my attention to an error in my first article on Dr. Smith's life, in which I stated that Hampden-Sydney began, like Washington College, as an Academy. According to Dr. Eggleston, "it began as a Liberal Arts College of its day—a duplicate of the College of New Jersey of 1772-1775—and had a preparatory academy as a feeder (following the College of New Jersey plan)."

<sup>13</sup>Minutes of the General Assembly, pp. 416-17.

visory rather than mandatory was passed only by the casting vote of the Moderator. It might be noted that in Dr. Smith's original report, though not in the resolutions presented to the Assembly of 1877, there was the following proposal:

To the regular may be added a post-graduate course, open, under the same regulations which apply to the ordinary course, to students desiring its advantages for extending their knowledge in any direction.

One service which Dr. Smith performed for his own Seminary during the last years of his active life deserves mention here. This was the compiling of the first General Catalogue of Union Seminary, which was published in 1884. This contained a brief biographical sketch of every student and every instructor who had ever been connected with the Seminary since its foundation. The amount of correspondence, investigation and other work connected with this was evidently very great, and yet in doing it he showed, in the words of Dr. William Lacy, "the same laborious fidelity and painstaking attention to details that ever characterized him."

#### V. IN AND OUT OF THE CLASS-ROOM

With regard to his actual class-room teaching, Dr. Smith when beginning his career as Professor, as has been mentioned in a previous article, was distressed to learn of unfavorable comments made upon his teaching by some of his students. Even with regard to his work in later years, Dr. William Lacy made the following criticism:

Acquisition was to him so easy and the "linguistic instinct," as Hadley terms it, so well developed, that he did not always seem to appreciate the difficulties in the way of the average student of divinity, in the mastery of Hebrew and Chaldee. The dress was familiar to him and the thought was the object of interest. He looked beyond the vehicle to the truth conveyed.

Yet Dr. Lacy also said:

He was ever quick to recognize conscientious fidelity or special aptitudes for languages, and he was considerate of the dull plodder who

wrought faithfully. He was often severe on the shirker and the idle. I have been deeply impressed with his resourcefulness, his readiness, his stores of learning on which he could draw at will. I have been also even more deeply impressed with his reverent handling of the Word of God, his devout love of the sacred text, his profound recognition of it as God's word to guilty man, "the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy Him." Familiarity with the volume itself, the almost constant use of it in study, in devotion, in teaching others, the dissection of the whole into its parts, and the minute examination of its details, did not in any sense lessen that reverential awe and love with which the Book was handled. He would at times relieve the monotony of the routine of the class-room by comments full of salt and sapidity.<sup>14</sup>

In his relations with his students, Dr. Smith was inclined to be exacting and to insist on the best of which they were capable. He was at times a caustic critic. On one occasion when a student was delivering his trial sermon he read his discourse, a procedure of which Dr. Smith always disapproved. His comment on the performance was: "If the gentleman *will* read his sermon, he ought to learn to read." When an indolent student asked him for advice, he gave the following prescription:

Ten grains of common sense, five grains of repentance, five grains of application or diligence—mix well and take with conscientiousness and prayer.<sup>15</sup>

He showed a strong personal interest in the welfare of the students. He spent much time in conferences with them on personal and religious problems as well as on matters connected with their studies. He welcomed them as visitors in his home. Here, according to Dr. William Lacy,

The discouraged student found welcome and cheer. How dear to memory the sacred hours spent there in song and social converse, in Christian intercourse and sympathy, and especially in those precious seasons of family devotion!<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup>UNION SEMINARY MAGAZINE, March-April, 1898, p. 288. See also similar judgements in Minutes of Board of Trustees, Washington and Lee University, June 19, 1894.

<sup>15</sup>W. S. Lacy, UNION SEMINARY MAGAZINE, March-April, 1898, p. 288.

<sup>16</sup>*Loc. cit.*, p. 290.

In time of affliction the students found Dr. Smith a sympathetic and fatherly friend.

A distinguished minister told me recently [wrote Dr. J. D. Eggleston in 1899] that when he was a student at the Seminary he received a telegram calling him to the bedside of his father. "Dr. Smith heard of it," said he, "and came at once to my room and talked with me. My own mother could not have been tenderer than he was in his expressions of sympathy. There was nothing perfunctory about it, and I have never forgotten it." This was one trait of his character that made him so beloved as a pastor.<sup>17</sup>

Dr. Smith was especially active in helping students who found themselves in financial difficulties. In 1876, Dr. Smith mentioned incidentally that he had had "a personal acquaintance with every student of Union Seminary and his pecuniary relations during a period of thirty-six years." Thus he was in a position to come to their aid if necessary:

Repeatedly [writes one with personal knowledge of student problems] when students were at the end of their resources, Dr. Smith succeeded in devising some way for them to continue their studies.<sup>18</sup>

His attitude toward his students was a reflection of his own benevolent disposition. Dr. J. D. Eggleston refers to him as "one of the kindest of men," and many years ago wrote as follows regarding him:

I remember as a very small boy that Dr. Smith always had a pleasant word for the children and never failed to speak to us in a kindly way. His sweetness of expression attracted children, and he had a quaint humor about him that provoked a laugh, did we dare give expression to it in the presence of one whom we knew to be a great and good man.<sup>19</sup>

His benevolence of character was conspicuously shown in his relations with family and friends in his home.

---

<sup>17</sup>*Kaleidoscope* (Hampden-Sydney College Annual), vol. 7 (1899), p. 43.

<sup>18</sup>Obituary of Dr. Smith in the *Christian Observer*, probably by Dr. T. E. Converse.

<sup>19</sup>*Kaleidoscope*, vol. 7 (1899), p. 43.

It was here [says Dr. William Lacy] he was "at his best." Delightful social intercourse, refined by godly living, was the charm of that sweet and happy home. As host, as kinsman, as husband and father, as friend, as man, the simple and noble excellence of his character were made manifest. He was domestic in his tastes. He busied himself in his home-life. He couldn't but be busy, wherever he was.<sup>20</sup>

Dr. W. W. Moore writes as follows:

When I came to the Seminary as his assistant professor in 1883, I boarded for several years at his table. I knew and loved the members of his family, and the memories of that sweet and happy home will abide with me and bless me throughout life.<sup>21</sup>

Another brilliant young man, Dr. W. S. Currell, long a member of the faculties of Hampden-Sydney and Washington and Lee and afterwards President of the University of South Carolina, added his testimony to that of his friend, Dr. Moore:

We [i. e., Dr. Currell and Dr. Moore] boarded together for a year with the charming family of Dr. Benjamin Smith and many were the delightful interchanges of wit and rally in which all the family joined and none with greater zest than Dr. Moore.<sup>22</sup>

## VI. THE CLOSING YEARS

On January 1, 1887, Dr. Smith resumed "a good old habit in the multitude of [his] thoughts and duties for many years neglected," i. e., the keeping of a diary, which was continued until February 1, 1890, three years before he died. Hence we are able to gain some conception of his daily life in these closing years. In spite of the fact that he had suffered since early manhood from a number of bodily ills, he was now in exceedingly good physical condition. Thus he writes on February 2, 1890:

My health is marvellously preserved, so that though I have reached my 79th year neither mental nor bodily force seems affected.

---

<sup>20</sup>UNION SEMINARY MAGAZINE, March-April, 1898, p. 288.

<sup>21</sup>*Appreciations*, p. 120.

<sup>22</sup>*Life and Letters of Walter W. Moore*, p. 149.

This may have been due to the practice which he thus describes in a note of March 2, 1889: "I aim to walk two miles each day, or forty minutes, and so I get a good night's rest every night." In addition, he continued his gardening activities, though apparently delegating more to his wife and to his hired man than in his younger days.

Dr. Smith continued his teaching at the Seminary until May, 1889, when he was made Professor Emeritus, having no class-room duties but continuing to act as Librarian. In this capacity he spent several hours each day at the Library building and attended to the cataloguing of new books and the binding of old ones and to measures for preventing the loss or misplacing of books, a problem which had greatly disturbed him. He had long since given up the frequent and exhausting journeys that had characterized his earlier life. He attended Presbytery and Synod but would not go if he thought the travelling involved would be too trying.

He was still accustomed to go to Lexington for the June meeting of the Washington and Lee Board. In 1887 he went to stay at the Blue Hotel in Lexington.

Next morning [he writes], General [G. W. C.] Lee [then President of the University], sent for me to be his guest with Dr. Talmage [the baccalaureate preacher]. He treated me with marked attention, going with me to my room at night to see that all was right.

In 1888 Dr. Smith was Acting Rector of the Board and urged that the \$200 annual increase in professors' salaries was insufficient, though apparently not winning his contention.

The relatively quiet life that he now led gave him time for more study and reading. He endeavored to prepare for publication the commentary on Luke which he had written many years before. In April, 1889, he arranged to have the work published by the Presbyterian Board of Publication in Philadelphia. This required some alteration and the rewriting of the text. He set manfully to work, utilizing the leisure acquired by his relief from teaching duties. Over and over again he records in his diary that he was attacking the task which he had set himself. But it was too late. Old age had at last slowed up the energy which had driven

him so hard all his life, and before he had finished the work the night had come.

A less ambitious task of scholarship, however, he was able to accomplish. As has been mentioned on an earlier page, he had in his later years followed with interest the archæological investigations in the Near East. Hence we find the following note in his diary for January 24 and 25, 1888:

Have been very busy this week writing out a lecture on Assyriology for Dr. Dabney, who asked me to prepare one giving my knowledge of the decipherment and translation of Assyrian inscriptions. . . . He wishes to have it read before his classes in the Texas University. [Dr. R. L. Dabney had left Union Seminary in 1883 to become professor in the University of Texas and also in the theological seminary at Austin.]

January 24 and 25, 1898. Changed my subject for the lecture to be sent to Dr. Dabney and selected simply "Assyria" as the theme and completed, by sitting up till 12 o'clock, a pretty full account of the country and people. . . . March 9, 1888. All my leisure today spent in gathering material and writing in part a lecture for Dr. Dabney to have read before his students as the result of the efforts to set forth the pagan accounts of the flood. Another part of the lecture proposed will be the names and work of those kings of Assyria who were connected with the kingdom of Judea and Israel. . . .

March 19 and 23. Have been engaged . . . in preparing lecture for Dr. Dabney's students—the second—on the results of the decipherment and translations of Assyrian inscriptions—and sent off the lecture to Dr. Dabney.

Even in these declining years Dr. Smith did an immense amount of reading and study. Thus on January 30, 1887, he records:

I have begun renewing my Syriac and propose to recall my knowledge and endeavor to perfect it. To this end I shall appropriate the hours from 10 to 1 p. m., Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and parts of the same hours Thursday and Friday.

On July 9, 1889, he notes:

Recommended study of Minor Prophets, preparing lecture introductory to the whole and notes in Hosea.

He continued his practice of reading through the Bible in the original, taking a fixed number of chapters daily, three on week days and five on Sundays. This represented apparently an increase in his daily stint which was made after he gave up his classes.

Dr. Smith read many English books, chiefly in the field of history. Thus he records on December 9, 1888:

Reading Prescott's History of Charles V. What lessons of wisdom are to be found in histories, tho' full of wars and rumours of wars. How thankful should we all feel in God's blessings on our wide and growing republic. The world has never yet seen its equal and its power over the nations of the world is won, not by arms or diplomatic intrigues or policy but is due to the foundations of its existence in that combination of the Huguenot and the Scotch-Irish who have moulded its religion and its institutions. Underlying all other source of its power for good is the existence and influence of family religion.

Dr. Smith's interest in Spanish history then led him to read the account of the Moors in Spain as given in a volume of the Story of the Nations, a series of standard works which were then comparatively new. On September 25, 1889, he writes:

I have spent much time on historical readings especially as to Egypt. Since finishing Shuckford, have taken up Rawlinson's History of Ancient Egypt. Have been more and more impressed with the emphatic lessons of history confirming the teachings of Scriptures on man's depravity and especially illustrating the oft-quoted "man's inhumanity to man makes countless thousands mourn." The immense works of the Rulers in buildings and monuments displays the ambitions and the folly of man in conducting enterprises which had very little practical value. Surely the works of our days in extending a true Christian civilization are far more commendable and they contribute truly to the "wealth of nations."

He was also engaged at this time in reading Crowe's *History of France*, which he followed up by Guizot's eight volumes. Then he undertook the history of Germany, including that of the Reformation led by Luther and Calvin. This was followed by a study of a book presenting "the evangelical succession of the pious

dissentors, Baxter *et al.*" This led to Palfrey's *History of New England*, in which he found

many things recorded not much to the honor of the people, though their treatment of the native Indians showed much more humanity than distinguished some other portions of the colonies except Pennsylvania.

In July, 1889, Dr. Smith speaks of having finished the first volume of Fyffe's *History of Modern Europe*, which had recently appeared. He was led to read this apparently through the interest excited in Napoleon I by the reading of Scott's Life, and also of a three-volume biography of Lafayette.

For he was accustomed to accompany his reading of history with that of biographies of the leading actors in great events. Thus he speaks of his interest in a life of Warren Hastings, in one of Cromwell and in Miss Strickland's Queen Elizabeth. He also read, especially on Sundays, many lives of eminent religious leaders. Thus he read in March, 1890, a Life of Wycliffe; in July, 1890, a life of Principal Harper; and in the same month one of Dr. Henry Cooke, "a man eminent for scholarship and eloquence, successful in eradicating Arianism, in training ministers and also in thwarting the plans of the Roman Catholics." This book also, he says,

brings to view the history of Ireland with incidental notices of Great Britain, especially Scotland, from 1788 to 1868.

Dr. Smith retained the strong interest in foreign missions which he had formed early in life. In March, 1889, he expressed gratification at a similar interest in this enterprise among the students: "Evidently the spirit of missions," he remarked, "grows in the Seminary." On September 1 he wrote:

Attended the services in the forenoon conducted by the Rev. Mr. Lane, a missionary to Brazil in which he gave us a very interesting and instructive account of the past and present state of evangelical religion in Brazil, commenting fully on the effects of the papacy and the work already done in rescuing that country from the influence of Roman Catholic superstition, the tyranny and wickedness of the priests and his hopeful view of the future of Protestantism in that land.

On August 31 he wrote:

We have Mr. Lane with us again. He made a good address Friday night last and preached a good gospel sermon today. I think more and more that it is especially the duty of our nation to evangelize the outlying lands in North and South America.

Dr. Smith's travelling now consisted chiefly in visits to his "colonies," i. e., the families of his married daughters, Mrs. Flournoy, in northern Maryland, Mrs. Rosebro, in Petersburg, and Mrs. Preston, at Tinkling Spring. On these visits he took great pleasure in the society of his daughters, his sons-in-law,—all Presbyterian ministers,—and his sixteen grandchildren. At his home also he had frequent visits from the members of his "colonies," including, in addition to those already mentioned, his daughter, Mrs. Addison Hogue, with her husband, who was then a professor in the University of Mississippi, and his son, Dr. Ben Smith, who was beginning the practice of medicine in West Virginia.

Thus at the eventide of Dr. Smith's long and busy life there was light. There is scarcely a trace of the sombreness which shadows some of the pages of his earlier diaries, though when his youngest daughter left in October, 1887, for Oxford, Mississippi, he wrote:

Have missed Ruth more than I expected and her absence leaves us, as we began 48 years ago, without a child in the house. I miss her music, her singing and her cheerful whistle, and then her constant care for my comfort.

His diary closed with the following entry on February 1, 1890:

Gaps in my diary grow longer. I have in MS. my diary from the earlier period which I am reading and find it extremely interesting and I live over a good part of my life. John Preston [his son-in-law] writes for some of my sermons. What he wants with them I do not know. Expect to send him some in a few days.

Shortly after writing this, Dr. Smith physical and mental condition became such that he could no longer carry on his work in the Library. A faithful and intelligent colored man, Isaac, who

had been employed by the family for many years, watched over him when he left the house. Knowing that Dr. Smith resented any sort of surveillance, Isaac was accustomed to hide behind a tree when he thought his presence might be detected. Finally Dr. and Mrs. Smith early in 1892 went to live with Dr. and Mrs. Rosebro in Petersburg. His mental failure consisted chiefly in loss of memory and of a sense of location. He continued his reading, including the chapters in the Hebrew and Greek text of the Bible. In March, 1893, he began rapidly to fail, though he suffered no pain and no perceptible impairment of his mental faculties. One day his youngest daughter, Mrs. McKelway, at his request, sang some of the old hymns, and in a little while afterwards he was gone.

---

NOTE: This article, like the others, was prepared with the valuable collaboration of Dr. J. Gray McAllister, the Editor of the REVIEW, who furnished the writer with references concerning Dr. Smith in the General Presbyterian and other sources. I am indebted to Dr. Brimm and his assistants at the Library of Union Seminary for the loan of books and for aid in examining the collections of the Library. I have made use of transcripts from Dr. Smith's letters to Mr. and Mrs. Cyrus McCormick furnished to me by Miss Roderick and Miss Bostater of the Nettie Fowler McCormick Biographical Association of Chicago. Valuable assistance has also been furnished by Dr. J. D. Eggleston and the library of Hampden-Sydney College. For the use of Dr. Smith's diaries and other papers and for recollections of his later days I am indebted to his daughter, Mrs. A. J. McKelway.