

A COLLECTION
John Thomas
OF THE
1865
ACTS, DELIVERANCES, AND TESTIMONIES

OF
The Supreme Judiciary

OF THE

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

FROM ITS ORIGIN IN AMERICA TO THE PRESENT TIME:

WITH

NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

EXPLANATORY AND HISTORICAL:

CONSTITUTING A COMPLETE ILLUSTRATION OF HER POLITY, FAITH, AND HISTORY.

BY

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TITLE 2.—THE DIVISION TAKES PLACE.

§ 11. *The Old Side Protestation.*

1741, p. 157. A protestation was brought in by Mr. Cross, read, and signed by several members, which is kept, *in retentis*.

“*A Protestation presented to the Synod, June 1, 1741.*”

(a) “*Reverend Fathers and Brethren*—We, the Ministers of Jesus Christ, and members of the Synod of Philadelphia, being wounded and grieved at our very hearts, at the dreadful divisions, distractions, and convulsions, which all of a sudden have seized this infant Church to such a degree, that unless He, who is King in Zion, do graciously and seasonably interpose for our relief, she is in no small danger of expiring outright, and that quickly, as to the form, order, and constitution of an organized Church, which hath subsisted for above these thirty years past, in a very great degree of comely order and sweet harmony, until of late; we say, being deeply afflicted with these things which lie heavy on our spirits, and being sensible that it is our indispensable duty to do what lies in our power, in a lawful way, according to the light and direction of the inspired oracles, to preserve this swooning Church from a total expiration: And after the deliberate and unprejudiced inquiry into the causes of these confusions which rage so among us, both Ministers and people, we evidently seeing, and being fully persuaded in our judgments, that, besides our misimprovement of, and unfruitfulness under, gospel light, liberty, and privileges, that great decay of practical godliness in the life and power of it, and many abounding immoralities; we say, besides these, our sins, which we judge to be the meritorious cause of our present doleful distractions, the awful judgment we at present groan under, we evidently see that our protesting brethren and their adherents were the direct and proper cause thereof, by their unwearied, unscriptural, anti-Presbyterial, and uncharitable, divisive practices, which they have been pursuing, with all the industry they were capable of, with any probability of success, for above these twelve months past especially, besides too much of the like practices for some years before, though not with such barefaced arrogance and boldness.

“And being fully convinced in our judgments, that it is our duty to bear testimony against these disorderly proceedings, according to our stations, capacity, and trust reposed in us by our exalted Lord, as watchmen on the walls of his Zion, we having endeavoured sincerely to seek counsel and direction from God, who hath promised to give wisdom to those that ask him in faith, yea, hath promised his Holy Spirit, to lead his people and servants into all truth, and being clearly convinced in our consciences, that it is a duty called unto in this present juncture of affairs. Reverend Fathers and Brethren, we hereby humbly and solemnly protest, in the presence of the great and eternal God, and his elect angels, as well as in the presence of all here present, and particularly to you, Reverend Brethren, in our own names, and in the names of all, both Ministers and people, who shall adhere to us, as follows:

(b) “1. We protest that it is the indispensable duty of this Synod to maintain and stand by the principles of doctrine, worship, and government, of the Church of Christ, as the same are summed up in the Confession of Faith, Catechisms, and Directory, composed by the Westminster Assembly, as being agreeable to the word of God, and which this Synod have owned, acknowledged, and adopted, as may appear by our Synodical records of the years 1729, 1736, which we desire to be read publicly.

“2. We protest that no person, Minister or Elder, should be allowed to sit and vote in this Synod, who hath not received, adopted, or subscribed, the said Confessions, Catechisms, and Directory, as our Presbyteries respectively do, according to our last explication of the adopting act; or who is either accused or convicted, or may be convicted before this Synod, or any of our Presbyteries, of holding or maintaining any doctrine, or who act and persist in any practice contrary to any of those doctrines, or rules contained in said Directory, or contrary to any of the known rights of Presbytery, or orders made or agreed to by this Synod, and which stand yet unrepealed, unless, or until he renounce such doctrine, and being found guilty, acknowledge, confess, and profess his sorrow for such sinful disorder to the satisfaction of this Synod, or such inferior judicatory as the Synod shall appoint or empower for that purpose.

“3. We protest that all our protesting brethren have at present no right to sit and vote as members of this Synod, having forfeited their right of being accounted members of it for many reasons, a few of which we shall mention afterwards.

“4. We protest that, if, notwithstanding of this our protestation, these brethren be allowed to sit and vote in this Synod, without giving suitable satisfaction to the Synod, and particularly to us who now enter this protestation, and those who adhere to us in it, that whatsoever shall be done, voted, or transacted by them, contrary to our judgment, shall

be of no force or obligation to us, being done and acted by a judicatory consisting in part of members who have no authority to act with us in ecclesiastical matters.

"5. We protest that, if, notwithstanding this our protestation, and contrary to the true intent and meaning of it, these protesting brethren, and such as adhere to them, or support and countenance them in their anti-Presbyterial practices, shall continue to act as they have done this last year, in that case, we, and as many as have clearness to join with us, and maintain the rights of this judicatory, shall be accounted in nowise disorderly, but the true Presbyterian Church in this province; and they shall be looked upon as guilty of schism, and the breach of the rules of Presbyterial government, which Christ has established in his Church, which we are ready at all times to demonstrate to the world.

(c) "Reverend and dear Brethren, we beseech you to hear us with patience, while we lay before you as briefly as we can, some of the reasons that move us thus to protest, and more particularly, why we protest against our protesting brethren's being allowed to sit as members of this Synod.

"1. Their heterodox and anarchical principles expressed in their Apology, pages twenty-eight and thirty-nine, where they expressly deny that Presbyteries have authority to oblige their dissenting members, and that Synods should go any further, in judging of appeals or references, &c., than to give their best advice, which is plainly to divest the officers and judicatories of Christ's kingdom of all authority, (and plainly contradicts the thirty-first article of our Confession of Faith, section three, which these brethren pretend to adopt,) agreeable to which is the whole superstructure of arguments which they advance and maintain against not only our Synodical acts, but also all authority to make any acts or orders that shall bind their dissenting members, throughout their whole Apology.

"2. Their protesting against the Synod's act in relation to the examination of candidates, together with their proceeding to license and ordain men to the Ministry of the gospel, in opposition to, and in contempt of, said act of Synod.

"3. Their making irregular interruptions upon the Congregations to which they have no immediate relation, without order, concurrence, or allowance of the Presbyteries or Ministers to which Congregations belong, thereby sowing the seeds of division among people, and doing what they can to alienate and fill their minds with unjust prejudices against their lawfully called Pastors.

"4. Their principles and practice of rash judging and condemning all who do not fall in with their measures, both Ministers and people, as carnal, graceless, and enemies to the work of God, and what not, as appears in Mr. Gilbert Tennent's sermon against unconverted Ministers, and his and Mr. Blair's papers of May last, which were read in open Synod; which rash judging has been the constant practice of our protesting brethren, and their irregular probationers, for above these twelve months past, in their disorderly itinerations and preaching through our Congregations, by which, (alas! for it,) most of our Congregations, through weakness and credulity, are so shattered and divided, and shaken in their principles, that few or none of us can say we enjoy the comfort, or have the success among our people, which otherwise we might, and which we enjoyed heretofore.

"5. Their industriously persuading people to believe that the call of God whereby he calls men to the Ministry, does not consist in their being regularly ordained and set apart to that work, according to the institution and rules of the word; but in some invisible motions and workings of the Spirit, which none can be conscious or sensible of but the person himself, and with respect to which he is liable to be deceived, or play the hypocrite. That the gospel preached in truth by unconverted Ministers, can be of no saving benefit to souls; and their pointing out such Ministers, whom they condemn as graceless by their rash judging spirit, they effectually carry the point with the poor credulous people, who, in imitation of their example, and under their patrociny, judge their Ministers to be graceless, and forsake their Ministers as hurtful rather than profitable.

"6. Their preaching the terrors of the law in such a manner and dialect as has no precedent in the word of God, but rather appears to be borrowed from a worse dialect; and so industriously working on the passions and affections of weak minds, as to cause them to cry out in a hideous manner, and fall down in convulsion-like fits, to the marring of the profiting both of themselves and others, who are so taken up in seeing and hearing these odd symptoms, that they cannot attend to or hear what the Preacher says; and then, after all, boasting of these things as the work of God, which we are persuaded do proceed from an inferior or worse cause.

"7. Their, or some of them, preaching and maintaining that all true converts are as certain of their gracious state as a person can be of what he knows by his outward senses; and are able to give a narrative of the time and manner of their conversion, or else they conclude them to be in a natural or graceless state, and that a gracious person can judge of another's gracious state otherwise than by his profession and life. That people are

under no sacred tie or relation to their own Pastors lawfully called, but may leave them when they please, and ought to go where they think they get most good.

(d) "For these and many other reasons, we protest, before the eternal God, his holy angels, and you, Reverend Brethren, and before all here present, that these brethren have no right to be acknowledged as members of this judicatory of Christ, whose principles and practices are so diametrically opposite to our doctrine, and principles of government and order, which the great King of the Church hath laid down in his word.

"How absurd and monstrous must that union be, where one part of the members own themselves obliged, in conscience, to the judicial determinations of the whole, founded on the word of God, or else relinquish membership; and another part declare they are not obliged and will not submit, unless the determination be according to their minds, and consequently will submit to no rule, in making of which they are in the negative!

"Again, how monstrously absurd is it, that they should so much as desire to join with us, or we with them, as a judicatory, made up of authoritative officers of Jesus Christ, while they openly condemn us wholesale; and, when they please, apply their condemnatory sentences to particular brethren by name, without judicial process, or proving them guilty of heresy or immorality, and at the same time will not hold Christian communion with them!

"Again, how absurd is the union, while some of the members of the same body, which meet once a year, and join as a judicatory of Christ, do all the rest of the year what they can, openly and above board, to persuade the people and flocks of their brethren and fellow members, to separate from their own Pastors, as graceless hypocrites, and yet they do not separate from them themselves, but join with them once every year, as members of the same judicatory of Christ, and oftener, when Presbyteries are mixed! Is it not most unreasonable, stupid indolence in us, to join with such as are avowedly tearing us in pieces like beasts of prey?

"Again, is not the continuance of union with our protesting brethren very absurd, when it is so notorious that both their doctrine and practice are so directly contrary to the adopting act, whereby both they and we have adopted the Confession of Faith, Catechisms, and Directory, composed by the Westminster Assembly?

"Finally, is not continuance of union absurd with those who would arrogate to themselves a right and power to palm and obtrude members on our Synod, contrary to the minds and judgment of the body?

"In fine, a continued union, in our judgment, is most absurd and inconsistent, when it is so notorious, that our doctrine and principles of Church government, in many points, are not only diverse, but directly opposite. For how can two walk together, except they be agreed?

(e) "Reverend Fathers and Brethren, these are a part, and but part of our reasons why we protest as above, and which we have only hinted at, but have forborne to enlarge on them, as we might, the matter and substance of them are so well known to you all, and the whole world about us, that we judged this hint sufficient at present, to declare our serious and deliberate judgment in the matter; and as we profess ourselves to be resolvedly against principles and practice of both anarchy and schism, so we hope that God, whom we desire to serve and obey, the Lord Jesus Christ, whose Ministers we are, will both direct and enable us to conduct ourselves in these trying times, so as our consciences shall not reproach us as long as we live. Let God arise, and let his enemies be scattered, and let them that hate him fly before him, but let the righteous be glad, yea, let them exceedingly rejoice. And may the Spirit of life and comfort revive and comfort this poor swooning and fainting Church, quicken her to spiritual life, and restore her to the exercise of true charity, peace, and order.

(f) "Although we can freely, and from the bottom of our hearts, justify the divine proceedings against us, in suffering us to fall into these confusions for our sins, and particularly for the great decay of the life and power of godliness among all ranks, both Ministers and people, yet we think it to be our present duty to bear testimony against these prevailing disorders, judging that to give way to the breaking down the hedge of discipline and government from about Christ's vineyard, is far from being the proper method of causing his tender plants to grow in grace and fruitfulness.

"As it is our duty in our station, without delay, to set about a reformation of the evils whereby we have provoked God against ourselves; so we judge the strict observation of his laws of government and order, and not the breaking of them, to be one necessary mean and method of this necessary and much to be desired reformation. And we doubt not, but when our God sees us duly humbled and penitent for our sins, he will yet return to us in mercy, and cause us to flourish in spiritual life, love, unity, and order, though perhaps we may not live to see it; yet this testimony that we now bear, may be of some good use to our children yet unborn, when God shall arise and have mercy on Zion."

" *Ministers*—Robert Cross, John Thomson, Francis Alison, Robert Cathcart, Richard Zanchy, John Elder, John Craig, Samuel Caven, Samuel Thomson, Adam Boyd, James Martin, Robert Jamison.

" *Elders*—Robert Porter, Robert McKnight, William McCulloch, John McEwen, Robert Rowland, Robert Craig, James Kerr, Alexander McKnight."

• § 12. *The New Brunswick party withdraws.—The standards re-adopted.*

1741, p. 159. Upon this it was canvassed by the former protesting brethren, whether they or we were to be looked upon as the Synod. We maintained that they had no right to sit whether they were the major or minor number. Then they motioned that we should examine this point, and that the major number was the Synod. They were found to be the minor party, and upon this they withdrew. After this the Synod proceeded to business.

Overtured, That every member of this Synod, whether Minister or Elder, do sincerely and heartily receive, own, acknowledge, or subscribe the Westminster Confession of Faith, and Larger and Shorter Catechisms, as the confession of his faith; and the Directory, as far as circumstances will allow and admit in this infant Church, for the rule of church order.

Ordered, That every Session do oblige their Elders at their admission to do the same. This was readily approved, *nemine contradicente*.

TITLE 3.—NEGOTIATIONS OF THE NEW YORK BRETHREN.

§ 13. *Measures proposed for re-union.*

1742, p. 162. Upon a motion made by the Moderator, [Mr. Dickinson,] that our Synod should hold a conference with the Brunswick brethren that they rejected last year, in order to accommodate the difference and make up that unhappy breach, it is agreed, that Messrs. Dickinson, Pemberton, Pierson, Cross, Andrews, Thomson, Cathcart, David Evans, and Alison, meet with these brethren, and try all methods consistent with gospel truth, to prepare the way for healing the said breach. Agreed that the conference be held at the usual place of the Synod's meeting, at three in the afternoon, and that the Synod adjourn till nine o'clock to-morrow morning.

Ordered, That the Synod be resolved into an *interloquitur* of Ministers and Elders, to manage the conference with the ejected brethren, who are allowed, if they see cause, to bring with them the Ministers that they ordained, that were never allowed to be Ministers of this Synod, and all their respective Elders.

After a great deal of time spent to no purpose, the interloquitur found that all attempts for a coalition were vain and fruitless, and therefore it is agreed to adjourn till three o'clock, afternoon. Concluded with prayer.

The Synod entered upon the affair complained of by the ejected members, and the question put for the managing said affair was, Who should be the judges of the case? The ejected members would submit the business to the consideration of none as judges, but such as had not signed the protest last year. And the protesting brethren answered to the point: That they, with the members that had adhered to them, after ejecting said members, were the Synod, and acted as such in the rejection, and in so doing they only cast out such members as they judged had rendered themselves unworthy of membership, by openly maintaining and practising things subversive of their constitution, and therefore would not be called to account by absent members, or by any judicature on earth, but were willing to give the reasons of their conduct to their absent brethren, and to the public to consider or review it.