JAMES MONTGOMERY (1771-1854): HYMN WRITER AND HYMNOLOGIST

by John H. Johansen

James Montgomery, it has been said, "is of considerable importance in the record of English hymnody, for not only was he a hymn writer of real merit, but he may also be regarded as the first critic, or hymnologist." A similar judgment is expressed by Canon Ellerton, W. Garrett Horder, Bernard Manning, F. J. Gillman, and Louis F. Benson. It is as the author of many well-known hymns, and as a collector and critic of hymns, that we wish to deal with The Christian Psalmist in this paper.

But, as Albert Edward Bailey points out, "in the primary background for this hymn writing lies his piety." And so in order to appreciate the work he did, we must know something about the man himself. Born at Irvine, a seaport in Ayrshire, Scotland, November 4, 1771, he was the oldest of the three sons of the Rev. John Montgomery, and his wife Mary Blackley. His father was an Ulster Scot Moravian minister who had come to Scotland shortly before the poet's birth, and Montgomery was fond of saying, "I was born in Scotland, and barely escaped being an Irishman."

At the age of six or seven Montgomery was sent to the Moravian school at Fulneck, near Leeds, in Yorkshire, England. Speaking of the voyage to England, he said, "We had a terrible storm. I was, as might be expected, much afraid at first; but my father told me to trust in the Lord Jesus, who saved the apostles on the water. I did so, and felt composed." It was the desire of Montgomery's parents to see their son become a minister in the Moravian Church, and so in addition to Latin, Greek, German, and French languages, he received instruction in history, geography, and music at Fulneck.

There can be no doubt that the school at Fulneck was very severe, as closely guarded against the world as a convent, with most of the world's literature forbidden. Montgomery and some of the other
boys managed, however, to obtain an occasional but always furtive glance at two or three of the poems of Burns, which had found their way into a newspaper received by one of the Fulneck teachers. His attachment to verse increased, and before he left school he read the two volumes of William Cowper, then recently published. This; he said, was the first “whole poet” he had seen. Here also he became acquainted with the hymns of the Moravians, and these, to quote his own words, “were my delight. As soon as I could write and spell, I imitated them; and before I was thirteen, I had filled a little volume with sacred poems, though I was almost unacquainted with our great English poets.”

As to the effect of this early Moravian discipline, Montgomery said in later life, “There is no system of religion, which I have yet seen which, taking it all in all, has half the charm for a young, a warm, and a feeling heart, as that professed by those people.”

The poet certainly acknowledged a peculiar providence in his removal to Fulneck. He wrote about it when he revisited the school in 1806, in the poem “Departed Days”:

> For hither from my native clime,  
> The hand that leads Orion forth,  
> And wheels Arcturus round the north,  
> Brought me in life’s exulting prime.  
> —Blest be that hand! whether it shed  
> Mercies or judgments on my head;  
> Extend the sceptre or exalt the rod,  
> Blest be that hand! it is the hand of God.

In the year 1783 Montgomery’s parents sailed for the West Indies, entering mission service on the island of Barbadoes. Robert and Ignatius, younger brothers of James, were also brought at that time to the school at Fulneck. There can be no question of the influence of his parents on young Montgomery, nor of the pride he felt in their service as missionaries. On one occasion, speaking on behalf of foreign missions, and he did this often in later years, he was heard to exclaim with great feeling: “I am the son of a missionary! I know but of one mission—the mission of the Son of God—the propagation of our common Christianity through the world, by Christian Missionaries of every denomination.”

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6 *Memoirs*, vol. 1, p. 46.  
7 Ibid.  
Montgomery spoke at a Methodist Missionary meeting in Halifax in March 1825, and in his memoranda of that meeting, James Everett records the following:

As the subject led him to Tobago, he had nearly broken down under the emotion excited by an allusion to the missionary labours and sufferings of both his parents in that island. "Where," said he, "they made the first deep furrows with the gospel-plough, and fell down dead in them through excess of labour; and now the seed of eternal life, once cast into them, had sprung up in an abundant harvest, under better auspices." "And oh!" he exclaimed, with an emphasis which drew tears from many eyes, "in the great harvest-day at the end of time, when those who have died in the Lord in Tobago shall arise and stand before the judgment seat, my mother, my dear mother, will stand in the midst of them, to receive her reward!" 10

It became apparent that Montgomery did not wish to become a minister, for he neglected his studies and spent his time composing epics in Milton's manner. The church authorities gave him up as a candidate for the ministry and he left Fulneck school in 1787. Montgomery himself said that he was "turned out of school" at Fulneck," on account of alleged indolence.11 So, at the age of sixteen he was placed temporarily with a Mr. Lockwood at Mirfield, near Huddersfield, who ran a retail store in that town. Here Montgomery served as a shop-boy and was extremely unhappy. In June of the same year he ran away with his few belongings and forty-nine pence in his pocket. It was characteristic of him that he went in his old suit, leaving behind him a new one which his master had given him and which he did not think he had earned.

He found employment for a time with Joseph Hunt in the village of Wath, working in what might best be described as "a general store." At this time Montgomery was remarkably grave, serious, and silent; exemplarily steady and industrious in his work, devoting all his spare time to reading and the composition of poetry. This position he left after a year, and went up to London with a bundle of his poems and with high hopes of having them published. When that failed he returned to Wath in 1790 and re-entered the dwelling and employ of his old master there.

In the year 1792 came the turning point in Montgomery's life. He saw in The Sheffield Register its publisher’s advertisement for a clerk and bookkeeper. He answered the advertisement in person

10 Memoirs, vol. 4, p. 101. Montgomery’s parents, following their term of service on Barbadoes, next took up work on the island of Tobago, where both died: the mother on October 23, 1790, and the father on June 27, 1791.

and secured the position, and in April of that year Montgomery took up his residence in Sheffield, where he continued to live until his death in 1854. Joseph Gales, the publisher of the Register, combined the vocations of printer, bookseller, and auctioneer, and he advocated parliamentary reform and popular rights in plain and fearless terms. Montgomery began to exercise his literary talent and became an extensive contributor to the Register.

When the owner had to flee the country to avoid persecution, Montgomery assumed the ownership of the paper, changing its name to The Sheffield Iris. The first issue of the Iris appeared on July 4, 1794, and Montgomery continued to edit the paper for the next thirty-one years.

Montgomery himself was a man of strong convictions, not always acceptable to the government of the day, and he was twice fined and imprisoned for periods of three and six months respectively, for articles on the Fall of the Bastille and on a political riot in Sheffield. He refused to insert advertisements of State lotteries which he described as a “national nuisance.”

At heart Montgomery was neither a politician nor a newspaper man, but a poet, and during the years that followed, volume after volume of his works appeared. The first of his works to catch the public ear was his The Wanderer of Switzerland, published in 1806, of which nine English and twelve American editions were called for. There followed West Indies in 1807; World Before the Flood, 1813; Greenland and Other Poems, 1819; The Pelican Island, 1828; and The Poet's Portfolio, 1835. Montgomery also lectured in various places on poetry, notably at the Royal Institution, London, in 1830-31.12 During these years also he was busy writing reviews for the Eclectic Review, of which his friend Josiah Conder was the editor.

During these years he kept up a wide correspondence with people in all walks of life, both in England and in America. Robert Southey, S. T. Coleridge, Sir Walter Scott, and William Wordsworth were numbered among his friends in England. In November of 1836, Montgomery received the copies of a new edition of Wordsworth's poems, with an inscription from him that read as follows: “In admiration of genius, and as a grateful token of profound respect for the pure and sacred uses to which that genius has been devoted, these volumes are offered to James Montgomery by his sincere friend, William Wordsworth.”13

As a young man, Ralph Waldo Emerson read The Wanderer of Switzerland and admired it greatly. In January 1848, he visited Montgomery at “The Mount” in Sheffield. William Cullen Bryant

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12 These lectures were published in 1833 under the title, Lectures on Poetry and General Literature.
also visited the poet at his home in England, and was an ardent admirer of his work, *The World Before the Flood*.

Montgomery was not only known and visited by people from all over England and from abroad; he was, for half a century, the first citizen of Sheffield. All that concerned the spiritual and moral well-being of the people of that city claimed his service. He was a founder of the Societies that promoted Sunday schools, the Bible, foreign missions, public health, education, and savings. He was one of the leaders that gave Sheffield a public gas service and for many years he served as chairman of the board of governors of the Sheffield Infirmary.

When, on March 29, 1811, the secretaries of the British and Foreign Bible Society came to Sheffield to organize a Bible society, Montgomery attended the meeting, and he became, and ever afterwards continued to be, an indefatigable advocate and supporter of the Bible society. In an account of this first meeting, given in the *Iris*, the editor said:

> Let each, let all of us, then, join hand and heart, however poor, however weak we may be, to forward the glorious work in which these our elder brethren are so pre-eminently engaged.\(^4\)

Montgomery was for many years what was called a "religious instructor" in the Red Hill Sunday school in Sheffield, a school conducted by the Wesleyan Methodists. The school had over a thousand children on its rolls, and long and zealously did the poet fulfil these Sunday morning engagements. The duty of the poet was to take about twenty boys and girls into a small room and there privately catechise, exhort, and pray with them. The authors of the *Memoirs* were present on some of these occasions, and they state that it was an affecting sight to see Montgomery "kneeling amidst a little group of poor boys and girls, after having explained a passage of Scripture, or enforced some moral duty, and breathing out his soul in prayer with a degree of fervour, simplicity, and sweetness, which those who heard him can neither forget nor describe."\(^5\)

\(^4\) *Memoirs*, vol. 2, p. 306. Montgomery's view of the Bible can be seen in the following words spoken in December 1822, at the formation of a Literary and Philosophical Society in Sheffield. In the course of a resolution favoring the establishment of this society, Montgomery said, "The possession of the Bible alone—including treasures of history, jurisprudence, poetry, and ethics, capable above all other books of informing, expanding, delighting, and exciting the mind, while the heart is purified—the possession of the Bible alone, with the power of reading and understanding its wonderful and blessed contents, sets the humblest Christian among us above the most enlightened heathen philosopher, in the true knowledge of the true God." Ibid., vol. 3, p. 350.

\(^5\) *Memoirs*, vol. 3, p. 128.
Montgomery never ceased throughout his life to work for the abolition of some of the gross social evils that disfigured the England of the nineteenth century. He advocated the abolition of slavery at a time when the doctrine was still unpopular, and formed an association for the rescue of juvenile chimney sweeps. “His Moravian background,” Eric Routley says, “gave him a missionary zeal which, allied with his lively social conscience and his literary facility, made him a formidable warrior in the Christian social cause.”

James Montgomery was a man of simple and beautiful character, who held his own theological opinions with a degree of firmness only exceeded by the charity which he extended to others. He joined freely and frequently in public worship with Anglicans, Independents, Baptists and Methodists. “We never knew a man,” his biographers said of him, “of equal piety and intelligence, whose conduct and sentiments were at once so decidedly evangelical, and so signally unsectarian.”

On December 6, 1814, Montgomery was granted readmission to the Moravian Church at Fulneck, and whenever possible in later years, he worshiped there. Writing to his brother Ignatius under date of May 19, 1815, Montgomery says:

In Passion Week I went to Fulneck, and enjoyed the Holy Communion on the anniversary of that night on which our Lord was betrayed. It was a blessed season, because it was a heart-searching one; Good Friday also was made exceedingly sweet and solemn to my soul.

Christian Frederic Ramstler was pastor of the Fulneck congregation at this time and continued to serve for some years after Montgomery’s reception. When the good man died at Bristol, England, on October 25, 1832, Montgomery was asked to write a hymn to be sung at a lovefeast to be held in connection with the funeral service. It was for the funeral of this servant of God that he wrote the well-known and immortal lines:

Servant of God, well done!
Rest from thy loved employ!
The battle fought, the victory won,
Enter thy Master’s joy.

16 In the summer of 1828 Montgomery was deeply engaged with the question of Negro slavery. He issued a call for an anti-slavery meeting in Sheffield, and on June 9, addressed the meeting at great length. See Memoirs, vol. 4, p. 260; vol. 7, p. 252.


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Rest from thy labours, rest,
Soul of the just set free!
Blest be thy memory, and blest
Thy bright example be.

Soldier of Christ, well done!
Praise be thy new employ;
And while eternal ages run,
Rest in thy Saviour's joy.20

N. H. Carter from New York City visited Sheffield in 1825 and on July 30, accompanied by a friend, called upon Montgomery. In a narrative of his tour, afterwards published in America, he has given us a description of the poet at the age of fifty-four:

In his person he is slender and delicate, rather below the common size. His complexion is light, with a Roman nose, high forehead, slightly bald, and a clear eye, not unfrequently downcast, betraying a modest degree of diffidence.21

The year 1825 was notable for other events, as well, and particularly for the fact that on Tuesday, September twenty-seventh the final issue of the Iris appeared under Montgomery's sponsorship. He turned his paper and printing establishment over to a retired Methodist preacher, John Blackwell. After retiring from the Iris, Montgomery continued to reside at Sheffield, where he had come to be accounted a local hero, and grew more and more in the respect of his fellow-townsmen by his exemplary life and activity in furthering every good work, whether religious or philanthropic. On November 4, 1825, a great testimonial dinner was held for Montgomery at the Tontine Inn in Sheffield, and in 1827 friends in his home city honored him further by raising the sum of two hundred pounds which was sent to the Rev. Christian Ignatius LaTrobe for use in re-establishing a Moravian mission station on the island of Tobago.

In June 1835, Montgomery was offered the Professorship of Rhetoric at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland, but declined the offer. In the same year, however, but a few months earlier, he was notified by Sir Robert Peel, the Prime Minister, that he had been granted a literary pension of two hundred pounds a year for life. This offer he did not reject, and there is, perhaps, something symbolic in the fact that the government which had once imprisoned him, now pensioned him!

True to his Moravian tradition Montgomery was enthusiastic in the cause of missionary work overseas. In September 1841, he accompanied the Rev. Peter LaTrobe on a speaking tour of Scotland, and the two men visited Glasgow, Paisley, Greenoch, Kilmarnock, Stirling, Perth, Dundee, and Edinburgh, speaking to enthusiastic crowds in each place they visited. Montgomery made a sentimental journey to his native town of Irvine, and was met by the Provost, the magistrates and the city council, and “having been taken to the city hall, was made a burgess of that ancient and royal burgh.” The poet accompanied LaTrobe on a similar speaking tour to Ireland in October 1842, when they visited the cities of Dublin and Belfast, and the Moravian settlement at Grace Hill.

It is interesting to recall the events connected with the poet’s eightieth birthday. Celebrations were held by his friends all over England and these attracted a good deal of attention outside that country. In America, however, these celebrations were misinterpreted and thought to be a memorial of his death. Accounts of the poet’s death, along with a sketch of his life and character, were published in the leading newspapers. A copy of one of these accounts came into Montgomery’s possession and he thoroughly enjoyed reading his American obituary.

In 1852 the Wesleyan Conference was held at Sheffield and Montgomery was invited to attend the sessions. One who knew him well and saw him during the Conference spoke of him in these words: “What a fine specimen he is of an aged Christian man and poet, sanctified by the grace of God!”

Montgomery had planned to spend Easter of 1854 at Fulneck, but he was taken ill a few days before, and died on Sunday, April 30. He was given a public funeral, such as Sheffield had never seen before; a statue was erected to his memory, and a Wesleyan chapel and a public hall were named after him. Special services were held in Victoria Hall, Sheffield, and in the Cathedral, on July 14 and 15, 1954, to commemorate the centenary of his death.

It is undoubtedly true, as Gilman has said, that Montgomery’s
hymns "constitute his most abiding monument." That this was the poet's own wish is seen by his words in the "Introductory Essay," to The Christian Psalmist. He says there that "he would rather be the anonymous author of a few hymns, which should thus become an imperishable inheritance to the people of God, than bequeath another epic poem to the world, which should rank his name with Homer, Virgil, and 'our greater Milton'."

Montgomery's hymns were published in three collections. Songs of Zion, published in 1822, contained paraphrases of fifty-six psalms. The Christian Psalmist, published in 1825, was an anthology consisting of 562 hymns, of which 103 were his own. And in 1853, Original Hymns was published, containing all 355 of his hymns.

As one examines this last collection it becomes clear that many of the hymns included were never intended for public worship. Indeed the sub-title makes this quite clear: "For Public, Private, and Social Devotion." Hymns were written by the poet for all sorts of occasions, and for friends with a very personal reference. Thus there are hymns "For a Deaf Man," "For Mariners," "For a Birthday," "For a Juvenile Missionary Meeting," and "For a Missionary Meeting in a Garden." And there are epitaphs written by the poet for many of his friends and colleagues. As an example of this latter we give the following, written by Montgomery in 1831 at the request of his old friend, Joseph Hunt, for the gravestone of his wife:

When the last trump shall wake the dead,  
And Christ be seen by every eye,  
Saints shall with joy lift up the head,  
For their redemption draweth nigh.  
When heaven and earth are passed away,  
And time and death shall be no more,  
The righteous, in eternal day,  
Their God and Saviour shall adore;  
Thrice happy they, who thus shall meet  
The friends they loved around his feet.  

The number of hymns for anniversaries and other special occasions, Hugh Martin has said, "suggests, what was indeed the fact, that Montgomery was regarded as a kind of Christian poet Laureate to be approached when churches or societies wanted something written appropriate to an event." Here are hymns for Sunday school

26 Gilman, op. cit., p. 240.
29 Martin, op. cit., p. 84.
festivals in Sheffield and near-by points, festivals which were for many years a feature of the church year on Whitsunday. It is said that Montgomery wrote a new hymn for the Sheffield Festival each year for forty years. Here are found hymns “For the Jubilee of the Religious Tract Society,” “On the Jubilee of the Church Missionary Society,” for the “Jubilee Anniversary of the Baptist Missionary Society,” “For a Female Friendly Society,” “For the Opening of the Sheffield General Infirmary, October, 1797,” “For the Molyneux Hospital, Dublin,” and “For a Sermon before a Society for the Recovery of Persons apparently Drowned.”

In 1832 a cholera epidemic raged through Sheffield. On August 22, a day of special humiliation and prayer was observed and for this occasion Montgomery composed two appropriate hymns. When the danger was over and a day of thanksgiving was ordered (November 22), he again composed a pair of hymns for the occasion.30

Here also are hymns for special services of the church: such as the laying of the foundation stone of a church, the consecration of a church, for the opening of a place of worship, on commencing a church and cemetery, for the opening of an organ, and for the opening of a chapel and Sunday school. And there are special hymns for centenary and anniversary occasions of the Moravian Church, two of which should here be noted.

On June 17, 1822, the congregation at Fulneck commemorated the centenary of the beginning of the building of Herrnhut by the first emigrants from Moravia. For this occasion Montgomery composed the following lines:

Thine arm, O Lord, of old
In lands of desolation,
Enclosed an humble fold,
Redeem'd a congregation:
Our fathers; like a flock,
The great, good shepherd led,
Gave water from the rock,
With heavenly manna fed.31

On November 19, 1841, a meeting was held in the Moravian Chapel, Fetter Lane, London, celebrating the centenary of the founding of the “Society for the Furtherance of the Gospel,” which had been established in 1741. At this meeting several hymns by Montgomery were sung, among them the stanzas of the hymn, “All hail! our church's Elder dear!” The verses of this hymn had been written by the poet a few days earlier, on November 13, and the Brethren

31 Original Hymns, no. cclxxi, pp. 283-84.
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in their printed copy, remark: "On the day on which they were composed, the congregations of the Brethren throughout the world were engaged in a thankful commemoration of an important event in the history of their Church—the discontinuance, a hundred years before, of the office of General Elder of the Brethren's Unity, and the solemn covenant made with the Lord Jesus Christ by their spiritual forefathers, that they would yield Him, henceforward, their individual allegiance, their entire confidence, and their unre­

served submission." 32 Originally, the hymn was written in three parts, and had ten stanzas. Today it is found in a four stanza version, and the first stanza is as follows:

"All hail, our Church’s Elder dear,
Jesus, her glorious Head,
To Thy disciples now appear,
As risen from the dead;
Let our rejoicing souls in Thee
The tokens of Thy passion see,
And hear Thy gentle voice anew
Say, ‘Peace be unto you’." 33

When these hymns, written for particular persons or events, are subtracted, the proportion of hymns still in use becomes all the more impressive. It is no longer true to say, as Julian's Dictionary of Hymnology (1891) says, that more than one hundred of Mont­
gomery's hymns are still in common use. But more recent tabu­lations show that this layman wrote more hymns in common use today than any other writer except Charles Wesley and Isaac Watts. And this despite the fact that he lacked the official support of one of the larger denominations of Christendom such as Wesley and Watts have had for two centuries. And this popularity of usage is equally true in England, Canada, and the United States of America.

The Baptist Hymn Book (England, 1962), contains fourteen of Montgomery's hymns: Congregational Praise (England, 1951), twenty-two; The Book of Common Praise (Anglican Church of Canada, revised, 1938), sixteen; The Hymnary of the United Church of Canada (1930), twelve; The Book of Praise (The Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1918), twenty-two; The Methodist Hymnal, (1964), ten; Service Book and Hymnal of the Lutheran Church in America (1958), fourteen; The Hymnal of the Evangelical and Reformed Church (1956), eleven; The Hymnbook (published in 1955 by the Presbyterian Church in the U.S., The United Presby-

32 Memoirs, vol. 6, pp. 84-85.
33 Original Hymns, no. cclxxiii, pp. 287-90. See, Hymnal and Liturgies of the Moravian Church, 1923, no. 795, for all the stanzas currently in use. The revised edition of this hymnal, published in 1969, also includes this hymn.
terian Church in the U.S.A., and the Reformed Church in America), ten; *Hymnal and Liturgies of the Moravian Church* (revised), twenty-three. It should be noted that seven of the hymnbooks used in this tabulation have been produced within the last fifteen years.

Montgomery's hymns are virile in thought, graceful and dignified in expression, and free from unhealthy introspectiveness. With few exceptions they are carefully constructed, the subject being introduced immediately, developed and illustrated, and brought to a conclusion in a reasonably short time. This means that Montgomery's hymns can be analyzed; they have a coherent and intelligible structure of thought, and this is due to the author's desire to teach Christian doctrine and life to ordinary people. In the "Introductory Essay" to *The Christian Psalmist* he states his philosophy of hymn writing in these words:

A hymn ought to be as regular in its structure as any other poem; it should have a distinct subject, and that subject should be simple, not complicated, so that whatever skill or labour might be required in the author to develop his plan, there should be little or none required on the part of the reader to understand it. Consequently, a hymn must have a beginning, middle, and end. There should be a manifest gradation in the thoughts, and their mutual dependence should be so perceptible that they could not be transposed without injuring the unity of the piece; every line carrying forward the connection, and every verse adding a well-proportioned limb to a symmetrical body.

"Angels from the realms of glory," is an excellent illustration of this content and structure of a hymn and shows the poet's adherence to his own high standard. This hymn first appeared in *The Sheffield Iris* on Christmas Eve, 1816. Montgomery published a revised version in *The Christian Psalmist*, 1825, and it appears in five verses as Hymn 239 in *Original Hymns*, with the title, "Good Tidings of Great Joy to all People."

It should be noted, first, how the author calls in turn upon the angels, the shepherds, the wise men and the saints, to "Worship Christ, the Newborn King," which is the real topic of the hymn. Notice how the atmosphere is appropriate to each group and permeates each verse, acting as a sort of stage setting to a drama in five acts or a story told in five pictures. Each property is in place!

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*Hymnal of the Moravian Church*, 1969. The author served for eight years as a member of this Hymnal Revision Committee.


Although based on the accounts in Matthew and Luke this hymn has a number of other Scripture allusions woven into its structure. In stanza one allusion is made in the words “Ye, who sang creation’s story,” to Job 38:7, where angels are said to have sung when God created the world. They are now asked to celebrate the fulfillment of creation’s unfinished task. The words, “God with man is now residing,” in stanza two is a reference to Isaiah 7:14 in which the promised Messiah is called Emmanuel—“God with us”; Matthew interprets this prophecy as being fulfilled in Jesus. In the same stanza the words, “Yonder shines the infant light,” remind us of what Jesus once said about Himself in John 8:12, “I am the light of the world.” The reference in stanza three is clearly to the Magi, who had already learned that a king of the Jews had been born (Matthew 2:2), and stanza four refers to Malachi 3:1, where Messiah is spoken of as claiming his spiritual heritage as world ruler.

In the original hymn a fifth stanza beginning “Sinners wrung with true repentance,” was included. It is a great pity that this last verse is now omitted in many hymnals. The angels, shepherds, wise men and saints represent the witnesses, but the sinners are the ones for whom the whole great drama is to be enacted.

Sinners, wrung with true repentance,
Doomed for guilt to endless pains;
Justice now revokes the sentence,
Mercy calls you—break your chains;
Come and worship, Come and worship,
Worship Christ, the new-born king.  

A hymn which appears in all ten of the hymnbooks mentioned above, and which is regarded by many as Montgomery’s greatest, is “Hail to the Lord’s Anointed,” an “Imitation of Psalm 72,” as he called it. It is one of our greatest missionary hymns. S. W. Christophers has expressed the feelings of countless numbers of Christians concerning this hymn:

How the devotion of the inspired psalmist kindles and glows when he looks at God in the face of the reigning Messiah! Can anything be more sublime than Psalm 72? Could there be a more perfect harmony of the Divine and the human in praise? And who does not thank God for the man who threw that song into English metre, so happily as to give it all the charms of new music, so effectually as to naturalize it to the purest taste and the warmest hearts of Christian England? James Montgomery did this when he taught us to sing,

87 Original Hymns, op. cit., no. ccxxix, pp. 239-40.
"Hail to the Lord's anointed,  
Great David's greater son!" 38

This hymn was written originally as a Christmas ode and was sung at one of the Moravian settlements in England, probably at Fulneck, on December 25, 1821. On April 14 of the following year Montgomery attended a missionary meeting held in the Pitt Street Wesleyan Church, Liverpool, at which Adam Clarke presided, and at which Montgomery was one of the speakers. He closed his address by reciting the words of this hymn, and Clarke was so impressed that he secured a copy, and in 1822 appended the hymn to his notes on the Seventy-second Psalm in his now famous Commentary On The Bible.

During the meeting, and just as Montgomery began to speak, the gas lights went out and "there was one wilderness of night before us," as the poet later described it. He continued speaking he says, "through every interruption—commencing with the twilight, settling down into darkness, rising again as the light reappeared, and concluding with the full blaze of the renovated illumination." 39 One can well imagine that the audience was thrilled! Who can resist the appeal of the last stanza with its firm, confident ending:

O'er every foe victorious,  
He on His throne shall rest;  
From age to age more glorious,  
All blessing and all blest;  
The tide of time shall never  
His covenant remove;  
His name shall stand for ever,  
That Name to us is love. 40

This hymn is also a fine hymn for Advent, and it is included in that category in a number of the hymnbooks mentioned above. Julian gives us this interesting comment on the hymn: "Of all Montgomery's renderings and imitations of the psalms, this is the finest. It forms a rich and splendid Messianic hymn." 41

Montgomery is known by three other fine missionary hymns: "Lift up your heads, ye gates of brass," "Hark, the song of Jubilee," and "O Spirit of the living God."

40 In Songs of Zion, 1822, the last line of this verse reads: "His name, what is it? Love"; Montgomery changed this to "That name to us is love," in Original Hymns, 1853, Hymns Ancient and Modern, 1861, has "His changeless name of Love," this alteration being attributed to John Keble, author of The Christian Year.
The original of "Lift up your heads," first appeared in the Evangelical Magazine in 1843. In Montgomery's Original Hymns, 1853, it appeared in three parts, of nineteen verses, and was headed, "China Evangelized," with the text, "The Lord of hosts mustereth the host of the battle—Isaiah 13:4." "The combination of energy and mystery in that hymn," Routley has said, "which represents Montgomery at his very greatest, gives it exactly the right emphasis for the Church's missionary work." 42

"Lift up your heads, ye gates of brass,
Ye bars of iron, yield,
And let the King of Glory pass;
The Cross is in the field;
That banner, brighter than the star
That leads the train of night,
Shines on their march, and guides from far
His servants, to the fight."

"Hark, the song of Jubilee," has been called by Josiah Miller, "a peculiarly noble and sublime paean of missionary triumph." 43 The observance of the year of Jubilee in ancient Israel undoubtedly suggested this impassioned hymn to the author. In Leviticus 25:9, 10, we read:

Then shalt thou cause the trumpet of the Jubilee to sound throughout all your land. And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof; it shall be a Jubilee unto you.

When the trumpet of the Jubilee sounded, a song of gladness was heard, for prisoners were released, and peace and good will reigned. Montgomery takes this idea of Jubilee and using Revelation 16:17 and 19:16 as the texts, and particularly the words, "Hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth," he deals with the supernatural conflict between light and darkness, and expresses the final victory of God, the theme of the whole hymn being one of ultimate and sure triumph.

He shall reign from pole to pole,
With illimitable sway;
He shall reign, when like a scroll
Yonder heavens have passed away.
Then the end: beneath His rod

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Man's last enemy shall fall:
Hallelujah! Christ in God
God in Christ, is All in All!“

The last of Montgomery's fine missionary hymns is "O Spirit
of the living God," and here we have a great universal hymn of
praise and prayer found in eight of the hymnbooks used in this
study. As Routley has noted, this is a hymn addressed to the Holy
Spirit and the hymn is found listed under this category in a number
of hymnals. It was written by Montgomery in 1823, "to be sung
at the Public Meeting of the Auxiliary Missionary Society for the
West Riding of Yorkshire, in Salem Chapel, Leeds, June 4, 1823." It
was published in his Christian Psalmist, 1825, with an extra
verse:

God from eternity hath willed
All flesh shall His salvation see;
So be the Father's love fulfilled,
The Saviour's sufferings crowned through Thee.

"In all these hymns," Routley has said, "there is pure adoration
of God, and a sense of the great controversy, in which Christ is
and will be the Victor. So much of Scripture is admitted to the
very heart of such hymns that we cannot fail to have our imagina-
tions stirred and our aspirations stretched towards the ineffable
dimensions in which the work is really being done." 45 It is not
that we are sent out into the world to "make Christ King." How
could it be that, when God has made Him King already and given
Him the Name which is above every name? It is not that our
missionary task is to cooperate with Jesus in seeking to establish
the Kingdom, as though we were to prepare the way for its coming
or work for its inauguration at some future day. The sure word
of God is that the kingly rule of heaven has broken into history
in Christ, and that the Lordship of Christ extends not merely to
a group of disciples but to nations of the earth. So the Christian
Psalmist in the last hymn above, in a verse called by Josiah Miller
"Miltonic": 46

O Spirit of the Lord, prepare
All the round earth her God to meet;
Breathe Thou abroad like morning air,
Till hearts of stone begin to beat.

44 It is not generally known that the tune "St. George's, Windsor," composed by
Sir George J. Elvey, and now associated with "Come, ye thankful people, come,"
was originally composed for this hymn by Montgomery. For further information on
this tune see Robert Guy McCutchan, Hymn Tune Names. New York: Abingdon
46 Miller, op. cit., p. 348.
Montgomery has given the Christian world another fine hymn on the Holy Spirit which deserves to be better known than it is. Found in the English and Canadian hymnbooks used in the survey above, it is surprising that it appears to be so little known in the United States.

"Lord God, the Holy Ghost," is one of the few hymns of which the subject is distinctively the day of Pentecost. Found in Original Hymns (no. cxxxvi, p. 139), with the heading, "The Descent of the Spirit—Acts 2:11-4," this hymn shows that Montgomery had a very well-developed doctrine of the Holy Spirit, and longed earnestly to be filled by Him. In a letter to Samuel Dunn, one of the Wesleyan preachers stationed at Sheffield, Montgomery comments on a sermon by Dunn entitled, "Witness of the Spirit," which the author had sent him.

My heart's desire and prayer for myself is, that as conviction of sin, godly sorrow, repentance, and faith, are all most unquestionably wrought in me by the Holy Spirit of God, He may also not let me rest satisfied with less assurance of being pardoned, accepted in the Beloved, and sanctified, than the Scriptures warrant me to expect, and consequently render it imperative upon me, at the peril of my soul and salvation, to ask and to seek, that I may receive and find . . . I have no more doubt of the communion of the "Holy Ghost" than I have of "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," or "the love of the Father"; but I do not enjoy Him as I ought, as I might, and as I pray daily that I may.47

The theme or text of this hymn is contained in the first verse, in which he invoked the power of the Holy Spirit, which had been promised by our Lord:

Lord God, the Holy Ghost,
    In this accepted hour,
As on the day of Pentecost,
    Descend in all Thy power.

The characteristic doctrine of salvation in Montgomery's hymns is Adoption rather than Justification, but always adoption through Christ.

Spirit of Truth, be Thou
    In life and death our Guide!
O, Spirit of Adoption, now
    May we be sanctified.

In this hymn, as in "Angels from the Realms of Glory," "In the Hour of Trial," and "Go to Dark Gethsemane," the writer projects his singers right into the biblical picture, and makes them participants in the scene. Note the phraseology taken directly from the narrative: "Day of Pentecost," "with one accord," "mighty, rushing wind," and "tongues of fire." By his delicate reminiscences of Biblical passages such as these James Montgomery has provided us with doctrinal riches in six verses, not as great perhaps as the medieval hymn, the *Veni Creator Spiritus*, but equally as strong as Charles Wesley’s hymn, "Come Holy Ghost, our hearts inspire."

Montgomery found in the Psalter not only an inexhaustible source of inspiration, but also a treasure-house of devotional materials from which to fashion hymns. We have already seen how he framed out of the seventy-second Psalm his rich and splendid Messianic hymn, "Hail to the Lord’s Anointed." Other psalm versions found in *Songs of Zion* (1822), and in current use, are:

"God is my strong salvation" (Psalm 27)  
"O God, thou art my God alone" (Psalm 63)  
"Call Jehovah Thy Salvation" (Psalm 91)  
"Thank and Praise Jehovah’s Name" (Psalm 96)  
"Glad was my heart to hear" (Psalm 122)  
"How beautiful the sight" (Psalm 133)

Of these six hymns, "Call Jehovah thy Salvation" is found in three of the current hymnbooks, while "God is my strong salvation," is found in seven books. Routley has indicated the reasons for the lack of use of these "Imitations of the Psalms" today. He mentions the fact that Montgomery’s versions were published in 1822, and that by that time there were many complete versions of the Psalms in use. Both the "old" version of Sternhold and Hopkins, and the "new" version of Tate and Brady, were still widely used. And the monumental work of Isaac Watts, published a hundred years before Montgomery’s, had taken a firm hold in England, particularly in the Free Churches.

One of the most widely known and used of these Psalm versions of Montgomery is the brave song of courage and faith:

God is my strong salvation;  
What foe have I to fear?  
In darkness and temptation  
My light, my help is near.

Though hosts encamp around me,  
Firm to the fight I stand;

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What terror can confound me,
With God at my right hand?

This rendering of Psalm 27:1, “The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?” is found in Original Hymns with the heading, “Trust in the Lord.” It is indeed a quiet meditation on the peace that comes to a mind set upon God.

Place on the Lord reliance;
My soul, with courage, wait;
His truth be thine affiance,
When faint and desolate.

His might thine heart shall strengthen,
His love thy joy increase;
Mercy thy days shall lengthen;
The Lord will give thee peace.

Martin has said that “Montgomery is at his happiest in hymns of worship,” and when we turn to these we find not only much about the Church itself as the fellowship of believers, but in hymn after hymn he sings with lyrical passion of the privileges of the sanctuary and the glory of public worship. Seven of the collections contain “Stand up and bless the Lord,” a robust and rousing song of the House of God. Written for the anniversary service of the Sheffield Red Hill Wesleyan Sunday School, on March 15, 1824, this hymn began,

Stand up and bless the Lord
Ye children of His choice.

Montgomery changed the word “children” to “people” when, a year later, it was published in his Christian Psalmist with the heading “Exhortation to praise and thanksgiving.”

Another hymn of worship which deserves to be better known is, “Command Thy blessing from above,” which appears in four of the books, and which is especially popular in England and Canada. With the heading, “For a solemn Assembly,” this hymn was written by Montgomery for the Sheffield Sunday School Union on June 3, 1816. The text was revised extensively by the author for Cotterill’s Selection of Psalms and Hymns, published in 1819. This is also a hymn addressed to the Holy Spirit, and pictures the gathered congregation waiting for the opening of God’s Word. The third verse

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49 Martin, op. cit., p. 89.
Routley says "exemplifies Montgomery's economy of words and terseness of diction, combined with his grace and smoothness": 50

Command Thy blessing in this hour,
Spirit of Truth, and fill the place, 51
With humbling and with healing power,
With quickening and confirming grace.

Other worship hymns by Montgomery found in one or more of the above hymnals are: "Come, let us sing the song of songs," "Holy, holy, holy, Lord," "O bless the Lord, my soul," "God is in his holy temple," "Sing we the song of those who stand," and "To thy temple I repair." All of these hymns are based on the idea, which is thoroughly scriptural, that that which binds the world-wide Church and the Church in heaven in one family is their common praise of Christ. The Church can learn from Montgomery that we are called to worship before all other activities on earth; that the Church exists, as man exists, for God, that the congregation does not come to receive, but to give; and "that what matters most is not that they should enjoy themselves, but that they should offer before the Most High what is acceptable to His Will." 52

"According to Thy gracious word," is found in all the ten hymnals surveyed, being found in the Hymnal and Liturgies of the Moravian Church among the "Communion Hymns" for Maundy Thursday. Macmillan says this hymn "is full of deep religious feeling, and of exquisite simplicity," while Martin calls it "a widely known Communion hymn, showing deep devotional feeling movingly expressed." 53 It appeared in the Christian Psalmist in 1825 under the text, "This do in remembrance of me—Luke 22:19," and the last line of each verse contains a reference to the text as a solemn refrain.

Another admirable hymn for the Lord's Supper has only two verses, but it is, according to Routley, "a treasure, expressing within its tiny compass the joyful response of the Christian to the Lord's invitation": 54

Be known to us in breaking bread,
But do not then depart;
Saviour, abide with us, and spread
Thy table in our heart.

50 Routley, I'll Praise My Maker, op. cit., p. 196.
51 In the Baptist Hymn Book (1962), this line reads, "and exciting power."
54 Routley, I'll Praise My Maker, op. cit., p. 211.
HYMN WRITER AND HYMNOLOGIST

There sup with us in love divine,
    Thy body and Thy blood
That living bread, that heavenly wine,
    Be our immortal food.

This Communion hymn is gaining in popularity in America, and is found in its original two-stanza form in The Methodist Hymnal, The Hymnal of the Evangelical and Reformed Church, and The Hymnbook published by the Presbyterian Church in the U.S. It is found in an expanded four-stanza version in the Service Book and Hymnal of the Lutheran Church in America, and in a similar form in The Baptist Hymn Book published in England.\(^5\)

Montgomery believed both that the Eucharist was “my sacrifice!” and that the elements were real channels of saving grace to those who humbly partook of them in faith. “Receiving the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper,” he said at one time, “is, with me, a very serious thing.”\(^5\)

One of Montgomery’s most famous compositions, which is in all ten hymnbooks, and is often found in devotional anthologies, is “Prayer is the soul’s sincere desire.” This hymn was written upon the request of the Rev. E. Bickersteth in 1818, and was published the same year with three other prayer hymns in a pamphlet for use in Non-conformist Sunday schools in the Sheffield area. The next year it appeared in Bickersteth’s Treatise on Prayer. In both The Christian Psalmist, 1825, and Original Hymns, 1853, it appears in its original eight stanzas, with the heading, “What Is Prayer.”

It has been said again and again that this is not a hymn at all, but the fact is that the Christian world has claimed and used it in public worship until it is a classic which is assured a permanent place. Montgomery’s own judgment on this hymn is worth noting:

\(^5\) Martin says that the additional stanzas of this hymn are “from an untraced source.” (Op. cit., p. 88.) The Offices of Worship, used in the Southern Province of the Moravian Church in America prior to 1923, contains a hymn attributed to Joseph Hart (1712-68), in which these additional stanzas are found. The stanzas are number one and three, and these have been placed before the Montgomery stanzas to make the expanded four stanza hymn. We quote the added stanzas:

Shepherd of souls, refresh and bless
    Thy chosen pilgrim-flock,
With manna from the wilderness,
    With water from the rock.

We would not live by bread alone,
    But by Thy word of grace,
In strength of which we travel on
    To our abiding place.

"The most attractive hymn I ever wrote," he said, "is that on 'Prayer,' which first appeared in Mr. Bickersteth's selection. Being simple in its form, general in its application, though rather instructive than devotional in its character." 57

The hymn is a simple statement about prayer, ending with a prayer. What it says is not only true but exceedingly well said. In April 1828, Montgomery presided at the Wesleyan Missionary meeting in York and the chapel was crowded to excess both in the morning and in the evening. At the evening service the Christian Psalmist spoke on the duty and importance of prayer in connection with missionary operations. One of his observations was as follows:

Prayer is not only the sublimest expression of the church on earth, but there seems to be something very like prayer among the souls of the martyrs in heaven itself, and then he quoted Revelation 6:10, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth". 58

In the light of these words how appropriate are the lines:

The saints in prayer appear as one
In word, and deed, and mind,
While with the Father and the Son
Sweet fellowship they find.

Nor prayer is made by man alone,
The Holy Spirit pleads,
And Jesus, on the eternal throne,
For sinners intercedes.

These two stanzas are generally omitted from modern hymnals and the six remaining verses are an excellent meditation, ending with the disciples' own prayer. Montgomery said he had received more messages as to its helpfulness than about anything else he had written. Here are the six stanzas of the hymn as it is used today:

Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Uttered or unexpressed;
The motion of a hidden fire,
That trembles in the breast.

Prayer is the burden of a sigh,
The falling of a tear,
The upward glancing of an eye,
When none but God is near.

58 Ibid, 4, p. 250.
Prayer is the simplest form of speech,  
That infant lips can try;  
Prayer, the sublimest strains that reach,  
The Majesty on high.

Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,  
The Christian's native air;  
His watchword at the gates of death,  
He enters heaven with prayer.

Prayer is the contrite sinner's voice,  
Returning from his ways;  
While angels in their songs rejoice,  
And cry, "Behold, he prays!"

And then the concluding stanza which is itself a prayer, containing two passages of Scripture: "Lord, teach us how to pray," Luke 11:1, and John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me."

O thou, by Whom we come to God,  
The Life, the Truth, the Way!  
The path of prayer Thyself hast trod;  
Lord! teach us how to pray.

Truly, as John Brownlie says, "some of the stanzas are exceedingly beautiful," and the hymn teaches the principles and practice of prayer with truth and power.

Montgomery wrote many other hymns on prayer but only one, "Lord, teach us how to pray aright," is found in any number of modern hymnbooks.

On one other theme the hymns of James Montgomery are outstanding. His favorite theme is the Cross. The comment of W. G. Addison concerning early Moravian hymnody applies also to the hymns of the Christian Psalmist: "The chief burden of the hymns was Ecce Homo." One of the tenderest hymns on the Passion is the little fragment entitled "The Three Mountains," with the lovely third verse:

When on Calvary I rest,  
God, in flesh made manifest,  
Shines in my Redeemer's face,  
Full of beauty, truth, and grace.

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Or, there is that other, more theological hymn for Holy Week, entitled, "A Fountain opened for Sin and Uncleanness."

Come to Calvary's holy mountain,
   Sinners ruined by the fall;
Here a pure and healing fountain
   Flows to you, to me, to all,
In a full perpetual tide,
   Opened when our Saviour died.  

The two most well known lenten hymns, however, are "Go to dark Gethsemane" and "In the Hour of Trial," both of which appear in all the Canadian and American hymnals used in the survey.

There are two texts of the hymn "Go to dark Gethsemane," both by Montgomery. In 1820 he published the first text in Thomas Cotterill's "Selection of Psalms and Hymns," where it appeared under the heading, "The Last Sufferings of Christ." Five years later he made extensive revisions in the hymn and published the altered text in The Christian Psalmist, under the title, "Christ our example in suffering."

1. Go to dark Gethsemane,
   Ye that feel the tempter's power
   Your Redeemer's conflict see,
   Watch with Him one bitter hour;
   Turn not from His griefs away,
   Learn of Jesus Christ to pray.

2. Follow to the judgment-hall,
   View the Lord of life arraign'd:
   O the wormwood and the gall!
   O the pangs his soul sustain'd!
   Shun not suffering, shame, or loss,
   Learn of Him to bear the cross.

3. Calvary's mournful mountain climb;
   There adoring at His feet,
   Mark that miracle of time,
   God's own sacrifice complete:
   It is finish'd; hear their cry;
   Learn of Jesus Christ to die.

4. Early hasten to the tomb,
   Where they laid his breathless clay!

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"Ibid., No. LVII, pp. 61-62."
All is solitude and gloom,  
Who hath taken Him away?  
Christ is risen: He meets our eyes;  
Saviour, teach us so to rise.

This is a matchless and dramatic lyric of the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Christ. And here again we see Montgomery's skill in the construction of his hymns, the mark of the true poet.  
"In the hour of trial," has been a means of grace to many in trial and sorrow. It contains no instruction, but only meditation upon the Passion.

1. In the hour of trial,  
   Jesus plead for me;  
   Lest by base denial  
      I depart from thee;  
   When Thou see'st me waver,  
      With a look recall,  
   Nor for fear or favor  
      Suffer me to fall.

2. With forbidden pleasures  
   Would this vain world charm;  
   Or its sordid treasures  
      Spread to work me harm;  
   Bring to my remembrance  
      Sad Gethsemane,  
   Or, in darker semblance,  
      Cross-crowned Calvary.

3. Should Thy mercy send me  
   Sorrow, toil, and woe;  
   Or should pain attend me  
      On my path below;  
   Grant that I may never  
      Fail Thy hand to see;  
   Grant that I may ever  
      Cast my care on Thee.

4. When my last hour cometh,  
   Fraught with strife and pain,  
   When my dust returneth  
      To the dust again;  
   On Thy truth relying  
      Through that mortal strife,  
   Jesus, take me, dying,  
      To eternal life.
Written as early as October 13, 1834, this hymn appeared for the first time in *Original Hymns*, 1853, under the heading, “Prayers on Pilgrimage.” Its Scriptural basis is Luke 22:32—“But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.”

In this hymn we are projected as participants into a scene from Christ’s Passion. This was a method used most successfully by Montgomery in other hymns, notably, “Go to dark Gethsemane,” “Lord God the Holy Ghost,” and “Angels from the Realms of Glory,” and by Philip Doddridge in “O God of Bethel by whose Hand,” and by Sara Flower Adams in “Nearer, my God, to Thee,” both of the last being based on the dream of Jacob. In using this method the poet frequently does not mention the name of the biblical protagonist in the scene (Jacob, Peter, etc.), but leaves, as it were, a blank, into which the Christian may insert himself to his own profit and advantage. This is a device which makes for universality, certainly one of the tests of a good hymn. Characteristic of this style, Montgomery uses this practice with great skill and effect. And we recognize the scene by its description, or by the familiar phraseology as here.

One other hymn of Montgomery’s must be dealt with, and that is the hymn “For ever with the Lord.” This hymn, which first came out in 1835 in the *Poet’s Portfolio*, is found as number 234 in *Original Hymns*, with the title, “At Home in Heaven—I Thess. 4:17.” In the original it extended to twenty-two four-line verses, but it is found in nine of the modern hymnbooks in four eight-line stanzas.

1. For ever with the Lord!
   Amen, so let it be:
   Life from the dead is in that word,
   ’Tis immortality.
   Here in the body pent,
   Absent from Him I roam,
   Yet nightly pitch my moving tent
   A day’s march nearer home.

2. My Father’s house on high,
   Home of my soul, how near
   At times to faith’s foreseeing eye
   The golden gates appear!
   Ah! then my spirit faints
   To reach the land I love,
   The bright inheritance of saints,
   Jerusalem above.

3. For ever with the Lord!
   Father, if ’tis Thy will,
The promise of that faithful word
E'en here to me fulfil.
Be Thou at my right hand,
Then can I never fail;
Uphold Thou me, and I shall stand;
Fight, and I must prevail.

4. So when my latest breath
Shall rend the veil in twain,
By death I shall escape from death,
And life eternal gain,
Knowing as I am known,
How shall I love that word,
And oft repeat before the throne,
"For ever with the Lord!"

This hymn has voiced the heavenward aspiration of millions of Christian people, and has been of special comfort to the dying and those sorrowing for the loss of friends. H. A. L. Jefferson says it "is a model of what any hymn dealing with death should be—sincere, restrained, an expression of living faith, not dimmed or entangled by a clutter of elaborate imagery or points of theological dispute." 63

There is nothing unreal in the sentiment as expressed in the hymn. James Montgomery was a man who, while wholeheartedly entering into the concerns of the present life, looked to the state of the blessed in the life beyond as the goal of all striving and home of the soul.

Montgomery's influence on hymnody was not confined to the hymns he wrote himself. His work as a pioneer hymnologist has already been demonstrated, and this aspect of his work deserves further mention. There are three solid achievements to be noted.

First, was the part he played in helping to introduce the use of hymns into the Church of England. Thomas Cotterill came to Sheffield in 1817 as the Vicar of St. Paul's Church. For use in his former parish he had compiled a hymnbook of one hundred and seventy hymns, and seven editions of this had been sold before he came to Sheffield. He introduced the use of this hymnbook, entitled Selection of Psalms and Hymns for public and private use, adapted to the services of the Church of England, at St. Paul's Church, and met with opposition on the part of many in the congregation. They declared that this book had no authorization, that hymn singing in church was illegal, and that only the metrical psalms were sanctioned. These dissidents insisted on carrying their complaint to the Consistory Court of York. The issue, thanks to the diplomatic

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63 Jefferson, op. cit., p. 86.
intervention of Archbishop Harcourt, who was sympathetic with Cotterill's purposes, was settled in a way satisfactory to all. The Archbishop suggested that Cotterill withdraw the unauthorized hymnal and that he prepare another to be submitted to him for authorization. Cotterill did just that, securing the help of his friend James Montgomery, and together they compiled a new collection. Montgomery's biographers tell of the event in these words:

To this "labor of love," the poet readily consented, contributing not only the benefit of his judgment in the choice and amendment of available compositions from various quarters, but a number of his own best hymns. 64

It was at Montgomery's suggestion that Cotterill included the Christmas hymn, "Christians awake," in the version with which we are familiar.

Montgomery described his collaboration with Cotterill in these words: "Good Mr. Cotterill and I bestowed a great deal of labour and care on the compilation of that book; clipping, interlining, and remodelling hymns of all sorts, as we thought we could correct the sentiment or improve the expression." 65 This book, Martin says, "became a model for several successors, and the whole affair gave publicity and encouragement to the cause of hymn singing in general and did much to overcome Anglican prejudices." 66 The incident may indeed be said to mark the victory of hymnody in the Anglican Church.

Thomas Cotterill, with whom Montgomery had been associated for many years, died on January 1, 1824. 67 It was this occasion which led Montgomery to write his great lines:

Friend after friend departs;
Who hath not lost a friend?
There is no union here of hearts,
That finds not here an end.

Beyond the flight of time,
Beyond this vale of death
There surely is some blessed clime,
Where life is not a breath.

There is a world above,
Where parting is unknown;
A whole eternity of love,
Formed for the good alone.

64 Memoirs, vol. 3, p. 158. Montgomery contributed eleven of his hymns to this collection.
65 Memoirs, vol. 4, p. 69.
66 Martin, op. cit., p. 91.
67 Not in 1823 as indicated by Martin. See Ibid.
Thus star by star declines,
Till all are passed away,
As morning high and higher shines
To pure and perfect day.

Secondly, should be mentioned Montgomery's work as an editor of the English Moravian Hymnal. In 1835 the Christian Psalmist had agreed, upon request of the Provincial Elders' Conference of the English Moravian Church to undertake such a revision. This hymn book had in 1808 and 1826 been prepared by Bishop F. W. Foster, and now it was, in the words of Benson, "subjected to a scrutiny more searching and a recension more free than ever before given to a hymn book." The result of Montgomery's work was presented to the Provincial Elders' Conference in 1847, and the new edition, with Montgomery's revisions and additions, appeared in 1849. The volume contains twelve hundred hymns, and the time spent by Montgomery in editing, rewriting and remodeling of the hymns in this book must have been monumental.

It was this edition of the Liturgy and Hymns, made by Montgomery in 1849, which became the basis for the first American Liturgy and Hymns, issued in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania in 1851, and for all subsequent editions of this hymn book. It was because of Montgomery's impetus that there has been included in these editions of Liturgy and Hymns a large body of the hymns common to all the churches.

The third influence of Montgomery on English Hymnody is found in his "Introductory Essay" to the Olney Hymns, written in February of 1829, and included in the edition published by Collins of Glasgow in that year. Benson calls this "the best study of the Olney Hymns." Of the Olney Hymns themselves the Christian Psalmist said that they "ought to be forever dear to the Christian public, as an unprecedented memorial, in respect of their authors, of the power of divine grace." Truly this was part of Montgomery's excellent work for hymnody. And...
the more excellent part was to provide hymns for use in the worshiping congregation; hymns with an earnestness, a fervour of piety, and an unmistakeable sincerity which goes straight to the heart. Hymns which are clear, direct, simple, plain to the humblest member of a congregation, yet glowing with poetic fire, and steeped in Scripture. The verdict of time has justified Montgomery’s own modest belief that some of his hymns would indeed survive. Here is praise to God for His mighty acts in Creation and in Christ.

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North Carolina Methodist Bicentennial

Several Methodist bodies in North Carolina are jointly sponsoring a bicentennial anniversary of the beginning of Methodism in that state. The event will be held at Currituck Courthouse near Elizabeth City, where Joseph Pilmore landed and preached the first Methodist sermon, September 28, 1772. The celebration will begin at 10:30 a.m., Thursday, September 28, 1972, when Dr. Frederick E. Maser, executive secretary of the World Methodist Historical Society, will speak. A complimentary dinner will be served at noon to all visitors. Bishop Herbert Bell Shaw, retired bishop of the A.M.E. Zion Church, will speak on the subject, “Two Hundred Years of Methodism in North Carolina,” for the afternoon service. Solicitation of sponsors at five dollars each is being sought. Due recognition will be given these sponsors in the day’s program. Contact the Rev. C. Franklin Grill, Box 401, Scotland Neck, North Carolina 27874.