

FAREWELL ADDRESS

TO THE

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

In *Donesdale, Pa.*

July 3, 1859.

BY
THOMAS H. SKINNER, JR.

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HONESDALE, July 4th, 1859.

REV. THOS. H. SKINNER, JR. :—

DEAR SIR,—The undersigned having listened with pleasure to your discourse delivered last evening in the Presbyterian church, and admiring your independent, manly, and truthful dealing with the people of your charge, would respectfully request a copy for publication in pamphlet form,—believing it desirable that the same should be more generally read and understood.

Very respectfully yours,

C. P. WALLER,
J. H. SINCLAIR,
JAMES R. DICKSON,
S. D. WARD,
T. S. FITCH,
DAVID BEERS.

LIBRARY

HONESDALE, July 11th, 1859.

TO MESSRS. C. P. WALLER, J. H. SINCLAIR, ETC. :—

DEAR BRETHREN,—After much hesitation I have determined to give you my brief farewell address for publication ; but I think I should be unjust to myself, if I did not connect with it, on its appearance in print, some such introductory statement as that which I append to this note.

In the fellowship of the Gospel, yours,

THOMAS H. SKINNER, JR.

162172.

PREFACE.

SUCH an address as the following should have no extension beyond the limits of the Congregation that heard it, without a more explicit statement of the local circumstances which justified it, than could be well given in the address itself. These circumstances, in this case, are not a little unusual.

As I have said in the address, there was, so far as I knew, no doctrinal diversity in the church, at the time of my settlement. It was not until about eighteen months since, when a special interest in religion commenced, that I discovered, as I did, not a little to my annoyance, that there was an intense disagreement on the part of a few, with my own theological views. The disagreement was not in minor matters, but in central and radical points ; nay, in the very basis of the whole system of our standards, the authority of the Bible as the *only* Rule of Faith and Practice. It was said, that there was *another* rule : the Bible could be accepted only as judged and endorsed by the Reason, or Intuitional faculty ; miracles were not the ultimate test of Spiritual Truth ; doctrines which the reason

does not apprehend as true by the independent exercise of intuition, cannot, by any external evidence, be authenticated; Christianity is self-evidencing; miracles, if there be any, instead of proving, must be proved by it, if proved at all. The Bible in short, though a Rule, is not the only Rule. The Reason is a Rule also, to which even the Bible with its miracles must, if need be, succumb. As might have been expected, the doctrines of our creed, which have direct testimonial miracles as their only foundation,—supernatural and super-rational mysteries as they claim to be,—were unwelcome topics of pulpit inculcation: and as these doctrines were in a sense my only themes, the all in all of my preaching, and the more so, because of the resistance to them,—the antagonism to my ministry became more intense and outstanding. It showed itself by open opposition at meetings for social worship; it occasioned much excitement, controversy and rumor among the members of the congregation; all signs of revival amongst us disappeared; my labors were unproductive; my mind perplexed and embarrassed; my condition extremely disagreeable.

That I have stated the true cause of our difficulties, was confessed at the church meeting which acted on my request for concurrence in an application to the Presbytery to dissolve the pastoral relation. Among the resolutions passed at this meeting, was one relating to the Rule of Faith and Practice. This I have adverted to in the address.

The Resolution as first proposed, declared the Bible to be the *only* rule, in accordance with my teaching and our standards : a leader in the opposition to me, moved to change the wording so as to make it assert, that the Bible is the only *infallible* rule ; urging as a reason for the change, that my *maintaining that the Bible was the only rule* was the sole cause of the troubles which had arisen. Referring to this in the address, I have expressed it as my own conviction also. And here let me say, I am happy that public testimony has thus been given to the important fact of our agreement as to this point. But I cannot believe that the church voted for the resolution, as proposed to be amended, with a clear understanding of what the mover of the amendment intended. I cannot think that the majority of the church meant to say, that the Scriptures are *one* rule of Faith, and that there is some other rule, capable of excepting to the authority of this one, if by *its own interpretation* this one had a meaning not acceptable to it. The Bible, as I have affirmed in the address, is indeed an infallible rule, the only infallible one ; but the epithet infallible, as now used, is to be taken, not as implying that there still is some other authoritative rule ; but in the sense that the Bible, as *self-interpretative*, is capable of giving forth an unmistakable meaning, of authority to confront and falsify the deliverances of the reason, or any other rule or test which does not implicitly submit itself to the Bible as absolutely infallible. This I

am sure is, with few exceptions, the Faith of the Honesdale church.

Perhaps the discordance about the Rule of Faith, with the difficulties arising from it, would not have justified me in preferring another field of labour, but for another fact which is mentioned in the address. The majority of the session did not regard the state of things as I did, and for reasons satisfactory to themselves declined taking any official measures of redress. My ministry was openly and strenuously and in singular methods, opposed; but they stood aloof, and left me to bear my burdens and conflicts as I could. In vain did I endeavour to obtain their cöoperation. In these circumstances, when a call came to me from another church, I could not but think the way open to accept it.

I depend upon the circumstances above mentioned, and particular matters arising out of them, said and done, to vindicate the unusual aspect of my farewell address, to the publication of which I have consented, not without much reluctance, in hope that with all its imperfections, it may, by the blessing of God, be useful to the people I have left.

In concurrence with the wishes of the Brethren who have asked for the address, and many others, I have given, in an appendix, some testimonials of confidence and affection from members of the church and congregation, for which I am thankful to them and my Heavenly Father.

DISCOURSE.

2d CORINTHIANS 1: 12.

“ For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to youward.”

I have selected these words, not as the topic of this evening's discourse, but simply as expressive of feelings and convictions to which I think it is not unfitting that utterance should be given on the present occasion.

The consciousness of the Divine favour is unquestionably the highest source of joy—of joy with which no stranger intermeddleth. He only is approved at last whom the Lord commendeth. When God justifies, it matters little who condemns. The light of God's countenance lifted on a poor diseased, deserted, dying Lazarus, makes him a partaker of celestial peace; while the splendours and wealth of a Dives are but misery under an imposing disguise. When a man's conscience bears him witness that he pleases God, he has a peace that passeth understanding. Let any one seriously and prayerfully aim at the

Divine glory ; let him, in reliance on Divine grace, endeavour to live in accordance with the Divine Word, and do the Divine will from day to day ; though in many things he may come far short of his aim and do amiss ; though his judgment may sometimes fail him, and his imagination mislead him, that man may adopt, without guile or proud self-complacence, the language of the Apostle just recited. And while I would arrogate no praise, no merit to myself : while I am deeply conscious of weakness and much imperfection ; while my service has been, I am sure, more unsatisfactory to none than to myself, I can, and I do say, with at least some measure of truth, in view of my departure, after a three years' pastorate among you, my rejoicing is this, the testimony of my conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, I have had my conversation in the world and before this church.

The heart is deceitful above all things, and no man is an infallible judge, even of his own spirit ; but I have a calm and deep conviction that I have earnestly and distinctly aimed at your highest interests, and supremely sought, not your approval or praises, not your money or friendship, but your precious souls. I have laboured as I could in trying to bring you nearer to Heaven. I have sought that you all might be

humble, meek, and lowly in spirit, conscious of your sins and shortcomings, of your ignorance and weakness, that so you might dwell close by the fountain of all light, and life, and strength, and receive of the fullness of Christ, and grace for grace. My highest ambition has been to be practically accredited among you as a faithful and devoted minister of the gospel.

I should doubtless err, in thus speaking of myself, if I had no occasion to adopt the language of the Apostle: "Let no man think me a fool; if otherwise, yet as a fool receive me, that I may boast myself a little. That which I speak, I speak it not after the Lord, but as it were foolishly, in this confidence of boasting."*

In prosecuting the work of the ministry here, it has been my aim to preach the whole gospel in its simplicity—this, and only this. When I came I determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified, making that sacred personage "the diamond to shine in the bosom of every sermon." In my desire to declare the Divine counsel, I have most carefully avoided the discussion of merely human opinions, and many themes of discourse which might have attracted popular attention. The supernatural Revelations, the deep and glorious mysteries of God, His laws and His counsels, His cau-

* 2d Cor. 11 : 16, 17.

tions and His promises, His warnings and His threatenings, I take you to record, that these have been the subject-matter of the preaching, the lectures, and the exhortations of this pulpit. I have wished, in imitation of God himself, to magnify His word above all His name; to establish your souls in the confidence of its profound simplicity, its supreme authority, its Divine authorship, so that when you opened its pages, or listened to its teachings, you might know and feel yourselves to be directly communing with the mind and spirit of God. In a word, I have tried to act simply as the messenger of the Lord of Hosts, to be his ambassador, and, as it were, His mouth to this people.

Moreover, I have endeavoured so to order my life as to give no offence, no scandal to any. Avoiding interests in which different parties were engaged, I have sought to be strictly impartial in my relations towards you. The following and such like directions have had, if I know myself, a controlling influence over me: "I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality."* "Ye shall not respect persons in judgment, but ye shall hear the small as well as the great; ye shall not

* 1 Tim. 5: 21.

be afraid of the face of man; for the judgment is God's."* "My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment, and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, . . . are ye not then partial in yourselves."† "Having men's persons in admiration because of advantage."‡ I have wished to know no man after the flesh, aiming to apply my ministry to all as God gave me opportunity. I have desired to give no occasion for the poor to say that I neglected them for the rich, or for the rich to say that I claimed their especial friendship. I have preferred to err, if err I should, on the side of those to whom above all others Christ came to minister, and whom God hath chosen rich in faith. I hope, however, that I have not erred on either hand; for I have endeavoured not to forget that I was made the pastor of all alike, and that each had an equal right in me. .

You will bear me witness that I have endeavoured to serve you not only by steadily preaching the gospel, but in the various methods of the pastoral care. By systematic visitation and prayer in families—by services at the sick-bed and at funerals—by attending all the extra meet-

* 2 Deut. 1: 17.

† James 2: 1-4.

‡ Jude, 16.

ings of the Church whenever practicable—by now teaching in the Sabbath-school—now superintending the teachers' meeting—now instructing a Bible-class, and then a weekly catechetical class for the young. But for special reasons, I should be ashamed to enumerate such things in your hearing.

In thus attempting to fulfil my ministry among you, the way has by no means been smooth. Opposition utterly unanticipated and unsuspected has manifested itself; difficulties and differences have arisen which have made my work here very painful and exceedingly perplexing. It is proper, I think, to mention one or two of these things; and I do it not simply on my own account, or in justification of my separation from you, but as needful for your spiritual protection and prosperity.

1. There have been developed differences respecting fundamental truths of God's word, for the defence of which the ministry of the Presbyterian Church are sacredly pledged by their ordination vows; truths which are embodied in the creed of the denomination, and which cannot be yielded by the ministry without the guilt of the highest form of perjury, or by the church, without incurring the Divine displeasure and malediction. I am constrained to admonish you that the pillars of our religion have been as-

sailed, the very citadel of Christianity attempted. I speak it thus openly, for this thing has not been done in a corner. I charge no evil motives on any. Saul of Tarsus thought he was doing God service when he was persecuting the Church. God judgeth the heart. I speak only of the fact. I have deeply felt this opposition and have endeavoured steadily, earnestly, fearlessly to confront it, and break its power in the mind of the Church. The radical difference, that which contains and vitalizes every other, has been concerning the authority, the all-sufficiency, the exclusive prerogative of the Bible in matters of religion. And here let me pause a few moments to emphasize and distinguish this difference in its root and essence, for I would to God that you and all men might fully, fairly, clearly understand it; and to this end I will make use of a recent and signal demonstration well known to the church.

The statement made at the congregational meeting, that this pulpit had held and taught that the Bible was the *only rule* of faith and practice, and that this had been the occasion of no small part of the troubles among us, I subscribe to most fully and heartily. This remark discriminates broadly, fairly, fully, the vital difference between the teachings of this desk and our standards, on the one hand, and on the other, of those among

us who have so persistently and earnestly differed from me on this subject; and I would here reiterate the sentiment with all emphasis, being fully persuaded that this is the very cornerstone of all true religion on the earth. Any statement which excludes or abates this, surrenders the citadel of the Christian religion;—the Bible is the word of God, *the only rule* of faith and practice. This is the Protestant formula.

But may we not say, as it was urged that we should say, and as was and is said in one of the resolutions adopted at the meeting referred to, that the Bible is the only *infallible* rule? Assuredly we may, if by this we mean to affirm that while the Bible is the *only* rule it is also an infallible one, which was the meaning, I suppose, of the greater part of those who voted for the resolution. But if, by affirming that the Bible was the only infallible rule, it was intended to affirm that there are other rules, fallible it may be, but real, immediate and authoritative in faith and practice, then, with all my heart and soul, I disapprove the sentiment, and repudiate it as false in fact and as fatal to our holy religion. Thus, while the expression is common to both parties, it has vastly different meanings in their minds respectively. For do you not see how fearfully liable to abuse it is by such as wish to elevate reason, or conscience, or the

church, or tradition, or anything whatsoever, to the dignity of being a determinative and authoritative rule in religion? If the Bible is the only rule, then man must bow to its authority implicitly and universally, in his reason and conscience, in heart and will, in the motives and ends of his conduct, in the animating and controlling spirit of every thought and word and deed. If, however, we say that the Bible is the only infallible rule, meaning that there are other ultimate rules besides this, or which this does not comprehend and overrule, then, if the Scripture contradicts the utterances of what is called sound reason or natural morality, that Holy Word, notwithstanding the application to it of the epithet infallible, must bend to their conclusions, or, at least, admit them to coördinate rank with itself, and be competitors for the supreme and final authority; for *reason* now claims to judge the Scripture statements and test their infallibility in its own crucible. For example, if the Bible says that God inflicts eternal punishment on man for sin, and if human reason asserts this to be inconsistent with the Divine perfection, then the Bible, while it says this, speaks falsely, or must really mean something else; and the infallible word is either contradicted, or made to mean just what the fallible reason may require.

Be assured, my hearers, that when stress is laid upon the distinction between the two statements, that the Bible is the *only* rule, and that it is the only *infallible* rule, the end, if not the design, is, to introduce another and a controlling rule. If the distinction is important, it is important to those who deny the self-sufficiency, the self-interpreting, the absolute perfection of the Scriptures. It is a distinction in the interest of infidelity, of rationalism, of church authority, of tradition. The Bible is the only rule, and it is really the infallible, because the *only* one. Cleave, my dear people, to this, with unflinching fidelity, against all plausible conjectures, all quibbles, all arguments, all assertions to the contrary. Remember that the Bible alone, without note or comment, is the religion of Protestants; and remember, moreover, that our own standards repeatedly affirm it. Let me cite them on this fundamental article. Thus, our confession says,* "The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture, unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the spirit, or traditions of men." And the larger catechism

* Chap. 1, sec. 6.

teaches,* “The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the word of God, *the only rule* of faith and obedience.” The shorter catechism teaches,† “The word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is *the only rule* to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy Him.” And in the form of government this language occurs,‡ “The Holy Scriptures are *the only rule* of faith and manners.”

And on another vital point, the interpretation of the Scripture, the determinative authority as to what the Scripture does say and does mean, what say our excellent standards? They teach us that the Bible interprets itself; that God is His own interpreter; that if God has not made His truth plain, so plain, that in all important matters, the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein, man cannot help His Maker; that “God’s own word must be as intelligible as any human interpretation of it.” So our standards emphatically declare. Hear them on this subject:§ “The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is”—what, my hearers?—reason? conscience? common sense? No, no. “The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself; and, therefore, when there

* Q. 3. † Q. 2. ‡ Form of Government, chap. 1, sec. 7.

§ Confession of Faith, chap. 1, secs. 9 and 10.

is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture, (which is not manifold, but one,) it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly. The Supreme Judge, by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture." Oh, that God would give you grace to see the deep, vital necessity there is for contending for this truth, and make you all satisfied with God's own simple word, which shines in its own light, and is its own ornament and glory and defence. For, as has been eloquently said,* "If men bring their torches around this pillar of fire, the sacred light goes out, and they are left to their own guidance, and then the blind lead the blind."

2. The other difficulty to which I would refer, relates to the method of dealing with the state of things just indicated. And I frankly admit that in this is to be found my principal reason for resigning the pastorate in this church. In my own mind, justice to the church and justice to myself require the separation.

A majority of the Session has differed from

* Dr. Hodge.

me on this most serious and vital subject. I will not attempt to state our views respectively. My own have been so strangely misrepresented, that I would not risk the making of a like misrepresentation of the views of my brethren. I therefore refer simply to the *fact of this difference*. And here let me at once and fully correct an impression, which I am told is abroad in the community, respecting this matter. I wish to bear my testimony to the absolute unity of the Session, so far as I know, on all other subjects that have come before us. I am not aware that there has been a divided vote in the Session for the past three years, except on this one point.

And, moreover, I do not think that there is much, if any diversity of opinion as to the gravity, the serious nature of the differences concerning the fundamental verities of our religion in the Church; and, if I may judge of the others by myself, language cannot express our sense of the injury to the cause of Christ by the free, unchecked utterance of those sentiments.

With these statements I repeat the remark just now made, that the majority of the rulers of the Church differed from the pastor as to the true method of dealing with these sad and radical troubles. This difference was honest, decided, and has thus far been irreconcilable. Men older, more experienced than myself, your own

chosen representatives, whose love of the Church, and of souls, and of Christ, is as true as my own, could not see their duty as I saw it. They could not agree with me as to the best way of attempting to purge out the doctrinal leaven that is at work among us. I have tried to agree with them, to look at the matter as they did, but it has always seemed to me that the Bible, and the spirit and letter of our Book of Discipline, and the good of the Church, and the salvation of souls,—all forbade me to yield my convictions. And the more I have thought upon it, and studied the Bible, and the history of churches, the more deeply am I persuaded that the peace, unity, and prosperity of this church require just about the course of conduct I have proposed and urged in our session. My conviction is, that there never will be that union of doctrine and discipline which God has appointed for the upbuilding of His Church, and without which no truly faithful pastor can be comfortable or successful in his work, until there exists a living, active, vigilant oversight on the part of the spiritual authorities of the Church, such as will create throughout the membership a sense of immediate responsibility to their spiritual rulers,—a responsibility enjoined with the utmost distinctness in the sacred Scriptures. “Obey them that have the rule over you and admonish you, and

submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls as they that must give account." But the majority of the Session are just as fully and honestly convinced that there is another and a better way of securing these results; and being in consequence deprived of their earnest coöperation in this most important concernment of the Church, I have felt my position to be more and more irksome and impracticable. Indeed, it must be perfectly evident to every one, that no church can expect much spiritual prosperity, when the official leader is not in living sympathy with his coadjutors and advisers on a subject of this vital nature. There will be necessarily more or less of friction: open or concealed; misunderstandings arise, unpleasant reports and rumors become rife, parties are formed, the church is divided in spirit and feeling, and every month more and more reveals the inexpediency of perpetuating the pastoral relation—for how can two walk together except they be agreed? I have felt that kindly, parental, prayerful discipline, sessional admonition, remonstrance, counsel, was the great want of the Church. I have earnestly tried to secure it. I have been overruled in my efforts. I have at length submitted to the decision of my older brethren, and yielded the church into their hands; but my love to the people of God embosomed in this fold, constrains me

thus to express my opinion. Whoever may be my successor, I hope that he and his helpers in government may be of the same mind.

Amid these varied and complicated differences, my position has been one of much difficulty and embarrassment. The style and tone of pulpit discourse has necessarily been modified by these circumstances. I have felt called upon very frequently to uphold against all opposition the Bible as God's whole, and only, and authoritative word, thus awakening ill-will on the part of those who felt their opinions controverted on this point. It has been my duty carefully to protect the Church from the influence of errors more or less prevalent in its communion, by magnifying the truths which have been assailed—assailed with a persistency and firmness which might well be imitated by them who love those truths as the very bulwark of Christianity; thus the breach has been widened, and some whose love to our common faith may not be questioned, have doubted the wisdom of my course, fearing the consequences that must sooner or later flow from it, and so have withheld their support from the pastor. I have pressed you, perhaps, with what you have thought undue earnestness, to self-abasement, to liberality, to individual consecration, to a sense of weakness and insufficiency, that you might not think more highly of yourselves

than you ought to think, and thus I have wounded the pride of some and aroused the enmity of others. Indeed, it has required more ability and wisdom than God has given me by nature or by grace, to accomplish the good I designed for you at the outset of my ministry. My usefulness has been greatly curtailed, my preaching often listened to with critical ears rather than with docile hearts, and the guardianship of the flock from imminent danger, has sometimes diverted me from efforts for the immediate conversion of souls. I do not see that I could be of much more service to you, and I therefore feel that the Providence of God, in opening a door of entrance to me into another place of labour, has made the path of my duty perfectly plain.

The pastoral oversight of a church is a serious responsibility. I have borne it in this place for three years, and I now resign it at His call into the hands of my Master. I have been graciously supported under all my burdens, and think that God's blessing has not been utterly withheld from my ministry.

In parting with you, let me say that I am not aware that I have an unkind feeling, or ever have had, towards a single person in the church or congregation. No one has ever done me a wrong in private or in public which it has seemed to me required any attempt to redress. The shafts of

whatever enmity may have existed against me, have fallen harmless at my feet, and I have never cared to pick them up, believing that those who have sent them were far more injured than he possibly could be against whom they were sent. Some, kindly proffering to me their sympathies, have spoken of persecutions. This is a misnomer. When I call to mind what others have been counted worthy to pass through for the dear name of Christ, I cannot but feel that the privileges and honours of persecution in this matter have not been mine. My trials have been light afflictions, and have endured only for a little time; and if they have in the least degree advanced my personal sanctification, surely I shall forever joy and rejoice because of them. Whatever evil I may have suffered, so far as I have deserved it, is not to be named; so far as I have not deserved it, it has fallen, not on me, but on Him that sent me, and on the church of which the Holy Ghost had made me overseer; I am unhurt.

And now I must bring these remarks, and with them my ministry among you, to a close.

Under misrepresentations of my course by others, I have spoken in the consciousness of my own integrity. I have declared the sincerity of my motives, the uprightness of my aims. But let it not be thought that I thereby justify every in-

stance of my conduct before you. Men often *mean* well, and *do* wrong; and no one probably is more deeply sensible of the imperfections and sins of my ministry here than I am. I owed to you a practical service far more thorough, far more self-sacrificing, than I have rendered. I have doubtless made many mistakes, neglected many opportunities, omitted many duties. I know that if God should be strict to mark my iniquities and my shortcomings, I could not stand in His sight, or answer Him for one of a thousand: and I know that if you will only recall the sacred vows I assumed at my installation, you will feel, as I deeply do myself, that I have need of infinite mercy from God for my sad lack of service to you. Those who were most anxious for my coming have been, I believe, the most conscious of these imperfections; and hence the most disappointed in me. I am sorry that such is the fact. I must throw myself on that Christian charity which covers a multitude of sins, and ask that, for the sake of our common Lord, you will think kindly of your pastor when he has gone from you, and remember that amid infirmities, temptations, and failures, he has tried to do you good, and only good.

And here let me thank you for all your kindness to me during my stay among you. *The Eldership*, for their forbearance with me, notwith-

standing our differences; for their union with me in other efforts to bless the Church; for their prayers and good wishes; for all the support they have rendered me in God's work in this place. *The people*, for their frequent remembrances of me and mine in tokens of good will and affection; for their support at our meetings; for prayer; for their personal friendship; for their kindly hospitalities. Especially would I thank you, at least very many of you, for removing the heavy burden which the action of the late congregational meeting left on my heart. I had submitted to it, as ordained for my discipline by Him who orders all events; but you have lightened that load, and I thank you for so cordial, so full an approval as you have given, of my ministerial and pastoral labours among you.* And I also express my gratitude to the pastors and members of the other churches of the town, for their concurrence with me in wishes and efforts for the common good; for their readiness to meet every overture on my part towards mutual religious harmony and kind feeling; for their friendly greetings; for their social confidence.

The Lord reward you all for your kindness, and return it a thousand fold into your own bosoms.

Dear brethren, I have longed to see this church

* See Appendix.

perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. I have laboured for this, but I leave it, as I found it, still divided ; yet I trust that many of God's dear people have been sanctified in heart and life, built up and comforted in the Christian truth, and their eyes opened more and more to see the deep, the unspeakable importance of doctrinal and spiritual union in the church. I leave you with my work partly done. May God give you grace to get nearer to Christ. Vie one with another in this. You will come closer together as you approach this Divine centre. The *love of Christ* is the *centre* and the *sum* of all truth and of all duty. Magnify, adore, love Him. Understand your position as a church. Fight the good fight : fear not the face of man. Remember those words which I have had occasion often to repeat in conversation with individuals of your number : " Who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the Son of Man, which shall be made as grass ; and forgettest the Lord, thy Maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth ? " Fear God : be bold for Christ and His truth. Let me assure you that fidelity in these things is under God the hope and the security of this church.

As I have already stated, there are those

among us who have steadily opposed what I have inculcated as fundamental truth from this sacred desk. My friends, I do not question the sincerity of your motives, or the firmness of your convictions. Your standard of truth and of duty is different from mine. We have crossed each other's paths. I did it at first in ignorance. I supposed, when I accepted the pastorate of the church, that all the members were agreed in regard to the Divine character and authority of the Bible and its revelations. But I have found it otherwise. We have radically differed. I have tried to convince you of the error and danger, both to yourselves and others, of your views; to show you that their utterance before your fellow-members and fellow-men was contrary to your covenant engagements. I have longed and prayed for you, that God would give you grace to see the line of conduct you have thought fit to pursue, as I could not doubt He has seen it, but in vain. You are right, according to your own judgment. I can do no more. I leave you, still loving your souls, and wishing you the richest of God's blessings, His enlightening and sanctifying grace. My covenant relations to you are just closing. If I have wronged you, I have done it unwittingly, and I ask you to pardon it. For whatever of wrong you may have done me, I have nought else to

say, than that, so far as I am concerned, I do not think it worth a word between us. You stand or fall to another master, and I commit you to His impartial and holy judgment, begging you, once more, for the sake of the Church, for the sake of your own souls, to submit your minds to the supreme and absolute authority of the Bible, and seek the peace, unity and harmony of those with whom you are in sacred covenant.

I add a parting word to my unconverted hearers. When I entered upon my ministry here, I promised that I would aim at your salvation. God has given me some seals of my ministry from among you. But, as you have heard, I have had to watch and protect the flock with more than usual diligence; to think of and labour for them, when otherwise I should have been more directly and earnestly engaged for your spiritual welfare. Still, I have not withheld from you the truth. I have declared unto you the whole counsel of God. I have warned, reproved, entreated, instructed you. The blood of your souls, I trust, will not be found in my skirts. Your continued impenitence has been a cause of heaviness and sorrow of heart; for every time you have failed to hear the word of the Lord at my mouth, you have been hardened in sin, strengthened in resistance to God's Holy

Spirit. I must now part from you. God has called me elsewhere. You have judged yourselves unworthy of that everlasting life I have proffered you. Oh, that before God calls you to meet Him in judgment you may listen to the voice of His mercy, and lay hold on eternal life through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Brethren and friends, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified. The God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that Good Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever.

APPENDIX.

REV. T. H. SKINNER, JR. :—

DEAR PASTOR,—The undersigned, members of the First Presbyterian Church and Congregation of Honesdale, take this method of expressing their sincere regret, that circumstances have induced you to accept a call to another field of labour, and that your relation to this church as its Pastor, is so soon to terminate.

The three years of your pastoral labour with this church have deeply impressed us with a sense of your faithfulness as a Pastor; in your magnifying the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the Inspired Word of God, and as the only and infallible rule of faith and practice, and in pressing its claims upon the heart and conscience and life; in your faithful warnings against the errors of doctrine and laxity of life, that so threaten the church in these days; in fully preaching Christ and Him crucified, and faith in Him as the only ground of Salvation; in your thorough instruction of the young in the vital fundamental doctrines, that underlie and support all evangelical religion: in your visits of love and Christian consolation to the poor, and the bedside of the sick and dying; and in your Christian deportment, and kind and genial spirit in all the social and domestic relations:—these labors of love have eminently endeared you to us, and will render your memory precious to our hearts.

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We beg you therefore to accept this testimony to your fidelity as a Pastor, and that you will receive the enclosed amount, which we wish you to use in such a manner as shall be most agreeable to yourself, and as shall also be a memento of the kind feelings and sincere friendship which we entertain toward yourself and family.

HONESDALE, Pa., June 29th, 1859.

A. STRONG,	S. D. WARD,
J. P. DARLING,	WILLIAM REED,
C. P. WALLER,	E. F. TORREY,
GEO. G. WALLER,	H. C. HAND,
SETH W. POWELL,	H. W. STONE,
J. H. SINCLAIR,	A. CUMMINGS,
J. S. WRIGHT,	DWIGHT REED,
ISAIAH SNYDER,	C. F. YOUNG,
WM. J. FULLER,	T. S. FITCH,
EARL WHEELER,	W. T. EASTABROOK,
STEPHEN G. CORY,	B. SHERWOOD,
JEREMIAH CLARK,	JAMES R. DICKSON,
JOHN F. ROE,	E. T. BEERS,
DAVID BEERS,	DANIEL BLANDIN,
EBENEZER T. LOSEY,	JESSE VANSTEENBURG,
ELAM STRONG,	ROBERT J. KNAPP,
W. W. WESTON,	NATHANIEL BEERS,
D. M. ENO,	GEORGE SNYDER,
GEORGE F. KNAPP,	WM. H. STONE,
I. H. SUTTON,	MOSES WARD,
JOHN. H. CRAWFORD,	F. A. DONEY,
C. KING,	D. R. BURNHAM,
COE DURLAND,	THOS. H. DICKSON,
H. L. PHILLIPS,	LEVY McCREERY,
CHAUNCY DEMING,	DAVID ROBERTSON,
JOHN ROBERTSON.	