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Montgomery, Henry, 1788-  
1865.  
Speech of the Rev. H.  
Montgomery, A.M. at





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# SPEECH

OF THE

REV. H. MONTGOMERY, A. M.

At Strabane,

ON FRIDAY, THE 29th JUNE,

1827.





TO THE  
REV. HENRY MONTGOMERY, A.M.  
*Presbyterian Minister of Dunmurry,*  
AND  
HEAD MASTER OF THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT  
IN THE  
**Belfast Academical Institution.**

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*Rev. and Dear Sir,*

*As the Publisher of this New-Year's-Gift, I beg leave to express my respect for the unsullied integrity of your character, your powerful talents, unaffected piety, and Christian moderation. Whilst an enlightened public, duly appreciating the striking combination of sterling ability and unshaken integrity manifested by you, during the recent struggles of intolerance in the Synod of Ulster, are about to demonstrate their esteem by a most valuable and splendid testimonial, I beg leave to inscribe to you, this private and personal tribute of my most sincere regard. I trust, that whilst you place it in the hands of your children, it may stimulate them to tread in their Father's footsteps. To the rising generation, I feel assured, it will prove a most valuable gift; as it maintains, in every page, the most sacred of all privileges, the unshackled right of private judgment in matters of religion. Wishing you many years of health and happiness,*

*I have the honor to be,*

*Your attached Friend,*

**JOHN HODGSON.**

*January 1, 1828.*



## Introduction.

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IT is lamentable to think how little progress the genuine principles of Christian Toleration have made, even amongst the different Protestant denominations, that so loudly declaim about “the sufficiency of Scripture, and the right of Private Judgment.” Dissenting from the Church of Rome, and from one another, on these important grounds, mutual forbearance and charity might naturally be expected. This, however, has never been the case; for the various sects not only censure each other, but impose the yoke of bondage upon the necks of their brethren.

A century has just elapsed since the greatest lights and ornaments of the Presbyterian Church in this country, Abernethy, Nevin, and others, were themselves expelled from the Synod of Ulster, for refusing to subscribe, or to impose subscription upon others, to the Westminster Confession of Faith. Their writings, their spotless integrity, and their unmerited sufferings, however, produced a salutary effect. A better spirit grew up in the Presbyterian Church; so that subscription, though still the *law* of the Synod, gradually became a mere *dead letter*. Even this was done away by the Code of Discipline published in 1825, when Presbyteries were left to

## INTRODUCTION.

their own discretion regarding the License of Ministerial Candidates. In consequence of this arrangement so favourable to Christian Liberty, perfect peace and charity were expected to prevail; but scarcely had the bond of amity been signed with an unprecedented unanimity, when the evidence given by the Clerk of the Synod and some other members, before the Commissioners of Education Inquiry, was made a pretext for breaking the sacred and peaceful engagement. A most violent attempt was made to dismiss the Rev. Mr. Porter from his office, merely for having spoken *the truth* on his oath, and made a candid avowal of opinions, which every person knew, at his election, he entertained.

Foiled in this attempt, the intolerant party in the Synod endeavoured to lay the foundation of a division of the body, by proposing a Trinitarian Test of Faith, which might eventually lead to the expulsion of Mr. Porter and others refusing subscription, in the same manner as their distinguished predecessors had been expelled in 1726.

The Declaration ran in the following words:

"WE do hold it absolutely incumbent on us, for the purpose of affording a public testimony to the truth, as well as of vindicating our religious character as individuals, to declare that we do most firmly hold and believe the doctrine concerning the nature of God, contained in these words of the Westminster Shorter Catechism, namely, 'That there are three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, and these three are One God, the same in substance, equal in Power and Glory.' "

## INTRODUCTION.

This Declaration was strenuously and ably opposed by some, because they did not believe the Doctrines contained in it, and by others on the ground of Christian Liberty. Towards the end of the second day's debate on the subject, (Friday, June 29th,) the following Speech was delivered. Excellent as it is, in its present form, and highly calculated to serve the cause of Christian freedom, we have been told by many who heard it spoken, that its effect, when delivered, was powerful beyond description. This address was originally reported by *The Northern Whig*; subsequently copied into all the liberal Papers in Ireland, and several of the leading Journals of London; published in various forms in Dublin and Belfast, and inserted in many of the most respectable religious Periodicals in the Kingdom. But although upwards of *thirty thousand copies* of it have already been put into circulation, many persons of different denominations have desired to see it published in a more permanent form, not only as a tribute to the individual who spoke it, but as tending to support the true Principles of Christian Liberty.

It is melancholy, however, to reflect, that notwithstanding the Christian spirit, and sound argument displayed by the several persons who opposed the Declaration, it was finally carried under the influence of public clamour by a majority of 135 to 19!

It is but right that the names of those upright

## INTRODUCTION.

Ministers and Elders who finally dissented from this act of Ecclesiastical usurpation should be permanently recorded.

### MINISTERS.

Wm. Porter, <i>Newtownlimavady.</i>	Hugh Brook, <i>Burt.</i>
H. Montgomery, <i>Dunmurry.</i>	W. Cuthbertson, <i>Cullybackey.</i>
John Mitchell, <i>Newry.</i>	Alexander Orr, <i>Anagh lone.</i>
N. Alexander, <i>Crumlin.</i>	S. C. Nelson, <i>Dromore.</i>
F. Blakely, <i>Moneyrea.</i>	Samuel Watson, <i>Killinchy.</i>
Robt. Campbell, <i>Templepatrick.</i>	Ephraim Stephenson, <i>Ennis-</i>
Robert Orr, <i>Killead.</i>	<i>killen.</i>
William Brown, <i>Tobermore.</i>	

### ELDERS.

Leonard Dobbin, <i>Armagh.</i>	Walter Roberts, <i>Dunmurry.</i>
William Orr, <i>Strabane.</i>	Wm. Moody, <i>Newtownlimavady.</i>
D. M. Blow, <i>Templepatrick.</i>	

# Speech

OF

THE REV. H. MONTGOMERY,

AT STRABANE, JUNE, 1827.

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Moderator,

IN coming forward to address you on the present occasion, I cannot avoid feeling that I do so under many disadvantages. The man who has the multitude at his back, who sails upon the full tide of popular favour, has an easy task to perform in vindicating his opinions; for there is a sympathy in the breasts of his auditors, which gives energy and life to all that he utters. But, the individual who ventures to stem the current of public feeling, who goes forth in his frail bark against the rolling waters, has only a cheerless and a hopeless prospect before him. Such is my situation at present; yet, although I may be driven back by the stream,

## SPEECH OF THE

or overwhelmed by the tempest, I cannot see the Synod of Ulster rushing forward, in the dangerous confidence of security, to what I consider destruction, without boldly pushing forth to warn her of the shoals and quicksands to which she is approaching.

A Presbyterian, by education, and feeling, and conviction; a Presbyterian, because I consider the principles of our Church essentially favourable to the great cause of Civil and Religious Liberty; I should be unworthy of the privileges which I enjoy, if any contemptible view of personal convenience, or temporal interest, could prevent me from expressing freely, what I strongly feel. I wish, however, to approach this important subject in a serious frame of mind, and in as calm a manner as the agitations of the last four days will permit. But, as I am sensible that the ardour of debate, and the very nature of an extemporaneous address, may carry me beyond those mild and decorous bounds, which the character and station of this assembly require to be observed, I commit my-

REV. HENRY MONTGOMERY.

self to the judicious correction of the Moderator. I feel it the more necessary to do so, as I, and those who think with me, have had our opinions treated, by several speakers, with terms of unmeasured obloquy and reproach. The gentlest epithet applied to us, has been that of *Heretics*. I never expected to hear the word used in a *Protestant* assembly; but its reiterated application, on the present occasion, has taught me, that no mode of faith can change the evil propensities of human nature, and that the hateful passions of men are never so malignant as when they put on the sacred garb of religion. Those, however, who have adopted this vulgar system of abuse, which only reflects discredit upon themselves, and the cause which they espouse, have not the merit of originality in the course which they pursue. The attaching of odious *names*, to opinions and persons marked out for persecution, has always been the favourite plan of the exclusively righteous. I feel unwilling even to allude, in this heated assembly, to the most Glorious Being that ever appeared upon

## SPEECH OF THE

earth; but we well know that the Redeemer of the world was brought to the cross, under the accusation of *blasphemy*,—and the great Apostle of the Gentiles was reviled as a *Heretic*, for preaching the truth dictated to him by the Holy Spirit. Paul “confessed that after the manner which they called heresy, worshipped he the Lord God of his fathers.” I cheerfully make the same admission: I own, that after the manner which the majority here “call heresy,” I do worship my Creator. But I am not the more in *real* error on that account; for I believe no member of this Synod will say, that *numbers* prove “sound doctrine.” If such a position were tenable, woe be unto Protestantism! Indeed, Moderator, except for the credit of this Body, I care not by what name I may be called: neither shall I retort upon my opponents the invidious epithets which might easily be applied, being determined not to sacrifice the best part of Christianity, its spirit of infinite benignity and love, to the support of a party, or the maintenance of speculative opinions.

## REV. HENRY MONTGOMERY.

Mr. Cooke has been courteous enough to compliment me, as possessing “ talents, acquirements, and eloquence, of no ordinary kind; and to say, that *he* thinks more highly of *my* abilities, than I do of *his*.” For the first part of his eulogium, however unmerited, I feel grateful; though probably I ought to consider it only as the *tact* of an ambitious general, magnifying the power of his enemy, merely to enhance the glory of certain victory. With regard to our comparative estimate of each other’s talents, I hope he is correct; for, knowing how highly I appreciate *his* abilities, I should be proud to stand even *higher* in the estimation of so competent a judge. But admitting his compliment to be sincere, in how awkward a situation does it place himself, in condemning my opinions! He grants me a mind *capable* of judging, and concedes that I possess literary acquirements adequate to enlighten and direct my judgment; and yet (most strange to say!) he declares that I do not understand the fundamental doctrine of the Gospel, which he avers

## SPEECH OF THE

is clearly revealed in every page of the New Testament! How this alleged force of intellect, and extent of information, can be reconciled with my alleged ignorance of the plainest proposition of Revelation, it is not for me to determine; but, as I feel grateful for his courtesy, I freely give him the full benefit of his argument.

I am not, however, more surprised at Mr. Cooke's granting to me all the attributes which are usually considered necessary to enable a man to form correct opinions, and then declaring that I am in dangerous error, than I am at the humble estimate which he seems to make of his own talents, whilst he proposes to guide the opinions of others, by a religious Test or Declaration. How a Church that considered itself *infallible*, or an individual who believed himself *inspired*, could make such a proposition, I can readily conceive; but, how any man, or body of men, admitting fallibility of judgment, and laying no claim to inspiration, can be guilty of such an audacious attempt "to lord it over God's heritage," (the conscience,) I do confess, I have no

### REV. HENRY MONTGOMERY.

faculties to comprehend. As there is a *possibility* of error, wherever there is human *fallibility*, in how awful a situation must those stand, who either require or give assent to that which *may* be the “commandment of men,” instead of “the truth of God!” It is vain to tell me, that “this is only a declaration of opinion, not a test of belief.” It is a distinction without a difference: for, what a man *declares*, at the bidding of his fellow-man, he virtually *subscribes*. Now, I do say, without fear of rational or scriptural contradiction, that any body of fallible men, who demand assent or subscription to any declaration or test of faith, in *human language*, under the fear of any penalty, or the hope of any reward, are trenching, not merely upon the fundamental principle of Protestantism, “the right of private judgment,” but also upon the sacred prerogative of the great Head of the Church. “Who art thou,” saith the Apostle, “that judgest another man’s servant? To his own master let him stand or fall.” And elsewhere we are instructed, that “one is our

## SPEECH OF THE

master, even Christ, and all we are brethren.” How dare those very Presbyterians, who declaim most loudly against the usurpations of Popery, who call upon the Catholics to read their Bibles, to despise their Priests, and to extricate themselves from the trammels of their Church,—how dare they, in the face of common shame and common consistency, to turn upon their brethren, and to attempt to place “the yoke of bondage” upon their necks! When I witness such an attempt, I blush for the weakness or the wickedness of man; but I will neither be a partaker in the shame, nor in the crime. So truly do I detest all human interference in matters of conscience, and so awful have been its effects in the world, that were you this moment to lay before me a human creed, every word of which I believed, I would not subscribe it, lest I should thereby sanction the interference of man with the sole prerogative of the Redeemer. Indeed, what are all such attempts, but a manifestation of the impious vanity of man, pretending “to be wise above what is

REV. HENRY MONTGOMERY.

written," and to reveal the will of God *more clearly* than it has been revealed by the Spirit of Truth! Sir, I will subscribe no creed but the Bible; I will account for my views of it to no human tribunal but my congregation; and when this world, and its evil passions, shall have passed away, I pray to Him, "who alone can keep me from falling," that I may not be altogether unprepared to answer for my faith, to the great Head of the Church.

I admit that this body has the *power* to pass any declaration which it pleases, and to demand any submission of its members which it pleases; but I deny that it has any Scripture warrant for doing so. /And if, Moderator, you should persevere, what will be the consequence? You may make *hypocrites* of the weak, and the crafty, and the worldly; you may make *martyrs* of the firm, the upright, and the sincere; but every child who hears me must know, that you cannot change the conviction of a single mind, or alter the feeling of a single heart. Suppose you pass your declaration, and I refuse my assent

## SPEECH OF THE

or signature, which as an honest man I must refuse, you will probably say to me, “we can no longer give you the right hand of fellowship:” but, if I *subscribe* your creed, though you *know* I do not *believe* it, then you will receive me as a brother in the Lord. How revolting, then, is this project, to every virtuous feeling of the human heart! You will spurn the hand which is pure as the mountain snow, whilst you clasp, with the grasp of friendship, that which is black with the stains of perjury! Woe be unto the Presbyterian Church, if ever that day shall come, in which falsehood and dissimulation shall be bonds of union, whilst truth and sincerity shall be cast out of her counsels!

And, for what is all this tyranny to be exercised, this disgrace to be incurred, this wound to be inflicted on religion? Why, that we may not be liable to the accusation of having “a diversity of opinions amongst us!” That is to say, we do differ, and we know that we shall continue to differ, but we will hold out false colours to the world, we will cast dust into the

REV. HENRY MONTGOMERY.

eyes of the multitude, and try to make them believe that “there is peace, when there is no peace.” This may seem very fair in the eyes of some, but to me it appears to be rank Jesuitism and hypocrisy. Yet this alone can be the “unity” for which many are such strenuous advocates. I do not think so meanly of their understandings, as to believe that they aim at any other kind of uniformity. *Uniformity of Faith!* Oh, that such a phrase had never been heard by the ears of man,—that such a vain idea had never flitted across his imagination! What dungeons has it crowded! what tortures has it inflicted! what oceans of innocent blood has it shed! what tears of widows and of orphans has it caused to ascend in sad memorial before Heaven! Leaving its mightier horrors, what havoc of integrity has it produced, in the ordinary walks of life! what lips has it sealed against the utterance of truth, or opened to the utterance of falsehood! what private and political oppressions has it sanctioned! what barriers has it opposed to the progress of religion, and

## SPEECH OF THE

the regeneration of a world! Uniformity of Faith! Why, two of us can scarcely agree respecting the most ordinary occurrences of life. On the subjects of literature and philosophy, manufactures and commerce, government and laws, there is an endless diversity of opinions. And can we, then, possibly expect to be exactly of one mind on “the high and deep things pertaining to salvation?” So long as human nature is constituted as it is, varying in dispositions and talents, subject to all the influences of education, society, and interest, a vast diversity of religious tenets must necessarily prevail. Nothing less than the immediate interposition of Heaven, could produce perfect uniformity. And when we consider that such uniformity never has been attained, it would be a libel on the Deity, to suppose that it is essential to the salvation of his people. Such an impious supposition would imply, that an All-wise and Gracious Being had given a religion to his creatures inadequate to produce the effects for which it was designed. But I do not require to urge this

REV. HENRY MONTGOMERY.

upon Presbyterians, who spurn at the idea of “exclusive salvation,” and rejoice to think, “that many shall come from the East and from the West, from the North and from the South, and shall sit down in the Kingdom of God.”

Were uniformity of faith, however, *desirable*, (which, to me, seems exceedingly doubtful,) I am persuaded that creeds, and confessions, and other “devices of men,” are not the means adapted to produce it. The very churches which taunt us with our varieties of faith, and reproach us for permitting the disuse of our “ancient standards,” have as great diversities of opinion in themselves, as prevail amongst us. We might fairly turn upon them, and say, “Physicians, heal yourselves!” It is as notorious as the sun at noon day, that the Established Church, at this very moment, is divided into two great parties, of Arminians and Calvinists; not to speak of minor divisions. I have seen a Low Arian, if not Socinian work, written not many years ago, as I have been told and believe, by a Dignitary of that Church, turning the doctrine

## SPEECH OF THE

of the Trinity, and Archbishop Magee's view of the Atonement, into contempt and ridicule, in the most indecorous manner. And we all know, that from Tillotson, down to the present age, many of the brightest ornaments of that Church have wished that "she was well rid of the Athanasian creed." Do I mention these things, from any invidious feeling towards the Established Church ? By no means. I believe the clergy of that church to be a very respectable body of Divines ; many members of it are amongst my best friends ; and some of the most pious Christians I ever knew, were of its communion. But I consider the state of that Church as a striking proof of my position, that uniformity of *creed* does not necessarily produce uniformity of *faith*. And when, on a previous day, I spoke of a few of the clergy, as showing themselves anxious about the dismissal of Mr. Porter from the Clerkship, and interfering in the settlement of a Presbyterian Congregation, I meant no reflection on the clergy of that church as a body. If some of them became "busy bodies in other men's

REV. HENRY MONTGOMERY.

matters," I am convinced that ninety-nine out of one hundred of them would condemn such injudicious interference as much as I possibly could. But whilst I thus express my respect towards the Established Church, I trust I shall be pardoned for not falling into that extreme courtesy, (so common amongst us of late,) which would exalt her above the Church to which I conscientiously belong. I would hold it disgraceful to continue a *Presbyterian*, if I preferred the doctrine, discipline, or worship, of *any* other Church ; and I freely confess, that I should place very little value upon a compliment from any man, who told me that he considered *my* Church superior to his *own*, whilst he remained in that which he disapproved.

If we turn to the Church of Scotland, it will not afford us much stronger proof of the efficacy of a uniform creed. There, the Confession of Faith reigns in all its glory: yet, I have been told, (and I speak under the correction of Mr. Carlile,) that there is not, on earth, a body of men of more diversified religious sentiments,

## SPEECH OF THE

than the ministers of the Church of Scotland. Nay, it has been more than hinted, that the very seats of learning are not free from heresy. Rumour tells a strange tale of a subscription scene in one of those venerable seminaries. When a professor was elected, who was pretty generally known not to be so orthodox as John Knox, the person who presented the Confession of Faith to him for signature, simply enough, asked him if he *believed it?* This, the learned gentleman very well knew, “was not in the bond.” “You have nothing,” said he, “to do with that: hand it here, and I’ll *sign it.*” There may be persons who admire this mode of producing a uniform and orthodox faith; but to me, it seems awful to think that a man should be excluded from the ministry, or any other office, for avowing the *truth*, who would be considered duly qualified for admission, by putting his solemn signature to a *lie!*

I was wrong, however, in saying that there is no Church in which uniformity is to be found. There is one which, at least, boasts of being the

REV. HENRY MONTGOMERY.

same, in every age, and clime, and country,—the Catholic Church. But are those who most strenuously press forward this Declaration, admirers of the beautiful uniformity of *that* Church? I suspect, that whilst some of them would not join me in my cordial wishes to see the benefits of the British Constitution extended to our Catholic countrymen, they will all unite with me in admitting, that the uniformity of the Catholic Church powerfully tended to bring on “the gross darkness” of the middle ages, to retard the Reformation, to clog the wheels of science, and thereby to arrest the progress of civilization. The fact cannot be concealed;—the uniformity of Catholicity has spread darkness over Spain and Italy, and the noxious weeds of Atheism and Infidelity have sprung up under its shadow, in the fair and fertile regions of France. This, however, in my mind, would have been the effect, though probably in a less degree, of any other system of faith which had attained equal power and extension; for it seems to be an ingredient in the nature of all Churches,

## SPEECH OF THE

to delight in the exercise of authority, where they have power; and to follow, as a natural consequence of uniformity of faith, that inquiry should cease, and the independence of the mind be annihilated. The truth is, controversies and discussions, which can only arise from diversity of opinions, seem to be as necessary to preserve the knowledge and energy of religion, as the motion of the waves to purify the waters of the ocean; but the misfortune is, that, in “the strife of words,” the spirit of the Gospel is too frequently lost.

I put it then, to the Synod of Ulster, whether, in the pursuit of a shadow, a visionary uniformity, they will trample upon the right of private judgment, the very foundation of their Church, and wilfully “lay a snare for the feet of weak brethren.” A curse lies upon him “who causeth a brother to offend;” and I ask, is there a man in this house, who does not believe, that if the Declaration be passed, some will assent to it with the lips, but not with the heart or with the mind? I beseech you to pause, before you com-

REV. HENRY MONTGOMERY.

mit an act which must “cause some to fall.” “Lay not the flattering unction to your souls,” that the sin will lie solely at the door of him who shall make an insincere declaration. Every man who is concerned in passing it, will be “a partaker in his sin.” I can readily conceive what a struggle of nature there may be in many a heart, where the best feelings of humanity will be dragging the unhappy victim different ways. If he assent to a creed which he believes not, he is for ever degraded in his own estimation ; he shudders in the presence of his God. But he is a husband and a father ; and if he resolve to put on the high unbending port of a martyr, and to utter that which will make a bigoted multitude expel him from his congregation, what must be the conflict of his spirit ! Unqualified for any other profession, perhaps in the wane of life, “to dig unable, and to beg ashamed,” he sees, in prospect, his comfortable home made desolate, the partner of his bosom in tears, the children of his affection crying to him for that bread which he can no longer give !

## SPEECH OF THE

I ask any person, that has in his bosom "a heart of flesh," can he wonder, if the most powerful feelings of nature should overcome the stern commands of conscience? Can it create surprise, if the unhappy man should say, "I will not leave HER desolate, whom, in the fond fidelity of my heart, I solemnly swore to protect; I will not leave the pledges of our love without the sustenance of nature, without the means of education. No: I will make this hateful declaration; I will cast myself upon the mercy of him who knows the pangs of my heart; I will wear my knees in secret prayer; I will wet my pillow with tears of penitence; and if all be too little to procure pardon for my offence, I may die without hope, but not without the consolation that I have sacrificed myself, for objects dearer to me than life!" Oh! let us not call such a man a wretch, or a hypocrite; he is a husband and a father! Let us rather make the case our own, and not "cast a stumbling block in his way." Let us not send him into the pulpit, from which nothing but the

REV. HENRY MONTGOMERY.

voice of sincerity and truth should ever be heard, with a heavy conscience, and a falsehood upon his soul! If we do, his blood may be required of the authors of his crime.

But, it may be alleged that I under-rate the firmness and virtue of our ministers. Possibly I may. And what is the reward proposed for those that will maintain their integrity? Why, you will kindly cast all the odium you can upon them, in these fanatical times; you will distract their congregations; turn them adrift, if you can, and give them the charity of the world for their portion. But you will not have many thus to endow. Those may be courageous, who are free from danger, and very upright, who have nothing to forfeit by their integrity. But I shall recal to your minds a passage in the history of a man, with whom no individual here would dare to put himself in competition. I allude to the virtuous and illustrious Cranmer, the Father of the Reformation in England. In the awful reign of Mary, his love of life prevailed over his integrity, and he was induced to sign a paper

## SPEECH OF THE

condemning the Reformation. This sacrifice, however, did not save him; for, having degraded, they resolved to destroy him. Being led to the stake, and the devouring flames kindling around him, he stretched forth his right hand, and held it in the flames till it was consumed, repeatedly calling out in the midst of his sufferings, “O that unworthy hand!” Who then shall boast of the firmness of ordinary men, when he who was bold enough to rebuke the Eighth Henry, yielded for a season to his fears?

There will, I admit, be a few honest men, whom you may have the comfort and glory of exposing to inconvenience or injury. But your triumph will be very limited; for if you pass your Test, I calculate that many will very soon perceive their errors. Amongst the first to rush forward to sign it, I suspect, will be a man who told me, “that if worldly interest and popular applause ran as high in favour of New Light as of Old Light Doctrines, he did not believe there would be above *half-a-dozen* Orthodox Ministers in the Synod.” This may be an erroneous

REV. HENRY MONTGOMERY.

estimate. But he is proud of being a particularly accurate man in his calculations. Next to him in the race, will come, I should suppose, another eminent divine, who yesterday accused a better man than himself of blasphemy; but who has, nevertheless, a very comfortable idea of the compressible nature of a ministerial conscience, as I have heard him declare, “that he only required to know a minister’s congregation, in order to tell his creed.” Oh, what a pure body the Synod of Ulster will soon be, and how much of one mind, if you but give them a good confession!

But I have been told, that all this is proposed in pure kindness, in order to bring back the stray sheep into the true fold. This, I am bound to believe, is all true, as the principle promoters of the plan are, no doubt, superior to ordinary Christians. But whilst the *motive* may be approved, I must say, the *means* seem but ill adapted to the end. There is a kind of resistance in human nature, to the exercise of authority, where no title to exercise it appears.

## SPEECH OF THE

There are some minds not very accessible to the logic of majorities, and which cannot comprehend the meaning of a threat from their equals. I tell you, plainly and sincerely, if you think us in error, you must take other means to convert us. Uncharitable denunciations, and unwarranted attempts to coerce our consciences, will rather wed us to our opinions. I shall venture to tell you a fable in proof of this position.— In ancient times, as the *Sun* and the *Wind* were chatting together, they beheld a traveller passing over a plain, with a cloak upon his shoulders. Just for a frolic, they laid a wager, as to which of them could soonest deprive him of his cloak. The Wind was to have the lead ; and, mustering all his strength, he blew East and West, North and South, in the most violent and ingenious manner. But although the poor traveller was nearly blown down, he would not part with his cloak: the stronger the blast, he just wrapped it the more closely about him, and held it with the more determined grasp. At length, the Wind exhausted himself by puffing, and gave

REV. HENRY MONTGOMERY.

up the task; when the Sun, who had retired behind a cloud, gently and gradually looked past the skirt of it upon the traveller, who held his cloak tightly for a while, remembering the rough usage he had experienced. But, as the storm was past, and as the day became genial, he gradually relaxed his hold: the Sun put forth stronger beams; the cloak was thrown open; the traveller paused; the Sun poured forth the full tide of his splendour and his heat; the cloak gradually descended from the shoulders of the traveller, and he stood, subdued and melted, in the glorious presence of the God of Day! The Wind is the fury of persecution: the Sun is the genial influence of Christian love. The cloak of error, if such there be, will only be held more tenaciously in the hurricane; but in the gentle calm of kindness, in the hour of friendly intercourse, it may be laid aside for ever. There is a pride in the human heart, which resists compulsion, though it will readily yield to love.

I see, on the other side of the house, a gentleman who has long been a leading member of

## SPEECH OF THE

this body, and who has lately distinguished himself, both from the pulpit and the press. I refer to my friend Mr. Stewart, whose Sermon in defence of Orthodoxy I hold in my hand. In the preface to this discourse, he tells the world (what I knew long ago,) that he was first a Calvinist in his boyhood, that he was afterwards very sceptical on the doctrine of the Trinity, and that it was only in the year 1825, he turned his attention to the Bible, to see if it contained, what he *now* calls the Fundamental Doctrine of the Scriptures; which, unless a man believe, he is on the very verge of Atheism. Now, had the proposed declaration been brought forward in 1824, Mr. Stewart, as an honest man, could not have signed it. He might then have been “cut off as a rotten branch;” and that very act of severity would, in all likelihood, have confirmed him in error. But see the happy consequence of kindness and moderation! He, who might have continued an Arian, a Heretic, a Semi-Atheist, peculiarly dangerous on account of his talents, is now the zealous champion of Ortho-

REV. HENRY MONTGOMERY.

doxy, and one of the powerful enemies of Catholic error! What *has* been, *may* be. In two years, if you do not “lop us off,” Mr. Porter, or myself, may be edifying the world with dissertations against our present opinions!

But consider, farther, if you pass this Declaration, you must extend it to Probationers as well as Ministers. Now, you tell the people that they have a right to choose their own pastors: but if they should not like a Calvinist, where are they to procure a teacher? I presume they must either submit to your dictation, or remain without a Minister; which would be rather a singular way of consulting their rights and privileges.

Mr. Cooke, and others, have been pleased to denominate those who differ from them, “wolves in sheep’s clothing.” This implies, that we have assumed a false character. So far as I am concerned, I treat the insinuation with contempt. But, I do admit, there are in this body, “wolves in sheep’s clothing:” men who have lived with us in Christian communion, who have pretended

## SPEECH OF THE

to entertain for us Christian friendship; but who now, when they are confident in numbers, turn upon us, and would devour us. These are the *real* wolves.

But we have also been compared to soldiers entering a garrison for its defence, and afterwards turning our arms against our companions. Surely Mr. Cooke intended this as a hit at himself and his partizans. I came into the garrison with the same colours which I now wear; I have always kept them flying; and whether I remain in it, or be driven from it, I shall keep them aloft, so long as I have an arm to bear them. There are, however, traitors amongst us: men who came into the fortress on the avowed condition of mutual toleration and forbearance, and who engaged with us to defend it against the common enemy. But now, that they think *themselves* able to maintain the bulwarks, they treacherously turn their arms against their comrades, and would drive them out defenceless upon the world. These are the *real* traitors.

Mr. Cooke's similes are only to be equalled

REV. HENRY MONTGOMERY.

by his charity. He has given us a new version of Christian unity. He has talked a great deal about unity of the Spirit, meaning “unity of the Spirit’s testimony.” These are idle words, which sound in the ear, without conveying any idea to the mind. Every ignorant enthusiast, down to the lowest dregs of fanaticism, talks most presumptuously of “the testimony of the Spirit,” and appeals to his own feelings as a proof that he is right. But when Mr. Cooke says that he is only to love those of his own creed, and to view those who differ from him, as he would regard robbers, I tell him, that he is listening to the testimony of his own passions, not to the Spirit of Truth. There were persons of old, who loved only their own tribe and nation, “who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others;” but our Saviour showed that the poor Samaritan understood the nature of brotherly love infinitely better than the priest and the Levite. It may be said, this was only an act of charity to the body; but surely, if we are bound to love “that which

## SPEECH OF THE

perisheth," we are much more constrained to love "that which endureth for ever." It is one of the greatest evils of our unsanctified contentions, that they tend to restrict the charity of the Gospel, which enjoins us to "love *all* men, and to do good unto *all* men,"—even that Charity, which the Apostle declares to be superior even to Faith and Hope.

I have not entered into any defence of my peculiar tenets, (though I believe them to be capable of a rational and Scriptural vindication,) because I know that such a course would only widen a breach which is already too large. But I can assure you, that whatever my opinions are, I hold them in great humility, under the most profound sense of my own weakness, and liability to go astray. In coming to the conclusions at which I have arrived, I can truly say, that I have sought light and direction, where alone they are to be obtained. I have never read the Scriptures, with a view to ascertain their meaning, without first imploring the gracious assistance of the Divine Spirit, to free me

REV. HENRY MONTGOMERY.

from prejudice, presumption, and error, and to lead me to a right understanding of the truth. Neither have I ever sat down to write a sermon, or any religious discourse, without praying to God, that I might be enabled faithfully and truly to interpret his holy will, and to instruct his people. And I can further say, in perfect sincerity, that I never enter a pulpit, without a profound sense of my responsibility; nor do I ever venture to address any people, until I have secretly and fervently intreated the protection and guidance of Heaven. I may not have asked with becoming humility, and devotion, and faith; but I trust I have asked in sincerity. And if I be yet in error, I believe God will enlighten my mind; if I be right, I trust He will grant me fortitude to maintain my integrity, in despite of unmerited obloquy, and "to speak boldly the whole counsel of his will." For myself, and those who think with me, I feel that I am entitled to claim at least the humble merit of being *sincere*. The world may consider us *fools*, for not conforming to its maxims, and pursuing its

SPEECH OF THE REV. H. MONTGOMERY.

gains ; but it would require the malignity of a demon to call us *knaves*. I believe, though many of my brethren be in error, that simple error is not a condemning sin ; and I sincerely hope, that the Great Shepherd may collect his sheep from many folds. If I thought that all who differ from me were to go down to destruction, I could not enjoy one hour's happiness.

I conclude by entreating you, not to enter upon a measure at variance with the true principles of your Church ; and which must eventually end in division and weakness. For myself, I have, as you all know, nothing either to hope or to fear. "But for my friends and brethren's sake, I would say, peace be within your Zion." Arianism has been persecuted, frequently unto blood, for fifteen centuries ; which must prove that it cannot be subdued by mere human power. This, however, is certain: "if it be of men, it will come to nought ; but, if it be of God, ye cannot prevail against it."

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