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FAREWELL SERMON Preached in the
First Presbyterian Church, Princeton,
New Jersey, October 27th, 1895, by
HORACE G. HINSDALE, D.D.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

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PREFATORY NOTE.

This Sermon is given to the press in compliance with the request of the Trustees and other members of the congregation. It may serve as a supplement to the Historical Discourse delivered nearly ten years ago. Possibly it may be of some use, directly or indirectly, to my successor. Some of my friends may value it as a memento. For such reasons only I have consented to its publication.

Second Corinthians xiii, 11.—*Finally, brethren, farewell.*

It is the custom of our Church when a minister has been released from his pastoral charge, for the Presbytery to send formal notice of its action to the congregation affected by it. Accordingly I am here this morning by the appointment and command of the Presbytery of New Brunswick, to make known to you that on the seventeenth of September last the said Presbytery dissolved the pastoral relation constituted November second, 1877, between the First Church of Princeton and myself, the dissolution to take effect on and after November first of the present year. The Presbytery also authorized the Session of this church to make all necessary arrangements for the supply of the pulpit until its stated meeting in April next, unless another pastor shall in the meantime have been chosen.*

At my installation in November, 1877, the Rev. Dr. George Sheldon was the presiding minister; the Rev. Dr. Archibald A. Hodge preached the sermon; the Rev. Dr. Lyman H. Atwater gave the charge to the pastor; and the Rev. Dr. Abraham Gosman the charge to the people. Of these excellent men, but one, Dr. Gosman, survives; and he has been forced by infirm health to relinquish the active duties of the pastorate.

Of the elders of the church five have died during my residence here, Messrs. Jacob Lane, Stephen Alexander, George M. Maclean, John F. Hageman, Sen., and Alex-

* It is proper to add that the Presbytery also passed a resolution commendatory of the pecuniary provision made for the retiring pastor for two years to come.

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ander Johnston. Of the deacons, Mr. Isaac Stryker, for some time a non-resident, was dismissed in 1884; Mr. John C. Conover was elected to the eldership in 1886; and Mr. Philip Hendrickson deceased in 1885. Of the members of the church, one hundred and seventeen have died. To this number should be added several clergymen who identified themselves with our communion—viz., Dr. Charles Hodge, Dr. Atwater, Dr. Sheldon, Mr. Harris, Dr. A. A. Hodge, Mr. Wilder, Dr. McGill, Dr. Zabriskie, Dr. C. W. Hodge, and Dr. McCosh.

Of the trustees of the Congregation one, Mr. John F. Hageman, Jr., has died. He was succeeded by Mr. P. A. V. van Doren. The vacancy in the board caused by the resignation of Mr. J. B. van Doren has been filled by the election of Mr. Richard Rowland.

One fact which impresses me with sadness to-day is the disappearance from us, in consequence of death or removal, not only of individuals but of whole families. The places once associated with the names of Atwater, McGill, Hendrickson, and others, now know them no more. The line of eminent theological instructors bearing the name of Hodge, ceased in 1891, after seventy years of signal usefulness in the Seminary and devotion to the interests of this church. Our records are full of eloquent reminders that we are only strangers and pilgrims in the earth.

We cannot boast of large growth during these eighteen years. Four hundred and forty-four members have been added, but the deaths have been many and the dismissions many. When I began my ministry here the church-roll, owing to the length of time which had elapsed since the death of my predecessor, had suffered serious neglect, and was carrying more than a hundred

names of persons deceased or dismissed. For this reason such growth as there has been has not been apparent. A comparison of the numbers reported then with the numbers reported now would, apart from this explanation, lead to an entirely false conclusion. It is only right to add that the figures of the census with reference to the white protestant population of Princeton indicate the possibility of but a small average increase to each of our several churches. Many students indeed, desiring to come under the care of the Presbytery, seek a church connection here. But this species of membership can add little real strength, however well it may look in published reports. For reasons readily understood we have not been largely favored with it of late.

During all these years the church has moved steadily forward in its appropriate work. In the pulpit the endeavor has been to declare the whole counsel of God, and the entire field of Christian doctrine and duty has been traversed in many forms of statement and exposition. The Sunday School has adhered with admirable steadiness and fidelity to the lofty purpose of its existence. Never a very large school, not rich in modern appliances, and subject to the disadvantages incident to the long vacation of our literary institutions and to a frequent change of superintendents, it has wrought nobly for Christ and his church in guiding many of its pupils to the Saviour, enlisting them in His service, and training them to become teachers of others. The school has been and still is favored with an unusually well-qualified band of teachers, and among its superintendents have been men now well-known in the Presbyterian Church. To the list of superintendents given in the historical discourse preached some years since, I may add the names of Professor Herbert S. S. Smith of the Col-

lege, Frank S. Woodruff, Maitland Alexander, L. W. Curtis, Henry E. Hale, Jr., Robinson P. D. Bennett, Edward L. Howe and Professor William F. Magie.

The Young People's Society organized a few years ago has maintained an interesting Sabbath evening prayer-meeting, and has also through its committees engaged in various forms of Christian work, such as holding religious services at the alms-house, distributing tracts and papers among the canal boatmen, and the like. It is moreover a contributor of money for Christian missions abroad.

Time does not permit me to give more than an appreciative mention to the Women's Home and Foreign Missionary Societies, the Young Women's Missionary Society, the Mission Bands, and the effort recently begun by a few of our younger members to bring sweetness and light into the lives of ignorant and neglected children in the needy locality known as the Canal Basin.

Our church's gifts for various benevolent objects have not been inconsiderable, though doubtless they have not filled the measure of our ability. For the last eighteen years the average annual contribution to Foreign Missions cannot have fallen much if any short of one thousand dollars; and the home objects represented by our Boards and other organizations have received in the aggregate a larger sum. There is reason to believe, also, that generous gifts for benevolent uses are bestowed by some of our members through the societies of the College and the Seminary, or otherwise, which do not come to the knowledge of the Session, and therefore are not reported in our annual statements. It should be mentioned here that our contribution to the Reunion Memorial (commonly known as the million dollar) Fund

was in excess of the amount asked of us by the General Assembly's Committee.

Nor do our people content themselves with beneficence of a denominational sort. The Bible and Tract Societies, and the local Aid and Relief Societies find in them earnest friends and liberal contributors. Indeed since I have been acquainted with the church no good object has been presented without a kindly response. Sufferers by floods and fires, students devoting their summer vacations to self-denying and Christlike labors in the slums of large cities, and institutions for the education and elevation of the Negro and the Indian, have never appealed in vain to the old First Church.

Mention must also be made of the country work in the vicinity of Princeton. This work is theoretically non-denominational, but practically Presbyterian, and efficiently helped by members of our church. At Queens-ton is a chapel owing its existence to the liberality of members of the First Church, saved at one time from sale for debt by the efforts of the Session, and now held in trust by our board of trustees for the benefit of the people of the locality. It has recently been greatly improved at an expense of several hundred dollars raised largely, though not exclusively, by the zealous exertions of members of our church. It furnishes accommodation for occasional preaching services, and for an excellent Sunday School in which some of our younger parishioners do efficient service. In the Sunday School and other religious work at Mount Lucas, the family of one of our elders together with other members of the church are deeply and actively interested. The church at Cedar Grove by gift of the late Paul Tulane is held by our board of trustees, together with the sum of five thousand dollars given by the same gentleman, the in-

come of which is applied to the maintaining of public worship every Sabbath afternoon throughout the year, conducted, in turn, by ministers of four different denominations.

Two of our elders and their families, with others, are prominent participants in a growing work at Stony Brook. A chapel is now in process of erection here which will furnish attractive quarters for the Sunday School, the prayer meeting, the Mission Band, the Christian Endeavor Society, the Sabbath evening preaching, and other purposes looking to the moral and religious improvement of the neighborhood. A number of our people have esteemed it a privilege to assist this enterprise by their benefactions.

The foregoing statement of facts has been given as a part of the history of the church. I do not found upon it any boastful claims. I thank God for all the agencies which are at work amongst us for the extending of His Kingdom. But it would be ungrateful to Him to shut our eyes upon the position which He has graciously permitted us to occupy. While it is sadly true that we have done far too little, we may still rejoice in what has been accomplished in the past and gird ourselves for more abounding labors in the future.

In this connection it may not be useless to notice some of the difficulties which confront Christian work in this place. One of these grows out of the liquor saloons. There is too much drunkenness here; there are too many traps set for boys and young men; the town is not alive to its honor and its responsibility as the seat of the College of New Jersey, Evelyn College, and the chief Theological Seminary of the Presbyterian Church. Rum and rum-selling were directly accountable for the shameful occurrence which marred the fes-

tivities of the last Commencement season. The problem presented is a hard one, undoubtedly, but it should not be proclaimed impossible of solution in the absence of a more thorough discussion than I have ever known it to receive here. The political prohibitionist helps us little because he is impatient. He demands the impossible; the millennium must begin with the next election. Many well-meaning men acquiesce in the license system as a choice of evils; but it is at best a poor evasion of the difficulty. Is there no other resource? Is there not something worthy of attention in the South Carolina and Swedish systems? Cannot Princeton students and teachers of Political Science and Christian Sociology do more than has yet been done in the direction of guiding public opinion and pointing the way out of our sore trouble.

Another hindrance to Christian progress here is the unsettled state of the question as to the non-church-going country population. As yet, neighborhood Sunday Schools and prayer meetings, with occasional preaching, are the means principally relied upon for supplying their spiritual necessities. But while I yield to no one in admiration of the missionary zeal thus exhibited and the results achieved, I have never been able to regard these agencies as completely solving the question at issue. Let them be retained by all means, but let something more be done to bring the people into closer connection with the Church and its ordinances. To fall short of this is to provide but a partial supply for imperative wants, and to lose sight, to this extent, of God's appointed way of securing spiritual well-being. Every one living within a circuit of three or four miles, or, in other words, nearer to Princeton than to any other large town, should be urged and encouraged to form

church relations here, and to attend at least the Sunday morning services of one of our congregations. The churches should reach out after these people in the spirit of warm affection and genuine fellowship, and they, in their turn, should be taught that the Sabbath School and the prayer meeting, admirable as they are, are inadequate substitutes for the communion of saints in the Church which Christ has bought with His own blood. Might it not be possible to provide in the several neighborhoods a free or cheap conveyance every Sabbath morning for all who can be persuaded to attend one or another of our churches? A plan corresponding to this has been adopted with great success in some parts of Massachusetts for giving to the children in retired country districts the advantages of the graded schools in large towns. It furnishes a useful suggestion to churches in such localities as our own.

The third source of difficulty is more especially peculiar to Princeton than those which have been mentioned. It is due to the presence here of two old, influential, and growing institutions of learning. Very naturally the men connected with them as officers and teachers regard them as the dominant interest of the place, and their duties toward them as paramount. In other towns the church is the supreme representative of religion, but in Princeton a large number of our foremost people assign this supremacy to the College or the Theological Seminary. Chapel services, with many features of attraction, and an occasional sacramental observance, are viewed as equivalent to church ordinances; and the necessary consequence is that as the institutions grow the local church, particularly the Presbyterian Church, is more and more overshadowed. Those whom the less educated portion of the commun-

ity might naturally look up to as religious leaders do not consider themselves under obligation to be such. They may help in various ways, as many generously do, to support the town church in its material requirements, but it holds only a secondary place in their esteem and must give way to the great schools when there is a conflict of interests. Of this the last few years have afforded at least two singular illustrations. The effect is obvious. The inference is but too readily drawn, that if scholars and divines set no high value upon church services and prayer meetings, others may safely follow their example.

I trust that I am not misunderstood. I do not forget that some of the best friends of this church have belonged to the class of which I am speaking. Nor am I uttering the language either of complaint or of censure. I am trying to describe a state of things which grows out of the peculiar conditions of our college town; conditions which perhaps are in large measure necessary and unalterable, but which the pastor of a Princeton Presbyterian Church must assuredly reckon with, and which will sometimes fetter his hands and oppress his heart.

Permit me to say before closing a few words as to the outlook for our own ancient and beloved church. I have no intention of posing as a prophet foretelling what will be done, or as an adviser declaring what ought to be done. It has seemed to me decorous to take no part in the proceedings of the Session relating to plans proposed for adoption after the conclusion of my term of service, and therefore, at my suggestion, a moderator *pro tempore* has presided at the last two meetings. But I claim the right, as one who has been and will always be deeply interested in the welfare of this church, to

give an expression of opinion of the worth of which you must judge for yourselves.

Since the completion of Alexander Hall it has been evident that our friends of the college desire to possess themselves of the church property. Rumors to this effect have filled the air and have tended to discourage all attempts to effect needed repairs and improvements in the building. The question seems to lie between the addition of a few square feet to the College property of two hundred and forty acres, and the demolition of one of the historic landmarks of Princeton. For this building, though not itself of great age, stands on the site of the church erected in 1766, a site consecrated for nearly a hundred and thirty years to holy uses, and rich in memories of great events and illustrious men. At a time when there is a notable revival of interest in the history of our colonial and revolutionary eras, every patriotic citizen of Princeton should pause before advocating, in the absence of an imperative necessity which has not appeared as yet, the destruction of such a memorial of an eventful past. Raze it, and the College campus is bigger by a few square yards; a little more grassy space is given to summer night loungers; and that is the extent of the gain. On the other hand preserve it, as in other places men are preserving historic sites; put upon it for interior and exterior improvement and decoration one-tenth part of the cost of a new site and building; remove the lecture room to the east side; make some architectural changes in that part of the edifice which looks on the College grounds, and allow ivies to climb the outer walls; and then you will have a house of worship on the site better suited for such a use than any other in all Princeton, both because of its central location and its historic associations; you will have

a fitting memorial of the ancient friendship and intimate relations of College and Church; and the sacred edifice made convenient and comely will meet the requirements of your children and your children's children and be to them all the dearer, as time goes on, for the memories which it enshrines.

If this be sneered at as sentiment, I have only to reply that to take sentiment out of human life is to quench its finest aspirations and rob it of energy for noble achievement. Sentiment began our revolutionary struggle and carried it on to victory. Sentiment stirred the hearts and nerved the arms of the men who fought to prevent the dismemberment of the Union. Sentiment inspires attachment to the national flag. Sentiment moves us to care tenderly for the places where repose the ashes of our dead. The sentiment of attachment to a venerable sanctuary where our forefathers served God in worship and sacrament, where they presented their children in baptism to the gracious Lord who is ever saying, "Suffer the little children to come unto me," where youth and maidens of successive generations have been joined in matrimony, and where words of jubilant victory have been spoken over the coffins of the departed, is rooted in the holiest affections of our nature, and not seldom is the spring of courageous and heroic action.

I envy not the man or the men who, except under the pressure of inexorable necessity, can give the word to tear down these walls, and sweep from this ground every vestige of the sacred uses to which it has been so long devoted.

I have also somewhat to say, simply as the expression of personal opinion, on the subject of the consolidation of Presbyterianism in Princeton. It has seemed to me that this would be desirable if it could be effected on

a proper basis and with the hearty concurrence of all concerned. From a pastor's point of view there are difficulties and frictions growing out of the existence in so small a town as this of two churches of the same order and occupying essentially the same field. In spite of all efforts to the contrary there will arise misunderstandings, conflicting interests, and appearances of unseemly rivalry. I have thought that a union of churches, brought about in the right manner, might result in one church of dignified size and commanding strength, under a pastor responsible for the morning service and the pastoral work and furnished with adequate assistance for all other services. It has seemed to me that in this way more interest could be concentrated upon the prayer meeting and the Sunday School, better appliances afforded, the country population more efficiently cared for, every taste as to preaching gratified, various talents and capabilities in the line of Christian work brought into play, all classes of people drawn together in fellowship, and this at a less cost than is made necessary by the maintenance of two parsonages and two houses of worship. Yet, while holding these views, and withdrawing from the church principally that there may be a freer opportunity for union should the people desire it, I have never been wholly sure that union is possible. My observation of churches has shown me that such a result is not easily attained. It usually requires much patience, forbearance and Christian love. A church union, like the marriage union, if entered into without strong desire and cordial consent on both sides, will be short-lived. If it be brought about by forced measures, by undue pressure, by hasty action on the part of church officers, by the least disregard of the rights of an intelligent and respectable minority, it cannot continue long.

The seeds of ultimate division will be in it, and they will yield their own harvest. In such a matter undue haste will defeat its own ends. It is important also in the present case to bear two facts in mind. One is that this church is not under the necessity of seeking consolidation with any other on account of financial or other weakness. It has money enough and members enough to be wholly independent, and, if a pastor were called to-morrow, could go happily forward in the future as in the past in the prosecution of its appointed work.

The other fact is that this church possesses a charter which in the event of a union of churches should not be destroyed. In such a transaction the oldest organization may claim the right of continuance. In the case before us the justice of the claim is too obvious to require discussion. The mother church of Princeton should remain such throughout all time.

In a word, this whole subject is not and in the nature of things cannot be, free from grave difficulties calling for earnest prayer to the God of all grace, for His light and guidance, and for the utmost exercise of Christian charity. May the Divine Head of the Church give such an issue as will be for the comfort of His people, the advancement of His Kingdom, and the glory of His name.

Upon the church session at such a time as this a peculiar weight of obligation must rest. To it is committed the spiritual oversight of the congregation, and in the absence of a settled pastor, its responsibilities are augmented. Its lay members or ruling elders are, in the language of the Form of Government, "representatives of the people," and they are in duty bound to act always in this character with courage, decision, wisdom, and love, not as lords over God's heritage, but as en-

samples to the flock. They cannot innocently share with others or transfer to others their special responsibilities, nor be governed by considerations of mere expediency, nor be controlled by the fear of man.

These remarks, which have been uttered with "charity for all and malice toward none," must now come to a close. The pulpit is not the place for the display of the preacher's personal feeling, else would I speak more at length of gratitude for manifold kindness and of pleasant memories which will accompany me to other scenes. I have only this to ask, that if ever during these past eighteen years you have been comforted in sorrow, or helped in perplexity, or cheered in the hour of gloom, or led nearer to Christ, or favored with glimpses of the blessed future life, through words spoken in this pulpit, you will, when your prayers go to God in behalf of His ministers, remember one who earnestly strove to declare to you in all its length and breadth the Evangel of heavenly mercy, and to promote the peace, purity, and unity of this ancient church.

Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.