

THE NON-SUBSCRIBING  
PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH OF IRELAND

CHRISTIANITY  
AS CHRIST  
TAUGHT IT



*Published by Authority of the General Synod.*

# The Non-Subscribing Presbyterians

## THEIR FAITH

I.—That the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the Rule of Christian Faith and Duty under the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ.

II.—That it is the inalienable right of every Christian to search these records of Divine Truth for his own instruction and guidance, to form his own opinions with regard to what they teach, and to worship God in sincerity, agreeably to the dictates of his own conscience, without privation, penalty, or inconvenience inflicted by his fellow-men.

III.—That the imposition of Human Tests and Confessions of Faith, and the vain efforts of men to produce an unattainable uniformity of belief, have tended to restrict the sacred right of private judgment, and to prevent that free enquiry and discussion, which are essential to the extension of religious knowledge.

IV.—That forasmuch as our Master, Christ, has described the true disciple in these words, saying, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another:" and further, has emphasised the two great commandments, saying, "Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these": and forasmuch as Christ himself has said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."

We, therefore, refuse to impose conditions upon the Church, which He, himself, has not sanctioned, and we solemnly declare our allegiance to the principle—as the real bond of union among Christians—that the teaching of Christ himself must take precedence of the doctrines of a later time, and that unity is to be sought, not in uniformity of creed but in a common standard of righteousness and obedience to the commandments which Christ himself has laid down.



## THEIR HISTORY

### The First Presbytery in Ulster, 1642

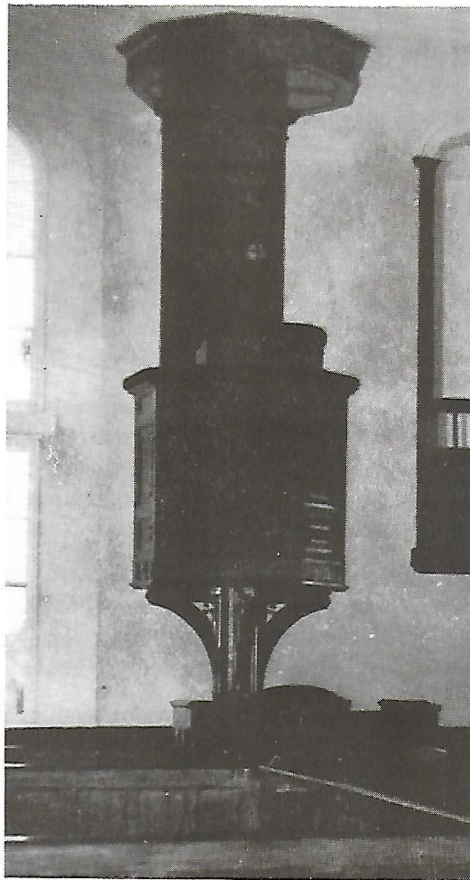
The 10th June, 1642, is an important date in Irish Church history. On that day the first presbytery in Ireland was set up in the town of Carrickfergus. The Scottish army sent to Ulster following the rising of 1641 brought with it an ecclesiastical as well as a military discipline. Before 1642 Presbyterian ministers from Scotland had been active in Ulster, but always within the framework of the Episcopal Church when in the early years of the 16th century certain bishops permitted some laxity in admission to Orders. Two such ministers were Edward Brice of Ballycarry and John Ridge of Antrim.

Up to 1698 the question of subscription to a fixed credal statement did not arise in the Synod of Ulster but in that year it was required of all licentiates that they subscribe to the Westminster Confession of Faith and the first word was spoken in the long and bitter controversy which was to mar the unity of Irish Presbyterianism.

The trial and sentence of the Dublin minister, Thomas Emlyn in 1703 following the publication of his "The Scriptural Account of Jesus Christ," influenced both parties to the subscription controversy in the Synod of Ulster. The upholders of the Confession pressed even more resolutely for subscription by all ministers; the defenders of the sufficiency of Scripture as the rule of Faith and Duty, and the principle of non-subscription held ever more firmly to their convictions, but as the years passed the subscribers increased in numbers and influence.

### The First Non-Subscribing Presbytery, 1725

In 1724 Thomas Nevin, Minister of Downpatrick, was tried before the Synod of Ulster on a charge of heresy. The Synod, not by a great majority, found against him. A year later all the non-subscribers were placed in the Presbytery of Antrim, weakening still further their influence within the Church. In 1726 the newly-constituted presbytery presented to the Synod six propositions defining its theological position. These proved unacceptable and the Antrim Presbytery stood alone in the Synod in defence of the sufficiency of Scripture and the supremacy of the teaching of Jesus Christ on all questions of Faith and Duty.



Thomas Nevin's pulpit, Downpatrick

### The Remonstrant Synod of Ulster, 1830

The second and better known controversy over the principle of non-subscription within the Synod of Ulster brought to the forefront two men of outstanding character and ability. Dr. Henry Cooke commanded the support of the subscribers; Dr. Henry Montgomery was the champion of those who espoused the non-subscribing principle. The first decades of the 19th century were enlivened by debate within the Synod and outside it on questions of religion, politics, and education in which these two propounded and defended the conservative and the liberal principles. In 1829 Dr. Henry Montgomery, Minister of Dunmurry, led three presbyteries; Armagh, Bangor and Templepatrick, representing seventeen congregations out of the

Synod of Ulster and formed the Remonstrant Synod. In 1830 its basis was defined by its first Moderator, William Porter, in these words:

"We have come together to prove that we are genuine Presbyterians, assertors of the right of private judgment, uncompromising advocates of the self-sufficiency of the Bible as the Rule of Faith and Duty—Christ and Christ only is our King. The Bible and the Bible only is our accredited standard of belief."

### Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland

Resolution passed at meeting held in Dublin, 20th July, 1835:—

"That the Synod of Munster, the Presbytery of Antrim, and the Remonstrant Synod of Ulster are perfectly unanimous in acknowledging allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ as the only King and Head of the Church; and in the maintenance of the great principles of the Reformation, viz., the sufficiency of the Scripture, the right of Private Judgment, and the rejection of human authority in matters of faith."

To these same principles the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland still adheres, and within its fellowship it numbers those who are firmly persuaded that truly "Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is Liberty."

### THEIR SPIRIT

*"Remember, liberty, however precious, is in itself only negative. It is merely the removal of hindrances to seeking truth. A far greater question is: what truth have you found, when you have got your liberty? What Gospel have you to proclaim for the salvation of the world? Had Christ a Gospel for the world? He had. What does he teach? He unfolds that life's secret lies in blessedness not happiness, in character not condition, in righteousness not reputation, in meekness, truth, gentleness, goodness, not in riches, ease or power; that we must not resist evil but bless them that persecute us, that love is the greatest thing in the world and the fulfilling of the law."*

W. G. BANNISTER, Moderator Remonstrant Synod of Ulster, 1892.

### CONGREGATIONS

Antrim .....	Old Presbyterian (founded 1645).
Ballee .....	Old Presbyterian (founded 1697).
Ballycarry .....	Old Presbyterian (founded 1646).

Ballyclare .....	Old Presbyterian, Main Street (founded 1646).
Ballyhemlin .....	Remonstrant Presbyterian, Kircubbin, Co. Down (founded 1833).
Ballymoney .....	Remonstrant Presbyterian Congregation.
Banbridge .....	First Presbyterian, Downshire Road, (founded 1716).
Belfast .....	First Presbyterian, Rosemary Street (founded 1644).
Belfast .....	All Souls', Elmwood Avenue, i.e. Second Presbyterian Congregation (founded 1708), and York Street Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Congregation (founded 1840).
Belfast .....	Domestic Mission (founded 1853).
Belfast .....	Mountpottinger Non-Subscribing Congregation (founded 1862).
Cairncastle .....	Old Presbyterian (founded 1646).
Clough .....	Non-Subscribing Presbyterian (founded 1829).
Comber .....	Remonstrant Presbyterian, Mill Street (founded 1836).
Cork .....	The Old Presbyterian, Prince's Street (founded 1674).
Crumlin .....	Old Presbyterian (founded 1672).
Downpatrick .....	First Presbyterian, Stream Street (founded 1650).
Dromore .....	First Presbyterian, Rampart Street (founded 1660).
Dublin .....	St. Stephen's Green Congregation (founded 1649).
Dunmurry .....	First Presbyterian (founded 1676).
Glenarm .....	Old Presbyterian (founded 1655).
Greyabbey .....	First Presbyterian (founded 1733).



Dr. Henry Montgomery



Holywood..... First Presbyterian, High Street  
(founded 1704).

Killinchy..... Remonstrant Presbyterian (founded  
1670).

Larne..... Old Presbyterian, Meeting-House  
Street (founded 1646).

Moir..... Old Presbyterian (founded 1693).

Moneyrea..... Non-Subscribing Presbyterian (founded  
1719).

Newry..... First Presbyterian, Needham Place  
(founded 1650).

Newtownards... First Presbyterian (founded 1642).

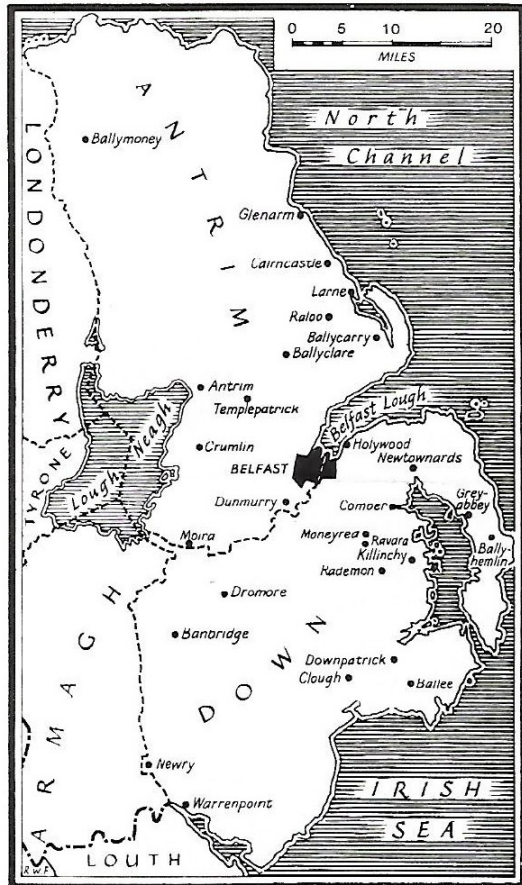
Rademon..... First Kilmore Presbyterian Congrega-  
tion (founded 1713).

Raloo..... Remonstrant Presbyterian (founded  
1838).

Ravara..... Non-Subscribing Presbyterian (found-  
ed 1837).

Templepatrick... Old Presbyterian (founded 1646).

Warrenpoint..... First Presbyterian, Dromore Road  
(founded 1707 at Carlingford).



Map of Congregations in Ulster