

*John G. Hunt's*  
*Property*



*November the 15 1789*  
THE

CONSTITUTION

*John G. Hunt*  
OF THE

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

*his Book*  
IN THE

UNITED STATES of AMERICA.



THE  
CONSTITUTION  
OF THE  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
IN THE  
UNITED STATES of AMERICA  
CONTAINING  
THE  
CONFESSION of FAITH,  
THE  
CATECHISMS,  
THE  
GOVERNMENT and DISCIPLINE,  
AND THE  
DIRECTORY for the WORSHIP of GOD,

Ratified and adopted by the SYNOD of NEW-YORK  
and PHILADELPHIA, held at PHILADELPHIA  
May the 16th 1788, and continued by adjourn-  
ments until the 28th of the same Month.

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T H E

F O R M

O F T H E

GOVERNMENT AND DISCIPLINE

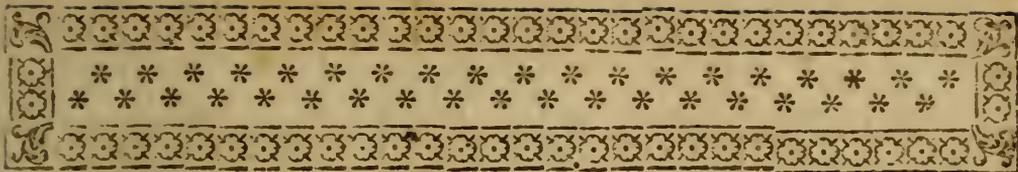
O F T H E

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

I N T H E

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.





# INTRODUCTION.

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**T**H E Synod of NEW-YORK and PHILADELPHIA, judging it expedient to ascertain and fix the system of union, and the form of Government and Discipline of the Presbyterian Church in these United States, under their care; have thought proper to lay down, by way of introduction, a few of the general principles by which they have been hitherto governed: and which are the ground work of the following plan. This, it is hoped, will, in some measure prevent those rash misconstructions, and uncandid reflections, which usually proceed from an imperfect view of any subject; as well as make the several parts of the system plain, and the whole plan perspicuous and fully understood.

The Synod are unanimously of opinion;

I. That "God alone is Lord of the conscience; and hath left it free from the doctrine and commandments of men; which are in any thing contrary to his word; or beside it in matters of faith or worship: Therefore, they consider the rights of private judgement, in all matters that respect religion, as uni-

versal and alienable: They do not even wish to see any religious constitution aided by the civil power, further than may be necessary for protection and security, and, at the same time, equal and common to all others.

II. That, in perfect consistency with the above principle of common right, every Christian Church, or union and association of particular Churches, is entitled to declare the terms of admission into its communion, and the qualifications of its ministers and members, as well as the whole system of its internal government which Christ hath appointed: That, in the exercise of this right, they may, notwithstanding, err, in making the terms of communion either too lax or too narrow: yet, even in this case, they do not infringe upon the liberty, or the rights of others, but only make an improper use of their own.

III. That our blessed Saviour, for the edification of the visible Church, which is his body, hath appointed officers, not only to preach the Gospel and administer the Sacraments; but also to exercise discipline, for the preservation both of truth and duty: and, that it is incumbent upon these officers, and upon the whole Church, in whose name they act, to censure, or cast out, the erroneous and scandalous; observing, in all cases, the rules contained in the word of God.

IV. That truth is in order to goodness; and the great touchstone of truth, its tendency to promote holiness; according to our Saviour's rule, "by their fruits ye shall know them." And that no opinion can be either more pernicious or more absurd, than that which brings truth and falsehood upon a level, and represents it as of no consequence what a man's opinions are. On the contrary, They are persuaded, that there is an inseparable connection between faith and practice, truth and duty. Otherwise, it would be of no consequence either to discover truth or to embrace it.

V. That

V. That while, under the conviction of the above principle, They think it necessary to make effectual provision, that all who are admitted as Teachers, be sound in the faith; They also believe, that there are truths and forms, with respect to which men of good characters and principles may differ: And in all these, They think it the duty, both of private Christians and Societies, to exercise mutual forbearance towards each other.

VI. That though the character, qualifications, and authority of Church-officers, are laid down in the holy Scriptures, as well as the proper method of their investiture and institution; yet the election of the persons, to the exercise of this authority, in any particular society, is in that society.

VII. That all Church power, whether exercised by the body in general, or, in the way of representation, by delegated authority, is only ministerial and declarative: That is to say, that the Holy Scriptures are the only rule of faith and manners; that no Church judicatory ought to pretend to make laws, to bind the conscience, in virtue of their own authority; and that all their decisions should be founded upon the revealed will of God: Now though it will easily be admitted, that all Synods and Councils may err, through the frailty inseparable from humanity; yet there is much greater danger, from the usurped claim of making laws, than from the right of judging upon laws already made, and common to all who profess the Gospel; although this right, as necessity requires in the present state, be lodged with fallible men.

VIII. Lastly, That, if the preceding Scriptural and rational principles be stedfastly adhered to, the vigour and strictness of its discipline will contribute to the glory and happiness of any Church. Since ecclesiastical discipline must be purely moral or spiritual in its object, and not attended with any civil effects, it can de-

*rive no force whatever, but from its own justice, the approbation of an impartial public, and the countenance and blessing of the great Head of the Church universal.*