

Johnell Krebs
the gift of E. Platt Esq
RECORDS

OF THE

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

IN THE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:

EMBRACING THE

MINUTES OF THE PRESBYTERY OF PHILADELPHIA, FROM A. D. 1706 TO 1716:
MINUTES OF THE SYNOD OF PHILADELPHIA, FROM A. D. 1717 TO 1758:
MINUTES OF THE SYNOD OF NEW YORK, FROM A. D. 1745 TO 1758:
MINUTES OF THE SYNOD OF PHILADELPHIA AND NEW YORK, FROM A. D.
1758 TO 1788.

PHILADELPHIA:

PRESBYTERIAN BOARD OF PUBLICATION.

JAMES RUSSELL, PUBLISHING AGENT.

1841.

not been decided by the Presbytery, ordered, that it be referred to the Presbytery, who are required to hear it this evening or to-morrow.

An overture was brought in by Mr. Roan in the following words:

“Whereas, there have been repeated complaints from serious persons of the degeneracy of many of the Presbyterian denomination in Great Britain and Ireland, and their falling off from the great doctrines of the Reformation, so that it is very possible there may be Presbyteries the majority of which would not be unwilling to license, ordain, or recommend ministers unsound in the faith; it seems to be of moment to guard against the admission of strangers into this body, before their principles and character are thoroughly ascertained: Therefore it is overtured, that no Presbytery be permitted to receive any stranger under the character of minister or candidate, or to give him appointments in the congregations under our care, until the Synod that shall meet next after their arrival, that the whole testimonials and credentials offered by such persons be laid before the Synod, to be by them considered and judged of, in order to their admission or rejection.

“JOHN ROAN.

Which after full consideration was voted and admitted by a small majority.

Several members desired liberty to enter their dissent, with their reasons, against the preceding vote, which was granted.

Their reasons in the following words:

“The second Presbytery of Philadelphia unanimously dissent from, and protest against, the injurious law recorded above.

“1. Because it takes away from the Presbyteries some of their essential rights, restraining them from performing the duties of ordaining and admitting ministers agreeably to the Scriptures and the constitution and practice of the Presbyterian churches. Christ has vested his ministers with certain powers for the edification of his church, which they may not surrender or deliver up to the dominion of any man, or any body of men, whatever. If they err in the exercise of their powers they are accountable to the higher judicatures of the church, but they are not to be deprived of them merely because they may err in the exercise of them.

“2. Because it insinuates a strong suspicion that Presbyteries are unfaithful or unsound, and therefore not to be trusted in this matter, which is fixing an unjust reproach on their judicatures, and only serves to lessen their credit and influence.

“3. Because it is highly uncharitable and inconsistent with the love, respect, and fellowship which we owe the Protestant churches abroad, as it brings a promiscuous charge of unsoundness against, and lays an heavy reproach upon all the judicatures of their churches, contrary to all justice and modesty, and to the peace and harmony which should be promoted among the churches of Christ.

“4. Because unfriendly, unequal, and offensive treatment of ministers and candidates who are strangers, tends to fill them with prejudices against this body, as acting in an arbitrary, uncharitable manner, and inconsistent with the known rules of Presbyterianism, which will deter them from uniting with the Synod, and induce them to erect Presbyteries independent of it, to the great dishonour and injury of religion.

“5. Because the precedent hereby established is not only wrong in itself, as it divests our Presbyteries of their inherent rights, but extremely pernicious in its consequences. If the Synod is allowed this power with respect to ministers or probationers from Europe, why may it not at any time be pleaded with respect to those from every other part of the world? Why may not the Synod, claiming thus far, extend their authority to the ordination of all our American probationers under some plausible pretences, such as, that the Synod is more

faithful, or more learned, or fitter to judge of the piety of those who are to be received?

“6. Because we have rules of proceeding as a Presbyterian church, respecting this matter, which from long experience have been found sufficient to preserve this Synod pure and free from errors; these rules are agreeable to our Presbyterian plan, and consistent with the several rights of our respective judicatures, whereas the present one is useless, unwarranted and anti-Presbyterial.

“7. As the agreements of 1764 and 1765 were repeatedly alleged to be, and evidently are, for the same purpose pretended in the overture now made a religious law, in which the northern provinces are expressly named, and as these provinces were repeatedly mentioned in the course of the debate, and nothing said, or even insinuated, that they were excluded, during the whole time in which this matter was argued, nor when the overture was read before it was voted, it must appear equivocation to explain the meaning of the law in a sense that would except the American Continent, to relieve some dissenting brethren, leaving others deeply grieved and afflicted.

“Against the aforesaid law, therefore, we, the second Presbytery of Philadelphia, do protest in our Presbyterial capacity, and hereby enter our reasons upon record, to relieve our consciences, and testify our opposition to what is so partial, so uncharitable, so unjust and oppressive.

FRANCIS ALISON,
JOHN ELDER,
JOSEPH TATE,
JOHN EWING,
JOHN SIMONTON,
PATRICK ALISON.”

Dissentient: Dr. Rodgers, Joseph Montgomery, Alexander McWhorter, John Miller, Alexander McDowell, James Anderson, Thomas Read, James Caldwell.

Reasons of dissent from an overture formed into an act of Synod, ordaining that no minister or candidate from foreign parts shall be admitted to membership by any Presbytery, but by the Synod alone.

“Dissentient, 1. Because this overture tends to overthrow the essential rights of a Presbytery, the radical judicature of our church, warranted in Scripture, and from which we derive our name, Presbyterians. The power of ordination, of receiving and rejecting members, evidently belongs, according to God’s Word, to this judicature only. But this overture takes it away from it, and gives its work and power to a Synod, which is only a voluntary association of different Presbyteries, or a council to give advice in difficult matters, and to secure peace, orthodoxy, edification, and mutual confidence, and has no power to make any arbitrary decisions, to which Presbyteries can only submit when their arbitrations are for the good of the whole.

“2. Because this overture is very uncharitable and contrary to the dictates of the humble and affectionate temper of the gospel, which ‘esteems others better than ourselves,’ and ‘thinketh no evil.’ It strongly implies that our Presbyteries are either so ignorant as not to know, or so degenerate as not to regard, the qualifications of their own members, and would ‘lay hands suddenly on any man,’ and admit to the ministry or to the rights of membership, without proper testimonials and authentic recommendations.

“3. Because it discovers great want of candour in judging of other churches of Christ, as if all the reformed churches, solemnly subscribing or assenting to the same Confession of Faith, the same Catechisms, and the same directory or plan of discipline and government, were wholly corrupted in faith or practice, notwithstanding their solemn assent or subscription to the forms of sound doctrine.