

E. B. Walworth

THE

Album

CONSTITUTIONAL HISTORY

OF THE

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

1839
BY

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PART I.

1705 to 1741.

PHILADELPHIA:

WILLIAM S. MARTIEN.

1839.

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Entered according to the act of Congress, in the year 1839, by WILLIAM S. MARTIN, in the clerk's office of the district court for the eastern district of Pennsylvania.

more than a hundred years, during which time the only modifications which the adopting act has received, were intended to render it more explicit and more binding. It is, therefore, a matter of surprise, that, at first, it should have met with so much opposition, and that this opposition should have come from the source it did. Mr. Andrews, in a letter, dated April, 1729, six months before the adopting act was passed, says "I think all the Scotch are on one side, and all the English and Welsh on the other, to a man."¹ This he gives, as his impression, and it no

¹ As this letter of Mr. Andrews to Dr. Colman of Boston, dated Philadelphia, April 7, 1729, is instructive and interesting, it is here inserted, as far as it is preserved in Mr. Hazard's MSS.

"As to affairs here, we are engaged in the enlargement of our house, and by the assistance we had from Boston, I hope we shall go on comfortably with that work. The stone work at the foundation is laid, and all the materials are getting ready. We are now likely to fall into a great difference about subscribing the Westminster Confession of Faith. An overture for it, drawn up by Mr. Thompson of Lewes-town, was offered to our synod the year before last, but not then read in the synod. Measures were taken to stave it off, and I was in hopes we should have heard no more of it. But last synod it was brought again, recommended by all the Scotch and Irish members present, and being read among us, a proposal was made, prosecuted, and agreed to, that it should be deferred till our next meeting for further consideration. The proposal is, that all ministers and intrants should sign it, or else be disowned as members. Now what shall we do? They will certainly carry it by numbers; our countrymen say they are willing to join in a vote to make it the confession of our church, but to agree to making it a test of orthodoxy, and term of ministerial communion, they will not. I think all the Scotch are on one side, and all the English and Welsh on the other to a man. Nevertheless I am not so determined as to be incapable to receive advice, and I give you this account, that I may have your judgment as to what I had best do in the matter. Supposing I do believe it, shall I, on the terms above mentioned, subscribe or not? I earnestly desire you by the first opportunity to send me your opinion. Our brethren have got the overture with a preface to it printed, and I intend to send you one for the better regulation of your thoughts about it. Some say the design of this motion is to spew out

doubt, in general, correctly indicates the dividing line between the friends and opposers of the measure. The expression, however, is certainly too strong. It is hardly possible that the English and Welsh members of the presbytery of Newcastle, who had been for several years in the habit of requiring the adoption of the confession by their candidates, should have opposed the synod's doing the same thing. Besides, when dissatisfaction was manifested on account of some expressions in the adopting act, these members were among the first to render them more explicit. Still, it cannot be doubted, that the class of members to which Mr. Andrews refers, was at first opposed to the measure. How is this to be accounted for? The only reason applicable to them as a class that suggests itself is,

our countrymen, they being scarce able to hold way with the other brethren in all their disciplinary and legislative notions. What truth there may be in this I know not. Some deny it, whereas others say there is something in it. I am satisfied some of us are an uneasiness to them, and are thought to be too much in their way sometimes, so that I think 'twould be no trouble to lose some of us. Yet I can't think this to be the thing ultimately designed, whatever smaller glances there may be at it. I have no thought that they have any design against me in particular; I have no reason for it. This business lies heavy on my mind, and I desire that we may be directed in it, that we may not bring a scandal on our profession. Though I have been sometimes the instrument of keeping them together, when they were like to fall to pieces, I have little hope of doing so now. If it were not for the scandal of a division, I should not be much against it, for the different countrymen seem to be most delighted with each other, and to do best when they are by themselves. My congregation being made up of divers nations of different sentiments, this brings me under greater difficulty in this contested business than any other minister of our number. I am afraid of the event. However, I will endeavour to do, as near as I can, what I understand to be duty, and leave the issue to Providence.

"P. S. Ten days ago was buried Mr. Malachi Jones, an old Welsh minister. He was a good man, and did good. He lived about eleven miles from this town."