

The Plan of Union Between the Synods of

New York and Philadelphia

Agreed upon May 29th, 1758.

The Synods of *New York* and *Philadelphia*, taking into serious consideration, the present divided state of the Presbyterian Church in this land, and being deeply sensible, that the division of the church tends to weaken it's interests, to dishonor Religion, and consequently it's glorious Author; to render government and discipline ineffectual, and finally to dissolve it's very frame; and being desirous to pursue such measures as may most tend to the glory of God, and the establishment and edification of His people, do judge it to be our indispensable duty to *study the things that make for peace*, and to endeavor the healing of that breach, which has for sometime subsisted amongst us, that so it's hurtful consequences may not extend to posterity; that all occasion of reproach upon our society may be removed; and that we may carry on the great designs of religion to better advantage than we can do in a

divided state: and since both Synods continue to profess the same principles of faith, and adhere to the same Form of Worship, government and discipline, there is the greater reason to endeavor the compromising those differences, which were agitated, many years ago, with too great warmth and animosity, and unite in one body.

For which end, and that no jealousies, or Grounds of alienation, may remain; and also to prevent further breaches of like nature, we agree to unite and do unite in one body, under the name of *The Synod of New York and Philadelphia*, on the following plan.

- I. Both synods having always approved and received *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, Larger and Shorter Catechisms, as an orthodox and excellent system of Christian doctrine, founded on the Word of God; we do still receive the same, as the confession of faith and also adhere to the plan of worship, government, and discipline, contained in *The Westminster Directory*, strictly enjoining it on all our members, and probationers for the ministry, that they

preach and teach according to the form of sound words in said confession and catechisms, and avoid and oppose all errors contrary thereto.

- II. That when any matter is determined by a major vote, every member shall either actively concur with, or passively submit to, such determination; or, if his conscience permit him to do neither, he shall, after sufficient liberty modestly to reason and remonstrate, peaceably withdraw from our communion, without attempting to make any schism: *Provided always*, that this shall be understood to extend only to such determinations, as the body shall judge indispensable in doctrine, or *Presbyterian* government.
- III. That any member, or members, for the exoneration of his, or their conscience before God, have a right to protest against any act, or procedure of our highest judicature, because there is no further appeal to another for redress; and to require that such protestations be recorded in their minutes. And as such a protest is a solemn appeal from the bar of said judicature, no member is liable to prosecution on

account of his protesting: *provided always*, that it shall be deemed irregular, and unlawful, to enter a protestation against any member, or members; or to protest facts, or accusations, instead of providing them, unless a fair trial be refused, even by the highest judicature. And it is agreed that protestations are only to be entered against the public acts, judgements, or determinations of the judicature, with which the protestor's conscience is offended.

- IV. As the protestation, entered in the *Synod of Philadelphia, Anno Domini, 1741*, has been apprehended to have been approved, and received by an act of said Synod, and on that account was judged a sufficient obstacle to an union; the said Synod declare, that they never judicially adopted said protestation, nor do account it a synodical act; but that it is to be considered as the act of those only who subscribed it; and therefore cannot in it's nature be a viable objection to the union of these two synods; especially considering, that a very great majority of both synods

have become members since the said protestation was entered.

- V. That it shall be esteemed and treated as a censurable evil, to accuse any member of heterodoxy, insufficiency, or immorality, in a calumniating manner, or otherwise, than by private brotherly admonition, or by a regular process, according to our known rules of the judicial trial in cases of scandal. And it shall be considered in the same view if any presbytery appoint supplies within the bounds of another presbytery, without their concurrence; or if any member officiate in another's congregation, without asking and obtaining his consent, of the session's, in case the minister be absent. Yet it shall be esteemed unbrotherly for anyone, in ordinary circumstances, to refuse his consent to a regular member, when it is requested.
- VI. That no presbytery shall license, or ordain to the work of ministry, any candidate, until he give them competent satisfaction as to his learning and experimental acquaintance with religion, and skill in

divinity and cases of conscience; and declare his acceptance of the *Westminster Confession*, and catechisms, as the confession of his faith, and promise subjection to the *Presbyterian* plan of government in the *Westminster* directory.

VII. The synods declare it is their earnest desire, that a complete union may be obtained as soon as possible, and agree that the united synod shall model the several presbyteries in such manner as shall appear to them most expedient: *provided nevertheless*, that presbyteries, where an alteration does not appear to be for edification, continue in their present form. As to divided congregations, it is agreed, that such as have settled ministers on both sides be allowed to continue as they are; that where those of one side have a settled minister, the other being vacant, may join with the settled minister, if a majority choose to do; that when both sides are vacant, they shall be at liberty to unite together.

VIII. As the late religious appearances occasioned much speculation and debate, the members of the *New York*

Synod, in order to prevent any misapprehensions, declare their adherence to their former sentiments in favor of them, that a blessed work of God's Holy Spirit, in the conversion of numbers, was then carried on: and for the satisfaction of all concerned, this united synod agree in declaring, that as all mankind are naturally dead in trespasses and sins, an entire change of heart and life is necessary, to make them meet for the service and enjoyment of God; that such a change can be affected only by the powerful operations of the divine Spirit; that when sinners are made sensible of their lost condition, and absolute inability to recover themselves; are enlightened in the knowledge of Christ, and convinced of his ability and willingness to save; and upon Gospel motives and encouragements do choose Him for their Savior; and , renouncing their own righteousness in point of merit, depend upon His imputed righteousness for their justification before God, and His wisdom and strength for guidance and support. When upon these apprehensions and exercises, their souls are comforted

notwithstanding all their past guilt, and rejoice in God, through Jesus Christ; when they hate and bewail their sins of heart and life; delight in the laws of God, without exceptions; reverently and diligently attend His ordinances; become humble and self-denied; and make it the business of their lives to please and glorify God, and to do good to their fellow man. This is to be acknowledged as a gracious work of God, even though it should be attended with unusual bodily commotions, or some more exceptionable circumstances, by means of infirmity, temptations, or remaining corruptions; and wherever religious appearances are attended with good effects above mentioned, we desire to rejoice in, and thank God for them.

But on the other hand, when persons seeming to be under a religious concern, imagine that they have visions of the human nature of Jesus Christ, or hear voices, or see external lights, or have fainting or conclusion-like fits, and on account of these judge themselves to be truly converted, though they have not the scriptural characters of a work of God above

described, we believe such persons are under a dangerous delusion. And we testify our utter disapprobation of such delusion, wherever it attends any such religious appearances, in any church, or time.

Now, as both synods are agreed in their sentiments concerning the nature of a work of Grace, and declare their purpose and desire to promote it as different judgements respecting particular matters of fact, ought not to prevent their union; especially as many of the present members have entered into the ministry, since the time of the aforesaid religious appearances.

Upon the whole, as the design of our union is the advancement of the mediator's kingdom; and as the wise and faithful discharge of the ministerial function is the principal appointed mean for that glorious end; we judge, that this is a proper occasion to manifest our sincere intention, unitedly to exert ourselves to fulfil the ministry we have received of the Lord Jesus: Accordingly, we unanimously declare our serious and fixed resolution, by divine aid, to *take heed to*

ourselves, that our hearts be upright, our discourse edifying, and our lives exemplary for purity and godliness – to take heed *to our doctrine*, that it be not only orthodox, but evangelical and spiritual, tending to awaken the secure to a suitable concern for their salvation, and to instruct and encourage sincere Christians; thus *commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God*: to cultivate peace and harmony among ourselves, and strengthen each other's hands in promoting the knowledge of divine truth, and diffusing the Savior of piety among our people.

Finally, we earnestly recommend it to all under our care, that instead of indulging a contentious disposition, they would *love each other with a pure heart fervently*, as brethren, who profess subjection to the same Lord, adhere to the same faith, worship, and government, and entertain the same hope of glory; and we desire that they would improve the present union for their mutual edification; combine to strengthen the common interest of religion; and go hand in hand in

the path of life; which we pray the God of all grace
would please to effect, for Christ's sake. Amen.

Published by Order of Synod,

Gilbert Tennent, Moderator