The Religious Thought of James Montgomery

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by

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" If he who pens these sentiments knows his own heart, he would rather be the anonymous author of a few hymns which should 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.'"

James Montgomery

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INTRODUCTION

With the passing of time, names in literature, sacred and secular, which were once popular become known only to the few. Some poetry, worthy in its kind, belongs to that part of literature which, having a temporary purpose and having accomplished that purpose, can accept oblivion. But there is a kind of poetry which is both for the moment and for all time; many of the four hundred hymns written by James Montgomery are of this lasting quality. Modern literary critics undoubtedly would consider Montgomery of the by-way rather than the high-way of English literature, and perhaps rightly so. The purpose of this thesis is not to argue that point or to present the merits or demerits of the writings of the poet from the standpoint of literature. My chief concern is with the religious subject matter of Montgomery's works, and with the various aspects and phases of his life which reveal his religious thought.

In considering the subject of this thesis, the phrase "religious thought" rather than "theology", was selected because James Montgomery was a layman and he had no system of theological thought. God was

not to him a mere object of investigation; his "theology" was recorded in terms of truth realized in personal experiment and experience, --Christian experience, from the depths of affliction, through all the gradations of doubt, fear, desire, faith, hope and love. Religion warmed his affections and inspired his imagination; love found him a ready and willing disciple. His faith furnished him with everlasting and inexhaustible themes. But Montgomery was at no time insensible to the pressure of the practical, material needs around him. He was not "the idle singer of an empty day"; there was substance to his song, --he had a message for the multitude. In his passionate studies of real life we find the real man in the context of his times. He was ardent, affectionate, earnest, courageous, tender, sad, --yet his inextinguishable faith tempered his native tendency toward melancholy. His spiritual perception enabled him to look at finite things in their right proportion and his writings served as an admirable directive and corrective in life.

Montgomery is best known as the writer of hymns, the most pervasive and powerful kind of poetry. He was one of the greatest contributors to this rich province of poetry; his hymns are as a glass which

reflect the beauty of holiness. But his religious thought is also expressed in terms of life and service as the editor of a newspaper for over thirty years, as a lay-worker and as a philanthropist. His life invites inspection, withstands scrutiny and affords inspiration.

I am greatly indebted to my advisors, Professor G. T. Thomson and Principal Watt, for their invaluable help and careful counsel.

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Robert T. Williamson

CHAPTER ONE

BEGINNINGS AND BACKGROUNDS

"I was not born, I have not lived, I shall not die,
a Demagogue or a Parasite!"

James Montgomery[1]

The name of Montgomery, under many an orthographic guise, is frequently found in British history and literature. James Montgomery, the poet, boasted no proud descent and did not care to trace his lineage through long lines of courtiers, chieftains, and great men. He had heard it said that his grandfather "was a gentleman", and had wasted an estate. He was of the opinion that his ancestors originally came from Ayrshire, the county of his birth. This being the case, it is not improbable to suppose that the poet had a common progenitor with that illustrious branch of the family, who could boast, as he used to say, "the reddest blood in Scotland", whose crest and motto[2] he on one occasion appropriated, and whom he jocularly called "the head of our clan".

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1 Sheffield 'Iris' editorial, 1798

2 "Gardez bien". Alluding to this motto, another Scottish poet wrote:

"Eight centuries gather round the crest!
And still 'tis guarded well,
Since first Montgomery forward prest,
Where dauntless Harold fell
On Hastings' field, -and earned a name,
That rivalled e'en the Conqueror's fame."

(Ayrshire Wreath)

The poet's father, John Montgomery, was born in Ballykennedy, in the parish of Ahoghill, County Antrim, Northern Ireland, in 1734. Under the stirring preaching of John Cennick[1], John Montgomery, at the age of twenty-three, joined the United Brethren, as the Moravians were then called. With sincerity and zeal he embraced the tenets of the Brethren, and, leaving the humble trade of a tailor, he went to the Moravian settlement called "Grace Hill" at Ballymena. He was soon singled out, because of his gifts and graces, to become a Moravian preacher.[2] After a visit to the Moravian settlements in Yorkshire and in Germany, he returned to Grace Hill where, on the 27th of December, 1768, he married Mary Blackley[3], the daughter of a "grave and serious matron of the community". Together they entered, what proved to be, the self-denying and perilous labours of the Moravian ministry.

John Montgomery became one of the pioneers of Moravianism in Scotland; his first charge was the small seaport

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1 John Cennick was a Methodist minister who worked with Wesley and Whitfield: he later joined the Moravians and went to Ireland to establish the Grace Hill settlement.

2 His son's biographers give him the title of"Reverend", (John Holland and James Everett, Memoirs of the Life and Writings of James Montgomery, London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, and Roberts, 1854, I, p.7), but it is doubtful that he ever preached that dignity, at least in Scotland. (Couper, W. J., "The Moravian Brethren in Scotland", Records of the Scottish Church History Society, Vol. V, part I, 1933, p. 59.)

3 Born October 9, 1742, in Ahoghill parish.

town of Irvine, Scotland's second Moravian parish.[1] He began his work in Irvine on the first of March, 1771, and soon found that in order to earn a living he would have to do some tailoring as well as preaching. His plan to build a church and dwelling-house under the same roof took two years to materialize, during which time the Montgomery family lodged in the house of John Miller near the proposed church site. It was in this house that James Montgomery was born November fourth, 1771.[2] His birth, occurring as it did within eight months of the arrival of his parents in Scotland from Ireland, caused the poet in later life to remark that he narrowly escaped being an Irishman!

The chapel, with the small cottage-manse attached, was constructed at an over-all cost of seventy pounds. Apparently, the Montgomery family occupied only one room and the rest of the building was used as a hall which woul

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1 Ayr was the first Moravian parish in Scotland, established in 1765; Irvine was the second, established i 1771. (Couper, op. cit., p. 56) Biographers Holland and Everett give some misinformation on this subject from the Irvine Monthly News Letter, Nov. 27, 1846, in which it is stated that Irvine was "the only spot in Scotland where those godly men (Moravians) at first found a footing." (Holland and Everett, op. cit., I, p. 7)

2 The site still stands and it bears a commemorativ tablet which reads: "THE BIRTH PLACE/OF JAMES MONTGOMERY/ 'THE CHRISTIAN POET'/BORN 4th NOV^{R} 1771/DIED 30th APRIL 1854." On his Scottish tour in 1841, the poet, in his Irvine speech, referred to an earlier and different tablet which he saw: "On the wall (of the house in Irvine) I saw a little tablet recording my birth, and under it a verse from one of my poems. Here, I will not repeat it, but it affected me much, for there I was born."

accommodate about one hundred worshippers.[1] The congregation was very small, and of the lower class. They were described as "being no honour to the gospel".[2] The members of the congregation were poor and could contribute little aid in meeting the cost of the building, and it was necessary to get financial help from sources in England and Ireland.

"Montgomery found the work very hard and unremunerative. At first, 'he suffered a good deal of outward difficulty', but it was said that though the results did not answer to expectation, he had 'some blessing'. The question whether it would be possible to have the sacrament dispensed at Irvine was discussed among the leaders of the whole movement, and the celebration was negatived, unless all the workers were able to meet together in the town, which seemed impossible. Following the slanders that were cast at the work, disturbances were not uncommon at the meetings on Sunday evenings. Tradition reports that

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1 The biographers of James Montgomery, the writer of this thesis (after visiting the site and doing considera ble research) believes, incorrectly state that the poet was born "in the dwelling-house under the same roof with the little chapel." Also,it is not true that "his nativity coincided with the arrival of his parents in Scotland." (Holland and Everett, op. cit.) If the manse-chapel took two years to complete, it is impossible that he was born there since his birth occurred eight months after the arrival of his parents in Scotland. (Couper, op. cit.)

2 Ibid, p. 60

Montgomery's domestic lot was one of hardship and poverty, and that one Sunday evening he appealed to his congregation and told them he could not live on air. Means were discussed to secure efficiency in the work, but these seemed of no avail, and at last, on May 14, 1776, Montgomery found it necessary to retire from the station. For a time the services were supplied from Ayr, but Montgomery had no special successor, and at length services were discontinued. ..."[1]

The Montgomery family returned to Grace Hill in Ireland for two years. At the early age of four, James passed from the gentle tuition of his mother to harder tasks under the village schoolmaster. Nearby Gilgoram Castle, its soldiers and band music, often commanded the truant attention of James, as he peeped through the trees to freer and gayer scenes beyond.

John Montgomery felt his son needed better schooling than Grace Hill could then afford and decided to enter him in a school in England. The school of his choice[2] was the Moravian seminary in the settlement of Fulneck, near Leeds, in Yorkshire. There, at the age of six, James was committe to the paternal care and tutelage of the Brethren. His

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1 Couper, op. cit., p. 61

2 His choice was limited since he, like all Moravians, had promised to send his children to a Moravian school.

two younger brothers, Robert and Ignatius, were brought to Fulneck six years later when their parents made the decision to become missionaries to the West Indies. At this time the Montgomery family had three months together in Fulneck prior to the departure of the parents on December second, 1783. It was the last time the boys saw them, for they died on the mission field.[1] Later in life, referring to the work of his parents, Montgomery said, "They made the first deep furrows with the gospel plough, and fell down dead in them through excessive labour."[2]

The discipline was strict and the life somewhat monastic at Fulneck. The "Fathers and Brethren" sought by precept and example to close the outer world to the eyes and hearts of the neophytes. Speaking of his ten-year stay at Fulneck, Montgomery asserted, "During the whole of this long period, I was carefully secluded, in common with my school-fellows, from any commerce with the world, as if we had been imprisoned in a cloister. I do not recollect having once, during that time, conversed for ten minutes with any person whatever, except my companions, our masters, or occasional Moravian visitors!"[3]

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1 Mary Montgomery died on Tobago, October 23, 1790; John Montgomery died on Barbados, June 27, 1791.
2 Holland and Everett, op. cit., IV, p. 101
3 Ibid, I, p. 45

Part of the system of surveillance practiced at Fulneck was the rigid vigilance exercised in excluding poetry, except that of a particular religious class, as well as other works of fiction, from the institution. "Notwithstanding all this care", commented Montgomery, "I frequently found means to borrow books, and read by stealth. But all mankind are made of the same clay: my curiosity was insatiate; and the pains that were taken to conceal certain things from us made us all the more eager to explore them".[1]

The course of study first prescribed for James was that preparatory to the Moravian ministry, in keeping with the request of his parents. The progress in this pursuit being unsatisfactory, the Brethren thought his temperament and aptitude better suited for the teaching profession and they planned his course of study accordingly. However, as time went on, his very sensitive nature, retiring manner, mysterious abstraction and poetic aspirations, together with the alleged want of diligence in his proper studies continued to perplex his masters exceedingly.

"At school", as he wrote in retrospect in 1794, "even when I was driven like a coal ass through Latin and

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1 Holland and Everett, op. cit., I, p. 46

Greek grammars, I was distinguished for nothing but indolence and melancholy, brought upon me by a raging and lingering fever with which I was suddenly seized one fine summer day, as I lay under a hedge with my companions, listening to our master whilst he read us some animated passages from Blair's 'Poem on the Grave'."[1]

This was the natal day of his poetic life. The "poetic fever" which gripped Montgomery that fine summer day, and which never left him, was largely responsible for the neglect of his studies. It so completely captured him that before he was thirteen years old he had filled a little volume with his own sacred poems, his chief poetical preceptor being the old Moravian hymn book, which he imitated as soon as he could write and spell. In addition to writing poetry geared to the pious strains that rose from the altar at Fulneck, Montgomery, before he was fifteen, wrote many miscellaneous pieces under the inspiration he received from reading poems which he managed to acquire, although they were not on the approved reading list of the institution. Long nights of wakefulness ensued because of his musing. Admonitions from the Brethren did not cause him to amend his ways, so it was decided to place him as an apprentice to a Moravian shopkeeper residing in the

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1 Holland and Everett, op. cit., I, p. 39

nearby village of Mirfield, with the hope that employment would divert his mind from the mysterious abstractions and daydreams of fame and ambition which so obsessed him.

The indolent, imaginative youth was placed behind the counter of a retail store, with little to do and less inclination to do it. During the year and a half he stayed in Mirfield, he composed a large part of his poem on "Alfred the Great," and, among other pieces, a metrical version of Psalm 113. At this time, he says, he became "music mad," and "nearly blew his brains out with a haut-boy". Of the outcome of this employment, Montgomery writes, "having little to do but to amuse myself, I grew more unhappy and discontented than ever; in an evil hour I determined to break loose and see the world. I was not bound (by indentures of apprenticeship) to my master, and knew that, if I left him, the Moravians could not compel me to return to him, though I was only sixteen years old.[1] You will smile, and wonder too, when I inform you that I was such a fool as to run away from my master, with the clothes on my back, a single change of linen, and three and sixpence in my pocket. I had just got a new suit of clothes; but as I had only been a short time with my good master, I did not think my little services had earned them. I therefore left him

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1 The poet miscalculated his age - in June, 1789, he was 17 years and 7 months.

in my old ones; and thus, at the age of sixteen, set out... to begin the world!"[1]

He took his leave one fine Sunday morning in June, 1789, while his master was attending divine service at the Moravian Chapel. Thus bursting his bonds, and exulting in the first emotions of new-found freedom, he headed south, not knowing his course or destination. After walking all day he spent the first night in Doncaster. Towards evening of the second day he entered a public house in Wentworth, where, he says, "the shy simplicity of my manners, and perhaps my forlorn appearance, induced the landlady to treat me kindly; and she harboured me several days without diving into my pockets".[2]

While he was staying at the little inn, a young man named Joshua Hunt, from Wath, stopped in for a pint of beer, and seeing Montgomery somewhat dejected, enquired if he were seeking employment. Hunt told him his father needed an assistant and advised him to go to Wath the next morning to offer his services. Montgomery did so; and Mr. Hunt agreed to engage him, provided the consent of his late master and his Moravian guardians could be obtained. He returned to Wentworth, wrote for the desired consent, and prepared to leave for Rotherham, where it was agreed he

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1 Holland and Everett, op. cit., I, p. 76
2 Ibid, VII, Appendix, p. 287

would await the reply. Before leaving Wentworth for Rotherham, he presented a copy of his verses to Earl Fitzwilliam, whom he met in Wentworth Park. The earl read the verses on the spot and gave the young poet a golden guinea. This was Montgomery's first patronage and profit from his poetical effort.

Instead of replying by post, as was expected, Montgomery's master went to Rotherham to meet him. After a most affectionate scene of greeting in the inn-yard, his master, Mr. Lockwood, told him that the Moravian Brethren had unanimously agreed to write any recommendation he might require, if he obstinately persisted in his resolution to leave them. He further stated they had instructed him to make any offers that might persuade him to come back. James was tempted to return, since he had not fared so well "in the world" thus far, but he resolutely resisted the entreaties and persuasions. When Mr. Lockwood left him the next day he gave him an excellent written recommendation, supplied him with money, gave him the clothes he had left, and went to his future employer to recommend him verbally.

James Montgomery was at last legally free. Although only seventeen years of age, he was grave, serious and silent. His new employer, Mr. Hunt, received him into the family affectionately and James proved to be most industrious as a clerk in the general store. Rarely associating

with any of the villagers, he devoted his leisure time to reading and the composition of poetry. After about a year in Wath, Montgomery sent a volume of his poetry, accompanied by a letter from a nearby bookseller, to Mr. Harrison, a London publisher and bookseller. With regret, he bade farewell to the Hunt family and, within a few days, followed his manuscripts to London to seek his fame and fortune.

The London publisher gave Montgomery a position in his shop, encouraged him to continue to cultivate his talents, but declined to print the poetry sent to him. It was suggested that he turn his attention to prose rather than poetry. This was quite a blow to the pride of the ambitious youth who felt he had already made considerable progress as a poet. With great reluctance he followed the suggestion and tried his hand at prose. His first prose work was for children and was refused publication by a publisher named Marshall who suggested the young writer try prose for men rather than for children. Using Fielding as a model, Montgomery wrote a novel and took it to a third publisher named Lane, who, after reading it carefully, commented, "You swear so shockingly, that I dare not publish the work as it is".[1]

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1 Holland and Everett, op. cit., I, p. 113

"This", said Montgomery, "was like a dagger to my heart, for I never swore an oath in my life, nor did I, till that moment, ever perceive, as I ought to have done, the impropriety of making fictitious characters swear in print, as they do in Fielding and Smollett, who had been my models in that novel; ...."[1]

However, publisher Lane told him that if he would re-write the novel he would give him twenty pounds for it. In his quest for fame amid conditions of poverty, this offer was tempting to Montgomery and he resolved to accept it, but he left London before this could be realized.[2]

The "refusal to print" which he had encountered all during his eight months in London was painful and discouraging, but he consoled himself by composing a rhyming diatribe on the lack of patronage for young literary aspirants. He turned his back on London and the frustrated hopes due to the rebuffs of publishers, and returned to Wath, "a sadder and a wiser man". His former employer, Mr. Hunt, warmly welcomed him back and received him into his home again. With youthful enthusiasm, Montgomery resumed his work in

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1 Holland and Everett, op. cit., I, p. 113

2 Five years later, while Montgomery was a prisoner in York Castle, he remodeled the novel and offered it to Lane for forty pounds. He refused to buy it. In later years the poet often rejoiced in this refusal, for he did not believe the work worthy of his pen.

the general store, and in his spare time continued to write poetry.

While collecting the weekly accounts one day, Montgomery happened to pick up a newspaper called the "Sheffield Register" which contained an advertisement of interest to him; it read: "Wanted, in a Counting-house, in Sheffield, a CLERK. None need apply but such as have been used to book-keeping, and can produce undeniable testimonials of character. Terms and specimens of writing to be left with the printer."[1]

Montgomery replied immediately, stating his qualifications, and as a sample of his hand-writing he wrote out the words of the national anthem, "God Save the King."[2] Later he went to Sheffield for a personal interview with Mr. Joseph Gales, the editor and proprietor of the "Sheffield Register," and was engaged on trial. In the first week of April, 1792, James Montgomery began his work in Sheffield, little realizing this was to be his home for the rest of his life.

Up to this time most of Montgomery's twenty years of life had been spent in sacred seclusion and rural

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1 Holland and Everett, op. cit., I, p. 131

2 Ironically enough, three years later both employer Gales and employee Montgomery were involved in charges of sedition.

wanderings; he was quite unmindful of the world of politics and of the events which now loomed large on the political horizon. By practical experience, which proved often bitter, he rapidly learned national and world history. The whole nation was disturbed by the example and influence of revolutionized France; industrial Sheffield was agitated by the prevalent prejudices and passions of the day. "This was a period," said Montgomery later, "when almost every man, woman and child, in the kingdom were politicians;....."[1]

"....The two parties in Sheffield, as elsewhere, arrayed themselves on the contrary extremes; some being for everything that was old, the rest for everything that was new. There was no moderation on either side; each had a little of the truth, while the main body of it lay between; yet it was not for this that they were contending (like the Greeks and the Trojans for the body of Patroclus), but for those few dissevered limbs which they already possessed.

"It was at the height of this great argument that I was led into the thickest of the conflict, though happily for myself, under no obligation to take an active share in it. With all the enthusiasm of youth, --for I

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1 Jabez Marrat, James Montgomery, Christian Poet and Philanthropist, (London, 1879), p. 40

had not then arrived at the years of discretion, -- I entered into the feelings of those who avowed themselves the friends of freedom, justice and humanity. Those with whom I was immediately connected were verily such. ..... Though with every pulse of my heart beating in favor of the popular doctrines, my retired and religious education had laid restraint upon my conscience, which (I may fearlessly say so) long kept me back from personally engaging in the civil war of words raging in the neighbourhood, beyond an occasional rhyme, paragraph, or essay in the newspaper, written rather for the purpose of showing my literary than my political qualifications. ...."[1]

The hurried trend of events, the resistless entrance of the Napoleonic element into the politics of Europe, caused England to suppress the faintest stirrings of liberal thought within her borders. The "Sheffield Register" advocated parliamentary reform and popular rights in plain and fearless terms; at the same time it presented correspondents of all shades of opinion.

Because of his liberal views, Editor Gales became a marked man. When he learned that a government representative, accompanied by the local constable, was seeking him with a warrant for his arrest on a charge of conspiracy, he fled and eventually reached America where in time

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1 Holland, op. cit., I, pp. 142, 143

he became a successful magistrate.[1] Through correspondence, the fugitive editor took leave of his friends and readers. Justifying his escape, he wrote in his final editorial: "Could my imprisonment or even death, serve the cause which I have espoused -- the cause of peace, liberty, and justice, -- it would be cowardice to fly from it; but, convinced that ruining my family, and distressing my friends, by risking either, would only gratify the ignorant and the malignant, I shall seek that livelihood in another land which I cannot peaceably obtain in this. To be accused is now to be guilty: and however conscious I may be of having neither done, said, or written any thing that militates against peace, order, and good government, yet when I am told that witnesses are suborned to swear me guilty of treasonable and seditious practices, it becomes prudent to avoid such dark assassins, and to leave the informers, and their employers, the mortification of knowing, that however deep their villany was planned, it had been unsuccessful."[2]

The eight-year-old "Sheffield Register" expired with the printing of this editorial. James Montgomery had been on the staff of the newspaper about two years and was deemed the most suitable successor. He lacked capital

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1 Montgomery promised to follow him in three months.
2 Holland, op. cit., I, pp. 172, 173

but soon found a partner with means in a Unitarian preacher named Benjamin Naylor. The next week, editor Montgomery printed the paper under the new name of the "Sheffield Iris". The first issue of the paper presented the following motto: .

> "Ours are the plans of fair, delightful Peace,
> Unwarped by party rage, to live like brothers."[1]

"The 'Iris' was planted among the thorns which had choked the 'Register'".[2] The new young editor was eyed with suspicion; he inherited the odium of the former editor, and the legal attack which missed Gales was soon launched against Montgomery. One month after he became editor, a charge of a trite and rather contemptible nature was made against him. He was served a magistrate's warrant in which he was charged with printing a seditious libel concerning the war between His Majesty's government and the French government, entitled, "A Patriotic Song, by a Clergyman of Belfast".

The truth of the matter was that Montgomery had neither written the song nor set up the type for it. A street ballad-monger had asked him to print it but he refused at once, stating that it was out of his line of work. However, Montgomery's foreman informed him that the song had been standing in type in the shop since before Mr.

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1 Holland, op. cit., I, p. 175
2 Ibid, p. 242

Gales left. Montgomery printed some sheets of the song for the poor fellow more as an act of charity than of business, as he charged only eighteen pence for the job, the charge hardly covered the cost of printing. "If ever in my life", said Montgomery,"I did an act which was neither good nor bad; or, if either, rather good than bad, it was this."[1]

It was impossible for this song to have been, as was stated in the indictment, a libel on the then existing war, since it was published and originally printed in 1793, before the war began. The verse of the song on which the prosecutor rested his claim actually referred to the invasion of France by the Austrian and Prussian armies under the Duke of Brunswick in July, 1792. The offending verse of the song read:

> "Europe's fate on the contest's decision depends;
> Most important its issue will be,
> For should France be subdued, Europe's liberty ends,
> If she triumph the world will be free."[2]

Two months after the printing of this song, Montgomery was served the magistrates' warrant; he appeared before the Doncaster Sessions, was convicted and sentenced to three months imprisonment in the Castle at York, and was made to pay a fine of twenty pounds.

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1 Holland, op. cit., I, p. 191
2 Ibid, p. 192

The reactions of Editor Montgomery were presented to the readers of the "Iris" from his prison at York. Among other things, Montgomery asserted " - - the verdict of a jury may pronounce an innocent person 'Guilty'; but it will be remembered that a verdict cannot make him 'Guilty'. .... Though all the world forsake me, this consolation can never fail me, that the great Searcher of Hearts, whose eye watches over every atom of the universe, knows every secret intention of my soul: and when at the bar of eternal justice this cause shall again be tried, I do indulge the humble hope that his approving voice shall confirm the verdict which I feel his finger has written upon my conscience. This hope shall bear me through my present misfortune; this hope shall illuminate the walls of my prison; shall cheer my silent solitude, and wing the melancholy hours with comfort....."[1]

His months of confinement were not unprofitably spent, in addition to writing an occasional editorial for the "Iris", Montgomery's pen was busy writing poetry. On April 16, 1795, at the completion of the three months' imprisonment, he returned to his editor's desk to write with caution, but without compromise of the truth.

The year 1795 was indeed eventful for the new

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1 Holland, op. cit., I, pp. 209, 210

editor of the "Iris". A few months after his release from prison, his financial partner announced his intention to marry and his desire to withdraw his investment. This meant a rearrangement of financial procedure, but Montgomery was able to pay the withdrawing partner in part, and, within a few years, he managed to pay off the obligation in full, thus becoming the sole owner of the newspaper.

In August, 1795, four months after his release from prison, Montgomery was in a "very warm place" again. A riot had taken place in Sheffield and in writing it up Montgomery gave the name of the man who commanded the volunteers to fire upon the people, asserting that he rode among the crowd and wounded some women and children with his sword. The descriptive paragraph of this event which Montgomery wrote and printed in his paper brought a seemingly premeditated blow against Montgomery in the form of a warrant for his apprehension. One month elapsed between the printing of the offending article and the actual execution of the warrant. It was a restless month for Montgomery since he had heard an arrest was meditated and practically inevitable. On the execution of the warrant, he was held to bail several weeks, before an indictment could be preferred against him at the Quarter Sessions.

During these weeks of waiting for the trial

Montgomery spoke his mind. The eventful year was drawing to a close; the editor took his glad leave of it by stating his position and his feelings in the last editorial of that year: ".....If I have occasionally been deceived into errors, I have never designedly misled the public. If the enthusiasm of a warm and zealous heart has sometimes betrayed me into violence of expression, I have never wilfully concealed or exaggerated truth. I may have transgressed the doubtful bounds of prudence, but I have never broke through the barriers of justice. I have reprobated abuses in Church and State, and while abuses exist, I trust I shall never want courage to censure them; but the sanctity of religion has never been violated, the principles of the constitution have never been vilified in the 'Iris' ..... If God were as unforgiving as man, the world would be a den of despair."[1]

The year closed with the passing of an act for the safety and preservation of his Majesty's person and government against treasonable and seditious practices and attempts. In January of 1796, politicians were embittered by the operation of this act. Montgomery, who was then still awaiting trial, was very cautious. Subtly, he merely printed the act in his paper with a deep mourning border,

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1 Holland, op. cit., I, p. 243

making no comment. Some of his readers charged him with "unbecoming heat and violence", while others denounced his "lukewarmness".

The trial of James Montgomery for libel against military magistrate R. A. Athorpe, Esquire, was held at Doncaster Sessions on January 21, 1796. The jury brought in a verdict of guilty, and the following sentence was pronounced: "That James Montgomery be imprisoned for the term of six months in the Castle of York; that he pay a fine of thirty pounds to the king; and that he give security for his good behaviour for two years, himself in a bond of two hundred pounds, and two sureties in fifty pounds each."[1]

He was taken into custody immediately, and soon began his return journey to the solitude of the prison at York. With his spirit in a state of ferment, his mind lacerated by the consciousness of its injuries, and his body weak, twenty-four year old Montgomery began his second term of imprisonment. During his absence, the newspaper and printing office was efficiently managed by his good friend, Mr. J. Pye Smith.

Montgomery had the misfortune of being thrown at first with one hundred and twenty prisoners confined for varying degrees of crime. The noise and confusion

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1 Holland, op. cit., I, p. 252

disturbed him greatly. Later he was moved to another building where he found a measure of peace and fellowship with Quakers, confined for refusing to pay their tithes. Under these improved conditions, Montgomery was able to resume his writing. He later published his literary labours of this period under the title, "Prison Amusements."

His health was so impaired by his imprisonment that when he was released on July 5, 1796, the physician advised a three weeks' sojourn at Scarborough for recuperation. He followed the doctor's prescription, and in a letter to his friend, Joseph Ashton, we can detect his relief in being released: "On Tuesday last I was duly liberated from my long and cruel captivity, and the same evening arrived at this delightful place. A greater contrast can scarcely be imagined than the narrow circumference of a prison and the boundless immensity of the ocean. I am charmed with the romantic beauties of this place, and my only employment here is to admire them -- and to wish to leave them all, to return home as speedily as possible; thus in no situation of life have I ever met with unmixed happiness! But shadow relieves the glare of light; the bitter corrects the sweet; and solicitude softens the tone of bliss, which might otherwise transport

a simple lad like me beyond the narrow limits of his reason. Part -- I may say the greatest part -- of the pleasure which I experienced on the day of my enlargement, arose from the solacing idea that you and many other dear and absent friends were then -- perhaps at the very moment of my release -- congratulating me in spirit, and welcoming the captive on his resurrection from the tomb of despondency."[1]

Returning to his editorial desk in Sheffield, Montgomery summarized his reactions to his ordeals in an "Iris" editorial: "Though to the last pulse of my life I can never cease to consider both these prosecutions as the most unmerited misfortunes that ever befel me, I shall always remember with a conscious, and I trust honest pride, that in the first instance my punishment and example were deemed necessary for the support of public justice and the preservation of the public peace: had my death under the same circumstances been found equally requisite, I would have lost my life, with as much cheerfulness as I lost my liberty, to serve my country.

"On reviewing the singular circumstances of my late case, I am happy in the reflection, that my

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1 Holland. op. cit., I, pp. 269, 270

sufferings have now offered an ample atonement to appease the wounded feelings of a gentleman, who thought he had reason to believe I had injured him by describing the actions of a nameless character: at the same time, I must frankly inform him, that he cannot look back with more triumphant satisfaction on my sufferings than I myself do at this moment. He hath cause to congratulate himself on the verdict of the jury; I am content with the verdict of the public: for whatever may be the opinion of the former, I shall never desire the sentiments of the latter to be any other than what they are."[1]

The prosecutor responsible for the second period of imprisonment had a change of heart, for on several occasions after Montgomery's release he honored him, sought his patronage, and tried to free his own character of the stigma which the whole affair had caused. Montgomery was firm, but forgiving. Although young in years, he had learned much about life in the school of adversity.

Party strife and political polution prevailed in Sheffield as Montgomery resumed his work as editor. He was conscientious, uncompromising, but cautious. Announcing his policy of party independence, he said: "....Never, while life and character are dear to him, shall the hand

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1 Holland, op. cit., I, p. 273

that pens these lines belie the heart that prompts them! In whatever light the conduct of the Editor of the 'Iris' may be viewed by others, he is determined to regulate it entirely by the dictates of his own conscience. Then, if while sailing between the wind of one party and the waves of another, the little vessel in which he and his fortunes are embarked should be wrecked upon Scylla, or engulfed in Charybdis, he may smile at destruction, and exclaim, with triumphant tranquility, 'I was not born, I have not lived, I shall not die, a Demagogue or a Parasite!'"[1]

Despite the great demands which were made upon him as the editor of a newspaper, Montgomery managed to write much poetry, which was his first love. He managed to find time to give unstintedly of his literary talent for the support of worthwhile religious and humanitarian causes. He became recognized as the friend of the people. His nearness to life enabled him to write poetry which itself pulsated with life. As a champion of the cause of liberty and freedom, he interceded in behalf of the slaves, the chimney sweeps, widows and the destitute.

His literary achievements brought him acclaim as a poet, author, editor, hymn writer, and literary critic. However, in 1807, a cold blast from the north temporarily

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1 Holland, op. cit., I, p. 304

wilted sensitive Montgomery as he humbly basked in the literary sunshine. A fellow-Scot, the liberal editor of the "Edinburgh Review", Jeffrey, unmercifully assailed Montgomery by tearing to pieces his poem entitled, "The Wanderer of Switzerland". In part, this vicious criticism read: "We took compassion upon Mr. Montgomery on his first appearance, conceiving him to be some slender youth of seventeen, intoxicated with weak tea and the praise of sentimental ensigns, and other provincial literati, and tempted, in that situation, to commit a feeble outrage on the public, of which the recollection would be a sufficient punishment. A third edition, however, is too alarming to be passed over in silence; and though we are perfectly persuaded that in less than three years nobody will know the name of the 'Wanderer of Switzerland', or any other poems in this collection,[1] still we think ourselves called on to interfere to prevent, as far as in us lies, the mischief that may arise from the intermediate prevalence of so distressing an epidemic.

".... Mr. Montgomery has the merit of smooth versification, blameless morality, and a sort of sickly

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1 Jeffrey was wrong in his prediction. Twenty years later, this collection was in its ninth edition. Montgomery received over 800 pounds from the sale of 12,000 copies. A score of editions were also printed in America.

affectation of delicacy and fine feelings, which is apt to impose on the amiable part of the young and the illiterate. ....The truth of the matter is, however, that the diligent readers of poetry in this country are by no means instructed. They consist chiefly of young, half-educated women, sickly tradesmen, and enamoured apprentices. ....The perishable nature of the celebrity which is derived from this kind of patronage, may be accounted for as easily, from the character and condition of those who confer it. The girls grow up into women, and occupy themselves in suckling their children, or scolding their servants; the tradesmen take to drinking or to honest industry; and the lovers, when metamorphosed into husbands, lay aside their poetical favourites with their thin shoes and perfumed handkerchiefs.

"..... Mr. Montgomery is one of the most musical and melancholy fine gentlemen we have lately descried on the lower slopes of Parnassus. He is very weakly, very finical, and very affected. His affections, too, are the most usual, and the most offensive of those that are commonly met with in the species to which he belongs. They are affectations of extreme tenderness and delicacy, and of great energy and enthusiasm. Whenever he does not whine he must rant. The scanty stream of his genius is never allowed to steal quietly along its channel, but

is either poured out in melancholy tears, or thrown up to heaven in all the frothy magnificence of tiny jets and artificial commotions."[1]

Montgomery had experienced adverse criticism before; his many buffetings mellowed and matured him. Privately, he confessed to a friend, that this personal onslaught from the land of his birth wounded and worried him. Among others, Walter Scott wrote him a complimentary and consoling letter. Oddly enough, Jeffrey himself, years later, attended a literary festival and drank to the health of Montgomery!

As the years passed, there were other evidences that Scotland recognized him as a worthy son. In 1835 Montgomery was asked to become a candidate for the Professorship of Rhetoric in the University of Edinburgh, but he declined. In behalf of Moravian Missions, he made a tour through Scotland in 1841, and was honoured in many of the large cities with public breakfasts.

A mark of royal favour was bestowed upon him in 1835, when His Majesty's Government allotted 150 pounds a year as a pension, "with a view to the encouragement of science and literature." Others receiving this signal

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1 Holland, op. cit., II, pp. 132-135. (Edinburgh Review, No. XVIII, January, 1807.)

honour with Montgomery were, Professor Airey, of Cambridge, Mrs. Somerville, Sharon Turner, and Robert Southey.

For more than forty years the poet lived with the Misses Gales in the Hartshead, a dingy and narrow thoroughfare in downtown Sheffield. But as long as he published a newspaper, and they kept a book shop, business considerations forbade all thought of abandoning this central location. However, in 1835, circumstances had changed. Montgomery's retirement in 1825, and the ensuing removal of the newspaper office, had made the greater part of the premises vacant; one of the Misses Gales had died and another was entering upon the last stage of senility. The youngest sister and Montgomery decided to break up the establishment and move to a house at "The Mount", a newly erected building comprising eight dwellings, located a mile and a half from the center of town. The move was made towards the close of 1835 and here James Montgomery spent the rest of his days.

From the time of his retirement from business in 1825, to the day of his death, Montgomery was fully occupied with his literary pursuits, and with his work as a Christian lay-worker and philanthropist. In 1849, he became seriously ill, and while listening to some of his own hymns, he commented: "As all my hymns embody some

portion of the history of the joys and sorrows, the hopes and fears, of this poor heart, so I cannot doubt but they will be found an accurate vehicle of expression for the experience of many of my fellow-creatures who may be similarly exercised during the pilgrimage of the Christian life."[1]

Not only his hymns were biographical. A poem of fifteen stanzas, entitled "Hannah"[2], seems to give a clue to his life-long bachelorhood. Four verses of this poem tell the story; they run the full gamut of feeling, from elation to dejection:

"At fond sixteen my roving heart
Was pierced by Love's delightful dart;
Keen transport throbb'd through every vein,
--I never felt so sweet a pain!

.....

'Twas on the merry morn of May
To Hannah's cot I took my way,
My eager hopes were on the wing,
Like swallows sporting in the Spring.

I saw the village steeple rise --
My soul sprang, sparkling, in my eyes;
The rural bells rang sweet and clear --
My fond heart listened in mine ear."

I reached the hamlet: --all was gay;
I love a rustic holiday;
I met a wedding -- stepp'd aside;
It pass'd -- my Hannah was the bride."[3]

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1 Holland, op. cit., VII, p. 114

2 Published later in the 'Iris' under the revealing title: "Sacred to the Memory of Her who is dead to me".

3 W. Odom, Two Sheffield Poets: James Montgomery and Ebenezer Elliott. (Sheffield: Leng, 1929), p. 13.

Perhaps there is an echo of this romantic episode in another of Montgomery's poems:

"Did woman's charms the youth beguile,
And did the fair one faithless prove?
Hath she betray'd thee with a smile,
And sold thy love?"[1]

These poetic portions are all that is known of "the affair of the heart" of the poet. Late in life he alluded to his celibacy in a somewhat mysterious manner, "The secret is within myself, and it is on the way to the grave from which no secret will be betrayed till the day of judgment."[2]

On the evening of Saturday, April 29, 1854, Montgomery began family worship. After opening the Bible he handed it to Miss Gales, his faithful friend and housekeeper,[3] saying, "Sarah, you must read". The tremor in his voice as he later led in prayer, plus his failure to read, aroused concern. However, he smoked his pipe as usual before he retired, and nothing more was heard of him during the night. At eight o'clock the next morning, one of the servants knocked at his door; receiving no answer, she entered, and found the aged poet lying on the floor. He had suffered some sort of an attack and had been on the floor for several hours. He was carried to

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1 W. Odom, op. cit., p. 14, ("The Grave")
2 Ibid
3 Sister to Joseph Gales, the fugitive "Sheffield Register" editor.

his bed and soon recovered consciousness. He rallied remarkably, even to the extent of cheerfully conversing and eating a little dinner. However, about mid-afternoon, Sunday, April 30, 1854, he peacefully passed away in his sleep. The great bell of the parish church broke the Sabbath silence for one hour, solemnly tolling its mournful message.

A great demonstration of esteem and affection ensued. The forges and workshops of smoky Sheffield were deserted for his public funeral. Thousands of mourners swelled the funeral train which took an hour to pass any given point. The common man had lost an uncommon friend.

James Montgomery was distinctly and rather uniquely British. Each of the three countries of the United Kingdom had its relation to the poet's life: Scotland was the land of his birth, and four years of his infancy; Ireland was the country of his parents, and can claim two years of his boyhood; England was the land of his adoption, for he spent the long term of seventy-seven years there. Succinctly, and with a touch of humour, Montgomery said he was a Scot by birth; that he should have been an Irishman because his parents were such; and that he passed for an Englishman because he was caught young.

Over his grave in the General Cemetery of Sheffield there stands an imposing memorial, a life-sized bronze statue, mounted on a large block of granite bearing the following inscription:

> "JAMES MONTGOMERY, born at Irvine, Scotland, Nov. 4th, 1771; died at the Mount, Sheffield (after a residence in the town of 62 years), April 30th, 1854, in the 84th year of his age. The teachers, scholars, and friends of Sunday Schools in Sheffield, assisted by public subscription, have erected this monument in memory of their revered townsman, MDCCCLX. Here lies interred, beloved by all who knew him, the Christian poet, patriot, and philanthropist. Wherever poetry is read, or Christian hymns are sung, in the English language, 'He being dead, yet speaketh', by the genius, piety, and taste embodied in his writings."

CHAPTER TWO

THE DEVELOPMENT OF MONTGOMERY'S RELIGIOUS LIFE AND THOUGHT

"Religion itself, at length, was brought before the court of inquisition in my own heart..."

James Montgomery

For many years the Moravians have used as a motto the famous words of Rupertus Meldenius: "In necessariis unitas; in non-necessariis libertas; in utrisque caritas" -- in essentials unity; in non-essentials liberty; in both, charity. In essentials they could allow no compromise; in non-essentials they gladly agreed to differ. Moravian history reveals that for these essentials they often shed their blood; but non-essentials they described as merely "useful" or "accidental".[1] Montgomery learned the essentials early.

In the Minutes of the Moravian congregation in Ayr, the record of the baptism of James Montgomery on November 14, 1771, is thus recorded: "At night we baptized Br. Montgomery's son unto the death of Christ under the sweet wind of grace in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, there being many present".[2]

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1 J. E. Hutton, A History of the Moravian Church, (London: Moravian Publication Office, 1909) pp. 482, 483

2 Couper, op. cit., p. 61

Strong Christian influences, of the Moravian variety, greatly affected young James. An early evidence of faith may be found in his account of the voyage from Scotland to England, en route to school at Fulneck, when he was six years old. "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. There was one circumstance of which I was not aware at the time, but which afterwards interested me when my father named it. Such was the danger to which we were exposed, that the captain himself was violently agitated, and pointing to me, who sat composed and resigned, he said, 'I would give a thousand pounds for the faith of that child.'"[1]

The type of religious thought, feeling and worship which pervaded the Fulneck settlement was not English, but Continental; its Protestantism seems to have borne the Lutheran rather than the Puritan stamp. The discipline was strict and the life somewhat monastic. The settlement comprised a chapel, grave-ground, schools, dwellings for married members, and houses for the "Single Brethren" and "Single Sisters" -- Bruder-Haus, Schwester-Haus, and Prediger-Haus. At Fulneck, Montgomery said,

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1 Holland, op. cit., I, p. 25

"whatever we did was done for the sake and in the name of Jesus Christ, ... whom we were taught to regard in the amiable and endearing light of a friend and brother."[1]

The "other-worldliness" of the settlement caused some talk among the villagers nearby, the "inmates" were regarded as a curiosity and Montgomery said it was common to be ridiculed while they were out on walks with their masters. The riots of Lord George Gordon in London in 1780 caused great concern and alarm among the teachers and fanatic rabble, believing the Moravians to be papists, or papishly inclined, might cause a mob visitation. It had happened before. On one occasion, years before, a mob came out from Leeds threatening to burn Fulneck to the ground. At another time a neighbouring landlord sent his men to destroy all the linen hung out to dry.[2] The threatened invasion in 1780 did not come to pass, but many methods of escape and concealment were discussed and planned. These sneers and threats of the past and present were real to the young students, particularly to Montgomery who was sensitive by nature.

In this sacred, secluded setting, the Moravian "essentials" were inculcated into the youthful mind of

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1 Holland, op. cit., I, p. 45
2 Hutton, op. cit., p. 315

James. What these included we can learn from a statement of doctrine issued at a General Synod held in 1775: "The chief doctrine, to which the Church of the Brethren adheres, and which we must preserve as an invaluable treasure committed unto us is this: that by the sacrifice for sin made by Jesus Christ, and by that alone, grace and deliverance from sin are to be obtained for all mankind. We will therefore, without lessening the importance of any other article of the Christian faith, stedfastly maintain the following five points:

1. The doctrine of the universal depravity of man; that there is no health in man, and that since the Fall, he has no power whatever left to help himself.

2. The doctrine of the divinity of Christ; that God, the Creator of all things, was manifest in the flesh, and reconciled us to Himself; that He is before all things, and that by Him all things consist.

3. The doctrine of the atonement and satisfaction made for us by Jesus Christ; that He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification; and that, by His merits alone, we receive freely the forgiveness of sin, and sanctification in soul and body.

4. The doctrine of the Holy Spirit, and the operations of His grace; that it is He who worketh in us conviction of sin, faith in Jesus, and pureness in heart.

5. The doctrine of the fruits of faith; that faith must evidence itself by willing obedience to the commandments of God, from love and gratitude to Him."[1]

These doctrines, however, were not defined further in dogmatic language and none of them were imposed upon the Brethren in the form of a creed. They have always boasted of the fact that they have had no creed apart from Holy Scripture, and that they have declined to bind the consciences of their ministers by any man-made doctrinal statement. A document was drawn up in the year 1771 known as the "Brotherly Agreement", which further reveals the nature of the Moravian Church at the time when Montgomery was learning the rudiments of the faith. All full members of the church had to sign this document in which they made some rather drastic and far-reaching pledges. They swore fidelity to the Augsburg Confession, since the Elders believed it simply and succinctly stated scriptural truth.[2] They promised to do all in their power to help the Anglican Church, and to encourage her members to be loyal to her. They declared that they would never proselytize from any other denomination. They

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1 Anonymous, Moravian Schools and Customs,(London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1889) pp. 50-52

2 Many would consider this compulsory act the equivalent of presenting an official creed.

promised that no marriage should take place without the consent of the Elders; that all children must be educated in one of the Brethren's schools; that they would help to support the widows, old people and orphans; that no member should set up in business without the consent of the Elders; that they would never read any books of a harmful nature.

These rules, and innumerable others contained in the document, were read once a year in each congregation, and every member was given a copy. Members who broke the "Agreement" were liable to be expelled. The document was not very popular in England because it was German in origin and expressed German ideals of religious life. "As the Brethren in Germany founded societies without turning them into settlements, so the Brethren in England conducted preaching-places without turning them into congregations and without asking their hearers to become members of the Moravian Church; and a strict rule was laid down that only such hearers as had a 'distinct call to the Brethren's Church' should be allowed to join it. The distinct call came through the lot.[1] At nearly all the societies and preaching- places, therefore, the bulk of the members were

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1 Montgomery's brother, Ignatius, successfully selected his wife by lot. This Moravian practice of using the lot to determine God's will later affected James. (See page 69)

flatly refused admission to the Moravian Church; they remained, for the most part, members of the Church of England; and once a quarter, with a Moravian minister at their head, they marched in procession to the Communion in the parish church. For unselfishness this policy was unmatched; but it nearly ruined the Moravian Church in England."[1]

During his ten years at Fulneck, from the age of six to sixteen, James frequently chafed under the rigid rules. He was proud of the heritage and history of the faith into which he was born, baptized and brought up; he loved the Moravian people but loathed the discipline and restraint imposed upon him. All of his fellow-students were Moravians and many of them were destined for the Cloth. His missionary parents were determined to have him follow this pattern of preparation at Fulneck, but individualistic James would not conform.[2] The monotony of his life, the well-nigh cloistered seclusion of the scholars, and the system which inculcated the doctrines of the Brethren, nurtured that sombre and melancholy bias which is often inherent in the poetical temperament.

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1 Hutton, op. cit., p. 444

2 This decision to counteract the parental pattern for his life,he later deemed the greatest sin of his life, a sin against God and his parents.

Montgomery tells us that three sentences in the Litany affixed to the Hymn Book meant much to him at this period, and perhaps even more later: "Keep us, our dear Lord and God--from untimely projects--from all loss of our glory in Thee--from unhappily becoming great."[1] Because of his awakened poetical talent, he had come secretly to crave fame and greatness. He longed for the outside world, the world of reality, the world of everyday men. When he was "politely expelled" for indolence, and placed as an apprentice in a shop, he realized his long-standing ambition to be among men. In view of his immaturity and inexperience, according to the standards of the world, James, who was then sixteen, began to compute his age by the number of years he had actually been "in the world".

The pre-digested doctrine, which was given to him at Fulneck, was not yet a part of his personal spiritual diet; it remained as knowledge of the head, unassimilated, unrelated to actual life. The deposit of Moravian doctrine can be estimated in a prayer which he wrote when he was seventeen years old at the request and for the use of his mistress, Mrs. Hunt, who was suffering from some severe affliction. Since the prayer contains more instruction than petition, there is reason to believe Montgomery thought she needed a good review of the great doctrines

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1 Holland, op. cit., I, p. 65

of the Christian faith:

"O! Father of Eternity, Lord of Heaven and Earth, most humbly we desire to offer up our poor but best acknowledgements for the numberless instances of thy mercies and favours conferred upon us, thine unworthy creatures. Above all, we adore thy undeserved love, in giving up thy only Son out of thy bosom to be a sacrifice for us, when we were aliens to God and rebels against our Creator. We lay wallowing in our own blood, chained to the world by our lusts, and slaves of the devil by our choice; there was none to pity, none to save us; we could not pity, much less save ourselves; but thou didst behold us with an eye of favour and bowels yearning with compassion; thou in tender mercy, in the fulness of time, didst send thy well-beloved Son to become our Redeemer and afterwards our Mediator before thy throne. We thank thee for his hard uncomfortable birth in a stable among the beasts: he came to his own, but his own received him not. Oh, let this teach us true humility, and his subjection to his parents be a lesson of obedience to us unto ours, and all who by thine appointment are placed over us. His meritorious life, his watching and fasting, his praying and preaching, every action, every thought, every word of our Saviour, prove a blessing to us his disciples; and, oh, may we be worthy of the glorious example of so great and good a master! For us he agonized in the garden of Gethsemane, where, like a worm, and no man, he lay weeping, groaning, praying, if it were possible the bitter cup might pass away. But the decree was fixed, and he must drink it to the very dregs. For us his blessed head was crowned with piercing thorns, his sacred back was ploughed with scourges; for us he was spit upon, buffetted, abused, and blasphemed. As a lamb he was led to the slaughter, and as a sheep dumb before his shearers, so opened not he his mouth: one breath might have consumed his tormentors from the face of the earth; but man, lost man, must have perished everlastingly. Not so -- Justice and Mercy kissed each other, the flaming sword of Justice was quenched in the heart and blood of our Redeemer, and Mercy opened the gates of Paradise to us, his redeemed. O God of infinite compassion, how shall we express our gratitude for his cruel sufferings on Mount Calvary, where he was offered up for us upon the accursed cross, and said, at length, 'It is finished', and bowed his head, and yielded up the ghost! His glorious resurrection, his ascension into heaven, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, completed the glorious work of salvation. May he see the travail of his soul, and be satisfied! May none of those whom thou, O Father, hast given him be lost!

And grant, O grant, that each of us may add to that happy number, and eternity itself shall be too short to sing thy praises. This we beg for the sake of our Redeemer, Jesus Christ, to whom," etc.[1]

In this prayer the Moravian theme, the love of a suffering Saviour, is prominent: "Hard uncomfortable birth in a stable among the beasts", "like a worm", "weeping, groaning", "his sacred back was ploughed with scourges". The doctrine of the total depravity of man, one of the Moravian"essentials", is strongly supported also: "aliens to God and rebels against our Creator", "we lay wallowing in our own blood, chained to the world by our lusts, and slaves of the devil by our choice", "there was none to pity, none to save us", "we could not pity, much less save ourselves".[2]

The doctrines which he penned in this prayer were not yet his own; it took years for the faith of Fulneck to come to fruition. After leaving the Fulneck-fold he fellowshipped and worshipped with Moravians whenever it was possible. Although he was on his own in the world, his moral life was above reproach. There being no Moravian church in Sheffield, Montgomery attended various churches. Frequently, during his early years in Sheffield, he did not attend any church. His most intimate friends

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1 Holland, op. cit., I, p. 85

2 The Rev. A. J. Lewis, present headmaster of Fulneck, told the writer that the Moravian doctrine of Montgomery's day was derived from"a blood religion; a blood and wounds theology".

were Unitarians and he became interested in, and in time, frustrated by their beliefs. For many years the chief characteristic of his experience was not assurance, but a combination of spiritual longings and spiritual unrest. "Religion itself", said Montgomery, "at length, was brought before the court of inquisition in my own heart: I studied, I reasoned, I doubted, I almost disbelieved what I had hitherto adhered to on the credit of my tutors; simplicity once lost can never be regained."[1]

Psychological idiosyncrasies often account for varying degrees of belief or unbelief. Some people will cling tenaciously to authority and tradition rather than undergo the disturbing sense of partial uncertainty implied in a process of personal inquiry. Others naturally tend to see nothing settled, and some in this category seem to have a genius for negation. There is a happy medium. Montgomery fluctuated between these two extremes, although during his period of "apostasy", as he called it, he was often found in the latter class.

In order to understand his moods and melancholy, doubt and despair, as revealed in his personal letters, one must keep in mind his background and environment, his physical and psychological make-up; one must remember the

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1 Holland, op. cit., I, pp. 46, 47

adverse circumstances through which, although yet a young man, he had passed. Physically, he was frail; psychologically, he was introvertive. His early estrangement from his home and family at the age of six for the purpose of institutionalized, rigid, religious rearing and education; the departure of his pious but poor parents for the mission field, and their deaths within eight months of each other; his failure to conform to the educational and vocational pattern established by his parents; his buffetings in the world after leaving the Fulneck fold; the frustration of his poetical aspirations and ambitions; his two imprisonments within eighteen months, one for three months, the other for six months; his business responsibilities and worries, ...these were all factors which greatly affected his outlook on life, and were material for his musing and meditation.

From the Castle of York, where he was serving his second period of imprisonment, Montgomery wrote the following letter to Joseph Ashton: ".....so close do my infirmities cling to me, and so ingenious am I in the art of tormenting myself, that I am seldom cheerful. ...I trust that no man can be more <u>resigned</u> than I feel myself to suffering; but yet there is a native melancholy interwoven in my disposition. I have from my earliest years

encouraged its growth, because in certain moments I loved to feast on the delicious poison...."[1]

A similar complaint is uttered in a letter which the poet wrote to his brother Ignatius, a Moravian minister: "... I have suffered too much by indulging a natural and even habitual melancholy, to encourage you to harbour any such gloomy emotions: it unnerves the body and unmans the soul; quenches all energy of character; sinks every hope into despondency, and renders the victim of its fury as burthensome to himself as he is useless to society. Shun it, my dear brother -- shun it by all means. Alas! I cannot practice the advice I am now administering to you. The difficulties and embarassments of business often overwhelm me with care. The disappointments and mortifications which hunt me through life are continually torturing my mind. Sometimes I have the courage to wrestle with this dangerous habit, and almost overcome it for a few days; but it returns to haunt me again. ...."[2]

Revisiting York in the summer of 1797, for the purpose of attending a meeting of printers, Montgomery wrote Ashtnn his reflections on seeing again the scenes of his two imprisonments: "....There is a tender melancholy pleasure in reviewing past misfortunes, and tracing

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1Holland, op. cit., I, p. 257
2 Ibid, p. 291

the scenes where we have formerly suffered. I feel an affection for every spot of ground where I have been unhappy; an attachment even to the dungeon which I entered with horror, and quitted with transport; but dear to my very soul is the snug little apartment, which I occupied during the last five months of my captivity; - the cage in which I sang of sorrow, till sorrow became familiar and delightful! ..."[1]

During the same year, and to the same correspondent, twenty-six year old Montgomery laid bare his heart and mind on the subject of faith in general, and his own faith in particular: "....(Faith) is a delicate subject: I remember you once before - when I was at York - felt my pulse on this head. I then, if I remember right, confessed, with the confidence which your ingenuous conduct towards me naturally inspired, that Religion was a theme of such doubt and perplexity to me, that I found it impossible to rest, in any form of faith, my happiness in this world, and my hopes in another. (Here follow five lines which are obliterated in the original letter) I do not hesitate to say that a most solemn conviction is impressed upon my heart, that Christianity -- pure, and humble, and holy, as we find it in the discourses of Jesus and His apostles -- is equally worthy of its Divine

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1 Holland, op. cit., I, p. 294

Author, and beneficial to mankind. I believe no human being, of any other profession, can ever be half so happy as a true believer in it -- and why? Because his faith is certain; no doubt of the truth of his religion can possibly remain on his mind; whereas the most enlightened deistical philosopher is at best (half a line crossed out) a half convert to the opinion he professes. He believes -- not that there is a God -- that the soul of man is immortal, but that there may be a God -- that the soul of man may be immortal: he hopes for, not expects, a day of retribution: consequently the spur to his virtues is blunt, and the bridle to his vices weaker than if he were assured of the future reward of the one, and the punishment of the other. ..."[1]

His Unitarian correspondent, Joseph Ashton, seemed little able to help him in his spiritual plight. At this point the poet was able to see in Christianity the source of peace and certainty for others, but not yet for himself. He continued to wrestle with truth. Imaginary ills were obstacles to him. Of these he told Ashton: "Imaginary they may be called; but in my opinion, imaginary ills are the most real, because of all others the most inveterate and incurable. A disorder that preys

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1 Holland, op. cit., I, p. 312

upon the body is quickly cured, or soon wears it away into primitive dust: the worm that gnaws the vitals of the soul, partakes of its essence -- of its immortality!

"There are three springs of everlasting uneasiness perpetually flowing in my bosom -- the cares of life, ambition of fame, and worst, the most deplorable of all -- religious horrors. ....Such has been my education -- such, I will venture to say, has been my experience in the morning of life -- that I can never, never entirely reject it, and embrace any system of morality not grounded upon that revelation. What can I do? I am tossed to and fro on a sea of doubts and perplexities; the further I am carried from that shore where once I was happily moored, the weaker grow my hopes of ever reaching another where I may anchor in safety; at the same time, my hopes of returning to the harbour I have left are diminished in proportion. This is the present state of my mind!..."[1]

Ashton must have told Montgomery that the important thing was to be an honest inquirer after truth. The poet was this, but he felt something more was necessary. In 1807 he wrote thus to Ashton: "....You say "A person cannot help believing what he does believe, so that if

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1 Holland, op. cit., I, p. 313

we do our duty, by inquiring what is truth? in a conscientious manner, it can be of little consequence, whether we believe accurately or not in all the minutiae of religion.' My dear friend, there is danger of misapprehending this doctrine .... We may think that we are seeking truth when we are wilfully and perseveringly embracing error. The Christian religion seems to me to require such a childlike simplicity, such a purity of heart, and singleness of mind, that when I contemplate it calmly, I despair of ever approaching its standard. It is hard to renounce the world, and all those pleasures which the world deems not only innocent, but useful and commendable; and yet, methinks that Christianity requires the sacrifice of them. For my own part, I cannot, at present, take up my cross and follow the despised and rejected Man of Sorrows through poverty, reproach, and tribulation; and yet -- you will say it is a strange confession -- I carry a heavier cross and bear a deeper ignominy in my own upbraiding conscience: I feel the Christian's sufferings without the Christian's hope of that eternal weight of glory which shall reward them. My mind is not deeply laden with crimes; but unbelief -- an unbelief from which I cannot deliver myself -- hangs heavy on my heart, and outweighs all those little joys, for which I am unwilling

to relinquish the world. I am sometimes sunk in such deplorable despondency, that I feel all the pangs of a victim, under the sentence of eternal damnation, without that salutary conviction of the reality of my danger, which might compel me to flee from the wrath to come ... The education I received..... has for ever incapacitated me from being contented and happy under any other form of religion than that which I imbibed with my mother's milk: at the same time, my restless and imaginative mind and my wild and ungovernable imagination have long ago broken loose from the anchor of faith, and have been driven, the sport of winds and waves, over an ocean of doubts, round which every coast is defended with the rocks of despair that forbid me to enter the harbour in view...."[1]

Montgomery's problem, at this stage of his religious development, seems to have been not so much that of proving Christian truth, but rather reconciling that truth with the reality which he knew, and finding a reconception of Christianity for which "the very being of truth is life, as the truth was in Christ".[2] Like Kierkegaard, Montgomery's regress to religion was "a

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1 Holland, op. cit., II, pp. 19-21
2 Soren Kierkegaard, Training in Christianity by Anti-Climacus, (1850), p. 201

stern education from innate dread to faith."[1] In his Journals, Kierkegaard asserts that "there is only one proof of the truth of Christianity, and that, quite rightly, is from the emotions, when the dread of sin and a heavy conscience torture a man into crossing the narrow line between despair bordering upon madness and Christianity..."[2] For Kierkegaard, the crucial choice in which the individual and the Christian are born is also the choice of death -- the death of the pseudo-self of natural life: "death comes first, you must first die to every earthly hope, every merely human reliance, you must die to your selfishness, or to the world."[3] The life beyond that death is the life of faith, the reborn spirit-self and eternal life. "Faith, this gift of the Holy Spirit, only appears when death has come between, .. Faith is against understanding, faith is on the other side of death ... when it is dark as the dark night ... then comes the life-giving Spirit and brings faith."[4]

The darkness of despair encircled Montgomery; he could best express his feelings in poetry, so he wrote:

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1 Walter Lowrie, Kierkegaard: (Oxford University Press, 1938), p. 129

2 Alexander Dru, The Journals of Soren Kierkegaard: (Oxford University Press, 1938), p. 926

3 Lowrie, op. cit., p. 475

4 Ibid, p. 477

"There is a winter in my soul,
The winter of despair;
O when shall spring its rage controul?
When shall the Snowdrop blossom there?
Cold gleams of comfort sometimes dart
A dawn of glory on my heart,
But quickly pass away:
And give the promise of a morn
That never turns to day!"[1]

The cold blasts of the winter in the poet's soul are felt in a letter which he wrote to his brother Ignatius in 1803: "....my heart aches so often, that it hardly knows any other sensations than those of remorse, apprehension and despondency. I have almost outlived my hopes in this world -- I mean my worldly hopes. How comes it, brother, that we seldom, perhaps never, seriously turn our thoughts to eternity till we have been disgusted with the vanity, and sickened with the disappointments of time? Why cannot we embrace both this world and the next at once? Is the enjoyment of the one incompatible with the other? Am I to lead a life of self-denial and suffering, as cruel -- and, I verily believe, as unprofitable -- as the mortifications of a hermit, for the sake or, rather, as an indispensable condition of salvation? You cannot mistake me here, and imagine that I mean by the enjoyment of the world an indulgence in criminal excesses. I mean only those pleasures which men of strictly moral and conscientious minds think innocent, but against which the

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1 Holland, op. cit., II, p. 58

Dissenters and Methodists inveigh with a bitterness and bigotry that makes me sometimes imagine that religion is, indeed, a cross on which its professors are condemned to linger out their lives in agonies; but I must not expiate on this subject, lest I should be betrayed into impiety of speech on what almost turns my brain to contemplate. Yet all this I think I could be content to suffer for the assurance of that peace with God which they profess to feel, and to which I am almost an utter stranger. I have no confidence towards him, except what the world must have, -- a confidence that he is good, and that what he does is right, whether I comprehend it or not; and that if he shuts me up in everlasting and unspeakable misery, he will convince me first that I have deserved it; and that, even consistently with his infinite mercy and infinite power, he could not mitigate my punishment. But why am I tormenting you with my sorrows? I know what you would answer to all this. I know what way you would point out to me to escape present and future sufferings! I dare not tell you that I cannot lay hold of that salvation which you preach, lest I should be guilty of lying against the Spirit of God; but indeed , brother, I sometimes fear I never shall lay hold of it. Farewell."[1]

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1 Holland, op. cit., II, pp. 41, 42

Unfortunately, the letters which Ignatius wrote to James are not extant; without a doubt Ignatius was instrumental in restoring his brother to the faith of the Fathers, and the "Brethren." But he is not yet restored. His attendance at the Methodist Chapels, burdened as well as blessed him. The emotional evangelistic appeals disturbed him. Reflecting on this years later, Montgomery said: "...the preachers (Methodist) were very strenuous in insisting on instantaneous justification and sanctification..."[1] The problem of sanctification for Montgomery involved the giving up of what he deemed "innocent pleasures", and the renunciation of the world. As yet he was not ready to do this. Faith, he felt, was an urgent matter, and the horrors of hell and estrangement from God were ever before him.

In a letter to Daniel Parken in 1806, the poet revealed the prominent part religious horrors played in his thinking: "....There are some subjects on which my mind is continually rolling, that forbid me ever to hope for peace on earth, because I am tempted in gloomy fits to think that I can never find rest for my soul even in the consolation of the Gospel, for I can never forget its threatenings: even on Mount Calvary I hear the thunders

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1 Holland, op. cit., III, p. 293

of Sinai..."[1]

Parken, a Methodist friend, replied immediately to Montgomery's letter and affixed the scripture reference, I Tim. 1:15. ("This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.") The poet deemed this letter to be providential, and he told his correspondent of the blessing derived from it: "....I was in very deep despondency when your sudden letter came, -- sudden I call it, for it darted like an arrow from your heart into mine. It roused, it warmed, it melted me. It arrived, and I read it just as I was going to chapel on Sunday morning, and it well prepared my mind for receiving a consoling sermon. In the afternoon I was obliged to stay at home. I took up a volume of Cennick's most simple, but truly evangelical, sermons, and opened to a discourse on the very text which you had sent as the label of your arrow, and which had sunk into my soul,-- viz., I Tim. 1:15. I read it over most eagerly and earnestly, and I was much refreshed and comforted by it. I mention this happy coincidence, because I am sure it will delight you, that you were made on this occasion the messenger of good tidings to me. I am sure that I am not

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1 Holland, op. cit., II, p. 104

superstitious, but I am deeply conscious of the omniscience and omnipresence of God, I can never believe that he is an idle spectator of the thoughts, words, actions, and accidents of his creatures. In what manner he interferes with any or with all of these is beyond my comprehension, but that he does sometimes rule them I am compelled to believe; and as we are taught that every good and perfect gift comes from him, the means through which it comes must be appointed or influenced by him. I did then, and I do now, attribute it to his grace, that these apparent accidents concurred to relieve me, and encourage me to hope in his mercy for final deliverance from one of the sins that most easily besets me -- despair; for it is a sin to despair when God proclaims himself to be Love, -- despair gives him the lie. You will, notwithstanding this frank avowal of what many would call fanaticism, understand that I am no Calvinist: God make me a Christian! and let those who would be more,pride themselves in being the followers of men! Among all sects who preach Christ crucified the disciples of Jesus are to be found; they are confined to none; they are excluded from none, at least I trust so...."[1]

Montgomery's personal history seems to confirm Kierkegaard's definition of a poet. "What is a poet?"

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1 Holland, op. cit., II, pp. 109, 110

asks Kierkegaard. "A poet is an unhappy creature whose heart is tortured by deepest suffering, but whose lips are so formed that when his sighs and cries stream out over them, their sound becomes like the sound of beautiful music... And men flock about the poet, saying: Sing for us soon again; that is to say, may new sufferings torture your soul, and may your lips continue to be formed as before; for the cries would only make us anxious, but the music is lively. And the critics come upon the scene; they say: Quite correct, so it ought to be by the rules of aesthetics."[1]

The products of our poet's pen frequently bespeak the struggle within his soul. He was little concerned with the "rules of aesthetics"; his plight was more"existential"; his quest was more profound, for he was wrestling and grappling with eternal verities.

Perhaps his most understanding and sympathetic correspondent was his brother Ignatius, to whom he thus addressed himself in 1807: "When St. John was in the spirit on the Lord's day he saw visions of future glory: I am in the spirit also on the Lord's day, and I behold scenes of past happiness, returning like lovely dreams

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1 Soren Kierkegaard, Philosophical Fragments by Johannes Climacus. Trans. by David S. Swenson, (Oxford University Press, 1936), p. XIII.

upon me. I am transported to my native country; I am turned back to infancy, and in the morning of life the Sun of Righteousness is rising upon me with healing in his wings; alas! how long is it since I saw that sun except in memory's melancholy eye! That eye often looks behind to dwell for a moment with exquisite misery and delight, most ineffably mingled, on the few hours of pure joy and peace that I have known since I began to breathe this air of mortality, that quickly kills every flower of bliss which springs in the wilderness of a human heart that was once a paradise, but is now overrun with thorns and brambles, and chilled and darkened with forests of cypress and yew!

"You are now in the land of my birth, and near the spot where I first saw the light: of how little importance it is to all the world besides, that I was ever born at all! Yet to me, how awful is the existence into which I was called without my own consent, and from which I cannot retire, though I were to give myself up to suffering for millions of ages to purchase the privilege of annihilation! Here, then, I am; and what I am finally here, I must forever be. Is it indeed, in my own power to choose between eternal bliss, and everlasting burnings? If it be, it is truly time for me to awake and

look around me, with an earnestness that will make every other concern of life indifferent to me, to see how I shall escape the latter and secure the former, -- for to the one or to the other I am inevitably predestined. I have the choice of these two; but I have no other choice.

"Brother! how is it possible that I should hesitate an instant? Why have I not, since I began to write this letter, already by an act of that faith which is the power of God communicated to his creatures, and to which all things are possible, -- why have I not already decided my condition for eternity? Is there anything more mysterious in the whole mystery of iniquity, than that a man shall be deeply, dreadfully, convinced of sin, and believe, almost without daring to make a reserve, in all the threatenings and judgments of God, -- yet have no confidence in his promises and declarations of mercy? And this is my case, as nearly as I can express it. Yet I do not, and I dare not utterly despair when I look at God; but I do and must despair when I look at myself; and my everlasting state depends upon the issue of the controversy between him and me: if he conquers, I shall be saved -- if I prevail against him, I perish."[1]

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1 Holland, op. cit., II, pp. 152, 153

James Montgomery blamed no one for his spiritual distress. His self-abnegation at times seemed extreme. Kierkegaard, in his self-criticism said: "...when I want to spit, I spit in my own face."[1] The figure of speech is pertinent; Montgomery often spat in his own face, and seemed to derive a melancholy satisfaction from so doing.

In the foregoing letter to his brother Ignatius, the poet has reduced his situation to what he calls "the controversy between himself and God". The letter breathes the theme of the urgency and need for decision. In his analysis of himself and his situation he had reached bed-rock. No one could make the decision for him, this he knew; and he must suffer the consequences of that decision. The analysis did not result in decision.

Later that year he wrote to his friend Parken: "...my heart is in the dust and my head lies upon it like a gravestone. I am very, very low, and only God can raise me up..... It is Sunday, and without being a hypocrite, I can conscientiously affirm, that I seldom concern myself with business or friendship on the Sabbath, -- which is, however, to me no day of rest, but generally of double gloom and despondency. I know this is my own fault; and that I am an insane self-tormentor. Yet, why is it not

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1 Melville Chaning-Pearce, Soren Kierkegaard, A Study, (James Clarke, London, 1945), p. 49

otherwise? If I could help it, would I be miserable from choice? And how miserable I am, the great Searcher of hearts only knows; for he only knows what an insincere, unbelieving creature I am, and how much I grieve his good Spirit, which has not yet departed entirely from me, though my disobedience and enmity and rebellion seem to grow stronger and bolder the more I experience the mercy and long-suffering of my Creator and Redeemer.."[1]

Two years later, in the year 1809, the poet again unburdens himself to Parken: "...But the wounded spirit and the breaking heart, these are the hardest to bear with resignation -- resignation to the will of God. Not that I feel so much over personal suffering, or repine my temporal lot, but with these disorders of my perishing frame, there comes so much confusion, and doubt, and darkness and desolation into my soul, that the powers of my mind seem paralysed, the affections of my heart withered, and every stream of hope or comfort passed away. Then I can neither think, nor write, converse, or even pray with connection and self-possession, I do indeed deem myself smitten, forsaken of God, and afflicted, -- worthily smitten, forsaken of God, because

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1 Holland, op. cit., II, pp. 171, 192

I will not, cannot, come to him, -- and afflicted, because I perversely, and yet inevitably, refuse the consolations of his Spirit. O what a mystery of woe, what a mystery of iniquity is this! God deliver me from it, or carry me through it, as his wisdom and goodness shall see fit!"[1]

Two more letters to his brother Ignatius, the Moravian minister, will conclude Montgomery's morbid medley of melancholy! The first was written in 1812 and contains this statement of self-abnegation: "I am not despairing; God is only humbling me under his mighty hand, and I bow to the chastisement and kiss the rod that smites me, as I lie in the dust of self-abasement and self-abhorrence at his feet. 'God be merciful to me a sinner!' is my prayer; and that prayer will be answered in his good time, and in his own manner. O how mysterious are his judgments, and his ways past finding out..."[2]

The second letter to his brother, written in 1813, after reviewing his afflictions, reveals his hunger for fellowship with Christians, and that he desires fellowship with the Moravian Brethren is implied: "....I have for several weeks past undergone sore trials and buffetings in my own soul. At times it has seemed as if the Lord had forsaken me; as if His 'mercy were clean gone

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1 Holland, op. cit., II, pp. 347, 348
2 Ibid, pp. 352, 353

forever;' not because He was changed, but because I was so heartless and cold, and alienated from Him....I find that when the consolations of the Lord are most needful in illness and infirmity of body, they are hardest to seek; though the heart is alarmed, and the conscience clamorous, the spirit is weak, and the tempter has a tenfold power to dismay and cast down the sinner, who either has not known the Saviour, or having known Him, has lost confidence in Him. I am a very forlorn being in many, many respects. Since I left the Brethren I have never dared to join myself with any other communion of Christians, and I want fellowship of this kind more than in any other way. With Calvinists and Methodists I frequently do associate, but I have not perfect freedom with either. Good men of both sects show me much love and kindness; and I cannot help feeling that in their charity they greatly overvalue me, and treat me in a way that makes me little indeed in my own eyes in proportion as I appear excellent in theirs. At the same time I lose many blessings, which can only be enjoyed in Christian communion; and my soul is starved for want of these..."[1]

Montgomery was now forty-two years old. During all this long period of mental and spiritual conflict he

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1 Holland, op. cit., III, p. 18

continued to live an active and full life, really too full for his own good. He edited and managed a newspaper, wrote innumerable poems, prose articles, literary reviews and addresses; he took an active part in community projects, local benevolent movements, and in many causes for political and social reform. With a fair degree of regularity he attended church, first one denomination then another; but his heart hankered after the Moravian moorings of his youth, the faith of his family and Fulneck wherein he once found happiness, peace, and security.

On his forty-third birthday, November 4, 1814, James Montgomery made an important decision, one which greatly influenced and affected his spiritual life. He wrote a letter to the Moravian Congregational Council at Fulneck, through the resident minister of Fulneck, stating his case and condition spiritually, and requesting renewal of fellowship and communion with the Moravians and permission to join the Fulneck congregation.

His letter was well received. The resident minister acknowledged it promptly and assured the poet that the matter would be considered at the next meeting of the elders. There being no Moravian congregation in Sheffield, he advised Montgomery to attend where he found the most

nutritious food for his soul.

The Elders' Conference was held two months later, and it was determined by lot to readmit Montgomery to membership in the church of the Moravian Brethren. The following letter from the resident minister at Fulneck announced the verdict: "....I will not delay informing you, that in our Elders' Conference today, our Saviour approved of your being now readmitted a member of the Brethren's church. I cordially rejoice in this, and present my best wishes, united with those of my fellow-labourers, to you on this occasion. Return then, my dear brother, with your whole heart, to the Shepherd and Bishop of your soul, inasmuch as he has manifested himself as the Head and Ruler of the Brethren's unity -- return to that fold in which your dear late father lived and died, which counts a brother of yours among its useful ministers, and in the midst of which you enjoyed, in the period of early youth, spiritual blessings such as you probably have not forgotten. Our faith you know; the Bible we acknowledge as our only rule of doctrine and Christian practice; and our constitutional regulations, which form a brotherly agreement among ourselves, you are not unacquainted with. More particularly we may perhaps treat of those things, when we shall see you here. Renew your vows

of love to our crucified, now glorified Redeemer; and may he preserve you blameless in the bundle of life until the day of his coming! .... You are aware that a separate question about your readmission to the Holy Communion with us must be asked, which, after your readmission to the congregation is published, may be put as soon as it is thought suitable. Meanwhile we shall consider you henceforward as a member of the country congregation attached to Fulneck; and only wish that Providence may still so direct your ways as to enable you to spend part of your days again in the bosom of our church. Meanwhile you will visit us frequently as your circumstances allow..."[1]

This event was a great source of thanksgiving and rejoicing for the poet. He wrote his brother Ignatius and told him of the step which he had taken, and asked him to rejoice with him "that the lot[2] had fallen unto him in that pleasant place", and that "on Sunday last he was publicly invested with his title to that goodly heritage".

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1 Holland, op. cit., III, pp. 51, 52

2 The Moravian practice of using the lot to determine God's will affected Montgomery three or four times during his life. On this particular occasion the Elders sought the will of God concerning Montgomery's readmission; the lot being favourable they announced that the Saviour had approved of his readmission. Had the lot been unfavourable, he would have had to wait until the Saviour indicated His approval in a lot after a period of waiting, during

(continued next page)

There is a pertinent question which quite logically poses itself: Was James Montgomery a Christian during his period of apostacy?

Karl Barth asserts that "faith is concerned with a decision once for all. Faith is not an opinion replaceable by another opinion. A temporary believer does not know what faith is. Faith means a final relationship. Faith is concerned with God, with what He has done for us once for all. That does not exclude the fact that there are fluctuations in faith. But seen with regard to its object, faith is a final thing. A man who believes once believes once for all. Don't be afraid; regard even that as an invitation. One may, of course, be confused and one may doubt; but whoever once believes has something like a character indeliblis. He may take comfort of the fact that he is being upheld. Everyone who has to contend with unbelief should be advised that he ought not to take his own unbelief too seriously. Only faith is to be taken

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(cont.) which time he would have been commanded to possess his soul in patience, realizing that God often has to wait a long time for us, and that his time is the best time.

Further, on the subject of the lot, it is said that George the Third was fond of a Moravian named James Hutton, and that one time the king, who liked a joke, said in his dry humour: "Mr. Hutton, I am told that you Moravians do not select your own wives, but you leave it to the ministers to choose for you -- is it so?" "Yes, please your Majesty," replied Hutton. "marriages among the Brethren are contracted, as your Majesty will perceive, after the fashion of royalty". (The modern Moravians have discontinued this practice.)

seriously; and if we have faith as a grain of mustard seed, that suffices for the devil to have lost his game."[1]

Montgomery took his unbelief very seriously; his sensitive, poetic, melancholic nature fed upon it. The purport of many of his letters was that he once believed but that unbelief had gripped his heart and estranged him from God. At a meeting, in the year 1814, a few months before he applied for readmission to the Moravian church, Montgomery was invited to partake of Communion with a group of ministers and Christian workers of various denominations. He replied: "I am afraid I am not a Christian; I therefore dare not approach the Lord's table."[2]

Owing to Montgomery's physical and psychological make-up, it is perhaps justifiable to say that he was not competent to judge his own spiritual condition during this dark period of his life. There are a few instances where he implies that he was a Christian during this period of apostacy, although a mighty poor one. Throughout the struggle, however, he seems to be involved in, and

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1 Karl Barth, Dogmatics in Outline, (Trans. by G. T. Thomson; London, SCM Press, 1949), pp. 20, 21

2 One of his friends, deeming Montgomery a Christian if any of the others were, assured him that he would take the risk of condemnation. Humbly, and with a contrite spirit, Montgomery partook. The poet later referred to that experience as "a season of humble and holy joy, such as will be remembered even in heaven with gratitude." (Holland, op. cit., III, pp. 44, 46)

awaiting the fulfillment of, that Pascalian paradox: "Thou wouldst not seek me hadst thou not already found me." Somehow one has the feeling, that although the poet departed from God, God did not depart from him.

Montgomery was more burdened than embittered by life. John Oman points out that "being embittered by life must, however, be carefully distinguished from being burdened by it. Otherwise it might appear that there could be no reconciliation to God till stress, as well as rebellion, wholly depart, and that peace with God should be measured by the extent to which we can keep on the sunny side of the street. But the deepest sense of the difficulty and stress of life may be so far from being enmity against God that, if the burden is laid on us by a sense of life's overwhelming significance, it might be the sincerest of all recognitions of God. To accept life as our difficult and strenuous way, because we meet it with sincerity and responsiveness to its calls, would be the highest proof that all rebellion had disappeared..."[1] From now on Montgomery presents this proof.

The experience of James Montgomery in attaining spiritual health followed the pattern described by

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1 John Oman, Grace and Personality, (University Press, Cambridge, 1931), pp. 124, 125

Reinhold Niebuhr: "It is an inner integrity not on this but the other side of inner conflict; it is sincerity not on this but the other side of a contrite recognition of the deceitfulness of the human heart; it is trust in the goodness of life not on this but the other side of disillusionment and despair; it is naïveté and serenity not on this but the other side of sophistication...."[1]

During his process of purification which resulted in his joining the Moravian church, Montgomery decided, probably being influenced by the Methodists, to give up some pleasures which the world deemed innocent. He decided against writing for and attending the theatre. Although he only attended the theatre occasionally, he declared that "the manners, characters, conversations, and incidents, which are exhibited at a playhouse are contrary to the purity of heart which the religion of Christ enjoins and requires."[2] He felt that stage plays were "dangerously fascinating amusements". He discontinued attending a literary and political discussion group which met in a small room in a public house, where for years he spent many evenings talking with his friends an sipping an occasional glass of wine. This good

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1 Reinhold Niebuhr, Beyond Tragedy, (Nisbet, London, 1938), p. 151

2 Holland, op. cit., II, p. 114

fellowship, he came to feel, cost him too much in terms of time, conscience, and self respect.[1]

Montgomery's return to the faith was gradual; there was no crisis experience. Indeed his joining the Moravian church was a high water mark. But in this speech which he made to the Sunday School Union several months before his Moravian return he gives a stirring witness. It means even more when one knows it is biographical: "The Lord has created 'a new thing in the earth'; the disciples of Christ not only love as brethren, but those who from some difference of opinion acted separately before, now unite in one purpose to promote their Master's cause among men. There is danger in running with the multitude to do evil, when amidst the contagion of example, and the tumult of publicity, the sinner seems to lose his personal responsibility in the crowd, and the guilt, divided among thousands, appears to attach to none, though, in truth, it attaches to each, as if each had acted alone. There is danger also in

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1 Montgomery was never intemperate in his drinking. In later life he drank moderately in his own home. The following quotation from his biographers is both informative and amusing: "After prayer, he mixed a tumbler of brandy and water, and placing the glass on the hob, lighted his pipe, smoking, sipping, and conversing till bed-time; this may be said to have been invariably his habit at this time; and indeed, it was so in after years." (Holland, op. cit., IV, p. 343)

running with the multitude to do good; danger in trying to escape from ourselves among the people of God. We may have a name among Christians; we may be affected by the external solemnity of divine worship; we may delight in the joy and animation of meetings like this; and yet be devoid of the spirit and power of godliness."[1]

Montgomery knew these dangers from experience, for this reason he was cautious. The development of his religious life and thought was slow, but sure.

To Montgomery, reuniting with the Moravians was like righting a wrong choice, at least in part. It had always been a source of deep regret to him that in his youth he spurned the will of his parents, the Brethren, (and of God, he believed), and decided not to enter the Moravian ministry. Although he had been rather active in Christian service up to this time, he now entered into it with a sense of divine commission. In a speech which he made at the Congregational College in Rotherham, he conveyed the idea of faith manifested in response and obedience to the call to service: "In the primitive church, it pleased 'God, who at sundry times

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1 Holland, op. cit., III, p. 44 (It was after delivering this address that the Communion service already referred to was held, at which time the poet at first refused to partake on the ground of not being a Christian. See page 71.)

and in divers manners' revealed himself to mankind, to employ 'unlearned men', like Peter and John, to preach the Gospel. And he gave them a mouth and wisdom which all their adversaries were not able to gainsay nor resist. But even in the apostolic age, when the miraculous gifts of the Spirit accompanied the testimony of the word of faith, Apollos, 'an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures', and Paul, 'brought up at the feet of Gamaliel', were called to exercise the same ministry; and the latter bequeathed to posterity a greater portion of that inheritance of that evangelical truth which we possess in the Bible, than any other inspired writer. It is readily admitted that God, who sends by whom he will send, frequently works signs and wonders in the conversion of sinners by the weakest human agents; yet these are not successful either by ignorance or inertness, but in the unwearied exercise of their utmost powers in their Master's service. We are commanded to love the Lord our God supremely, and to serve him only; it follows, that we must serve him in the same manner as we love him, with all our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength; with all our corporeal and intellectual faculties, with all our affections and all our attainments.."[1]

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1 Holland, op. cit., III, pp. 77, 78

Montgomery's faith became public. As he loved the Lord, so he served Him. It was his desire, during the last half of his life, that his service of God should be commensurate with his love for God. The avenues of life, in and through which Montgomery's faith manifested itself, were many. Reviewing them, realizing the poet's principle of service inspired by love for God, one can say, "Behold how he loved Him!" In addition to his active participation in the Sunday School Union, missionary enterprise, and church projects and programmes of every description and denomination, he reached out into the realm of social reform and took a stand against such social evils and injustices as state lotteries and the practice of using boys as chimney sweeps. He detected and detested the decidedly unchristian element in slavery and was untiring in his fight against it. Through his written word, as an editor, poet and hymn writer, and through his spoken word, as Christian business man and lay worker, he championed the causes of freedom, of good and of God.

Karl Barth, who approves of making faith public and related to life, would probably say that Montgomery stepped out of his neutrality towards God, out of his disavowal of obligation towards Him in his existence and attitude, out of the private sphere, into resoluteness,

responsibility and public life, with regard to his faith. For, says Barth, "faith without this tendency to public life, faith that avoids this difficulty, has become in itself unbelief, wrong belief, superstition. For faith that believes in God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit cannot refuse to become public."[1]

As time passed, Montgomery reflected on some of the errors to which he was exposed, and which influenced him during his apostacy. He never, as far as we know, really disbelieved in the deity of Christ; but that his Socinian associates disbelieved this doctrine caused him to wonder. Now that the fog had lifted from his faith he expressed himself as to what he now believed. Concerning the divinity of Christ he says: "It was not the bare sacrifice of one that could redeem millions the same in kind; it was the divinity of Christ that stamped the sacrifice of his humanity with infinite importance .... I cannot conceive in what any alleged efficacy of the atoning sacrifice of Christ could consist, abstracted from his Godhead; and the opposers of the one, very consistently -- because necessity is laid upon them -- relinquish the other. The doctrines stand or fall with each other; and before Socinians can hope to get rid of the

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1 Barth, op. cit., p. 29

divinity of Christ, they must burn the Bible, -- and even then would that doctrine be seen rising out of the ashes of the imperishable word of truth."[1]

Montgomery also clarified his position on the doctrines of justification and sanctification, and their relation one to the other. The Methodists had confused him on this point by their insistance on instantaneous justification and sanctification. "The former," said Montgomery, "I can easily comprehend, as a simple act of God; nor is there anything opposed to reason in it; and the person whose sins are blotted out, and in whose heart the love of God is shed abroad, must know it. No doubt remains with me of the doctrine of sanctification, and of the necessity of that divine work in the soul of man; but if a degree of sanctification is received in justification -- if the work is progressive up to a period in which a person is said to believe for it -- and if after it is then received, the work is still progressive, I can hardly comprehend either the nature, the reason, or the necessity of a single intermediate and momentary act, between its commencement in justification, and its termination in whatever measure of holiness we may have attained to when we quit this scene of mortality, -- for till we

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1 Holland, op. cit., III, p. 314

die, the same glorious and renovating work of grace is going on in the soul."[1]

The poet objected to the fondness manifested by some preachers, in all denominations, to indulge in exaggerated descriptions of the sufferings of Christ, under the notion of enhancing the price paid by the Author of our salvation; some of them contending that he endured in his agony all that the lost souls suffer in perdition; others, that He bore in his own person all that believers would have suffered had He not died for them. He admitted, of course, that the sufferings were very great, and certainly sufficient, in relation to the atonement, for the sins of all mankind made by Him who bore our sins; but their degree, as nowhere revealed in Scripture, was a mystery beyond our comprehension, and which ought therefore to be left with God.

Not professing to be a theologian, Montgomery was content to leave some questions, which he deemed unanswerable, with God! When asked his opinion on the subject of the millennium, he replied that he had no opinion of his own to give, and that he was not much wiser for the opinion of others. Concerning the issue between Calvin and Arminius, Montgomery said: "The question

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1 Holland, op. cit., III, pp. 293, 294

between the followers of Calvin and Arminius is one which neither you nor I can ever settle; and happily salvation does not depend upon its settlement; therefore it does not disturb me: like the origin of evil, it will probably never be understood, either in this world or the next; it will more likely exercise the astonishment of the Archangel Gabriel to all eternity."[1]

Montgomery evaded and avoided all labels, save that of being called a Christian, and it was his life-long feeling that he was unworthy of being called a follower of Christ. Although, like all other Moravians, he swore fidelity to the Augsburg Confession, the poet boasted no creed but the Bible. He shrank from the dogmatic and damnatory tone of the Athanasian Creed, saying, "This is not a chapter either from the Old or the New Testament; I am therefore not bound, on the peril of my soul, to believe this form of words. At the same time I trust I am willing to believe all that the Bible hath declared concerning the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. From this I will not take anything, lest God should take away my portion out of the book of life, (if, indeed, my unworthy name be written there); nor will I add anything thereto, lest God should add unto me the

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1 Holland, op. cit., VI, p. 187

plagues that are written in the only book under heaven which contains His perfect will."[1]

That Montgomery recognized the irrefragable compatibility of physical and scriptural truth may be seen in the following editorial in which he presents his creed on the relation between the discoveries of science and the grounds of revealed religion: "With materialism and immaterialism I have nothing to do. I believe in God, the author and upholder of all things, as he has revealed himself in his word; and I believe in the immortality of the soul upon the same Divine authority, independent of the arguments which may be deduced in support of that doctrine from the nature and capacity of the spirit that is in man, to which the breath of the Almighty hath given understanding. Now the evidence of revealed religion is of a kind so utterly distinct from all the demonstrations of physical science, that no possible discovery in pursuit of the latter can come in contact with it; the one being on a subject solely apprehensible by the understanding and the affections, while the other is the analysis of substantial forms, which may be seen, handled, or otherwise made palpable to the senses, and of which nothing can be surely predicated but what is thus capable of

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1 Holland, op. cit., VI, p. 91

practical proof. Wherefore, till the mind itself can be laid bare by the anatomist's knife, and the operation of thought exhibited naked to the bodily eye, I cannot be afraid of the appearance of any truth which Philosophy can bring from the arcana of the universe. None of these can prove the negative of the question, while the affirmative (without being in contradiction to them) rests on testimony which can never be invalidated in a dissecting room, any more than the reality of virtue, justice, truth, knowledge, genius, taste, can be exploded there, for want of their visible presence in dead carcasses. Let Truth, therefore, be sought, wherever God hath hidden her, and wherever she is found she will add to our knowledge of Him."[1]

James Montgomery was a seeker after truth; he found The Truth, but unfortunately, never the full and abiding assurance of having found that Truth. Humbly and sincerely he said: "were I to estimate the reality of my own religious experience by the standard to which others have attained, or even by some of the technical rules they have laid down, I should sihk into despair. I feel my place of safety, therefore, to be that to which I do know I am permitted to come -- the foot of the

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1 Holland, op. cit., IV, p. 291

cross."[1] From this spiritual vantage point he wrote his hymns, which will be our next consideration.

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1 Holland, op. cit., V, p. 296

CHAPTER THREE

HYMNS AND SACRED WRITINGS

"...I will lie in wait for my heart, and when I can string it to the pitch of David's lyre, I will set a Psalm to the Chief Musician."

James Montgomery[1]

Montgomery was a man of deep religious sensitivity: his sincere humility and penitence reduced his ego to the fine point needed for sharp focus on eternal verities. He was one of the few English hymn writers of the first rank who was not a member of the clergy. His 400 hymns (including his versions of the Psalms), of which over 100 are still in use[2], are a versified compendium of Evangelicalism. Without obtrusive dogmatism, he hymns his basic beliefs.

The writing of sacred song was to him a high and holy vocation; a gift, held like that of the preacher and the prophet, for the purposes of heaven and eternity. He considered it a holy honour to "furnish words in which sincere Christians may express their joys and their sorrows, their hopes and their fears."[3] Montgomery early

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1 Holland, op. cit., II, p. 147
2 John Julian,(Editor), A Dictionary of Hymnology; (John Murray, London, 1892), p. 764
3 Holland, op. cit., III, p. 318

dedicated his talents to God, and it was his conviction that "next to the consecration of the greatest talents to the glory of God who gave them, their employment in the service of man, created in the image of God, fallen from it, and needing restoration by a Saviour, is surely the best and noblest use to which they can be dedicated."[1]

Our poet found in the writings of Milton a true description of the art of writing sacred poetry, and he often quoted it for his own edification and that of others. "These abilities," said Milton, referring to the abilities required in the writing of sacred verse, "are the inspired gift of God, rarely bestowed; and are of power to inbreed and cherish in a great people the seeds of virtue and public civility; to allay the perturbations of the mind, and set the affections in right tune; to celebrate in lofty hymns the throne and equipage of God's almightiness, and what he works, and what he suffers to be wrought with high providence in his church; to sing victorious agonies of martyrs and saints, the deeds and triumphs of just and pious nations, doing valiantly through faith against the enemies of Christ; to deplore the general relapses of kingdoms and states from justice and God's true worship. Lastly, whatsoever in religion

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1 James Montgomery, The Christian Psalmist: (William Collins, Glasgow, 1829) Introductory Essay, p.xxxi

is holy and sublime, in virtue amiable or grave, whatsoever hath passion or admiration in all the changes of that which is called fortune from without, or the wily subleties and refluxes of man's thought from within; all these things, with a solid and treatable smoothness, to point out and describe: --Teaching over the whole book of sanctity and virtue, through all the instances of example, with such delight to those especially of soft and delicious temper, who will not so much as look upon truth herself, unless they see her elegantly dressed, -- that, whereas the paths of honesty and good life appear now rugged and difficult, though they be indeed easy and pleasant, they will <u>then</u> appear to all men easy and pleasant, though they were rugged and difficult indeed."[1]

Montgomery's reputation became well established not only as a writer of verse, sacred and secular, but also as a literary critic. Commenting on the writers of hymns in general, he said, "Hymns, looking at the multitude and mass of them, appear to have been written by all kinds of persons, except poets; and why the latter have not delighted in this department of their own art, is obvious. Just in proportion as the religion of Christ

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1 John Milton, On Church Government, Book II

is understood and taught in primitive purity, those who either believe not in its spirituality, or have not proved its converting influence, are careful to avoid meddling with it..."[1]

Enlarging upon this thought in another of his volumes, Montgomery said: "...let who will be offended, the fact cannot be disproved, -- that our good poets have seldom been good Christians, and our good Christians have seldom been good poets. .....Our great authors, unhappily, have too often wanted the inspiration of piety, and religious poetry has been held in contempt by many learned, and wise, and elegant minds, because religion itself was either perfectly indifferent, troublesomely intrusive, or absolutely hateful to them. ....Religious poetry, however, in one very peculiar way, is a test of poetic talent. A middling poet, without piety, sinks below his own mediocrity whenever he attempts it; whereas a writer of comparatively inferior skill, when rapt and elevated by the love of God in his heart, becomes exalted and inspired in proportion."[2]

Many poets praise virtue without giving morals

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1 Montgomery, op. cit., Introductory Essay, p. viii

2 James Montgomery, The Christian Poet: (William Collins, Glasgow, 1827) Introductory Essay, pp.xx,xxiii

the support of religion; others are religious without identifying their religion as Christian. With these, Montgomery had little patience. "So neglectful of religion," he asserted, "have many of our chief poets been, that it cannot be discovered from their writings whether they were of any religion at all; -- except that it may be fairly presumed they were professing Christians, because they made no profession whatever; for had they been Jews, Turks, or Pagans, they would have shown some tokens of reverence for their faith, if not openly gloried in it, and made its records and legends the themes of their most animated compositions."[1]

To illustrate his point, Montgomery refers to Gray's Elegy, as a "master-piece of moralizing", and asks: "What God is intended in the last line of the Elegy Written in a Country Church-yard?

'The bosom of his father and his God.!'

Search every fragment of the writings of the celebrated author, and it will be difficult to answer this question, simple as it is, from them; from the Elegy itself it would be impossible, except that the God of the 'youth to fortune and fame unknown' is meant; and that this may have been the true God, must be inferred from his worshipper

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1 Montgomery, The Christian Poet, op. cit., p.xxiv

having been buried 'in a country Church-yard.' There is indeed a couplet like the following, in the body of the poem:

'And many a holy text around she strews
To teach the rustic moralist to die:'--

but, throughout the whole there is not a single allusion to 'an hereafter', except what may be inferred by courtesy, from the concluding line already mentioned. After the couplet above quoted, the poet leaves his 'rustic moralist to die,' and very pathetically refers to the natural unwillingness of the humblest individual to be forgotten, and the 'longing, lingering, look', which even the miserable cast behind, on leaving 'the warm precincts of the cheerful day'; but hope, nor fear, doubt, nor faith, concerning a future state, seems ever to have touched the poet's apprehensions, exquisitely affected as he must have been with all that interests 'mortal man', in the composition of these unrivalled stanzas; unrivalled truly they are, though there is not an idea in them, beyond the Church-yard, in which they are said to have been written. No doubt this deficiency may be vindicated by phlegmatic sceptics and puling sentimentalists, who will cordially agree to reprobate what, in their esteem, would have been contrary to good manners;

but is it right, is it consistent, in a 'Christian Poet', to be thus 'ashamed of the gospel of Christ', by which 'life and immortality were brought to light', on occasions, when it ought to be his glory to acknowledge it, at the peril of his reputation?[1] These remarks are not made, to throw obloquy on the name of an author, who has justly acquired a greater reputation than almost any other, by literary remains, so few and small as his are; they have been introduced here to show with what meditated precaution piety is shunned by Christian Poets, who, like Gray, seem to be absolutely possessed by the mythology, not only of the Greeks and Romans, but even of the Goths and Vandals."[2]

Montgomery denounced the pantheistic tendency of some so-called "Christian poets" to equate God with nature. Although a friend and admirer of Wordsworth, writing in the Eclectic Review, he says that the poet regards nature with so passionate a devotion "that it is sometimes difficult to distinguish the reverence which he pays to it, from the homage to the Supreme alone."[3]

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1 Italics mine.

2 Montgomery, The Christian Poet, op. cit., pp. xxiv, xxv

3 Hoxie Neale Fairchild, Religious Trends in English Poetry: (Columbia University Press, New York, 1949), III, p. 208

Dr. Samuel Johnson was responsible for a theory, current during the last part of the eighteenth and first part of the nineteenth centuries, that religion and poetry are incompatible. It was his opinion that contemplative piety, or the intercourse between God and the human soul, cannot be poetical. As a literary critic and Christian poet, Montgomery strongly opposed this view. In the introductory essay of a book which he edited, entitled, The Christian Poet, he refuted Dr. Johnson's argument, and in the poems presented in that volume, demonstrated unequivocally the possibility of combining poetry and religion. In addition to the evidence which he gave to confute this theory, Montgomery could have submitted his own hymns and sacred verse, which he humbly omitted.

"A profane world", declared Montgomery in his Christian Psalmist, "will never be smit with the love of Sacred Song. The language of devotion, whether in prose or rhyme, cannot be relished, because it is not understood, by any but those who have experienced the power of the Gospel, as being salvation to them that believe; for the same reason that the Bible itself is neither acceptable nor intelligible to those who are not taught by the Spirit of God. To such, 'though I

speak with the tongues of men and of angels' about divine things, 'I am as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.' To those, on the other hand, who have 'tasted the good word of God, and felt the powers of the world to come', it will be easy to comprehend, that poetry and piety may be as surely united on earth, as they are in heaven before the throne, in the songs of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect."[1]

Canon Ellerton identified Montgomery as "our first hymnologist; the first Englishman who collected and criticized hymns, and who made people that had lost all recollection of ancient models understand something of what a hymn meant, and what it ought to be."[2]

Montgomery was a perfectionist; he was eager to see hymns poetically correct and consistently Christian. "Authors," he said. "who devote their talents to the glory of God, and the salvation of men, ought surely to take as much pains to polish and perfect their offerings of this kind, as secular and profane poets bestow upon their works. Of these, the subjects are too often of the baser sort, and the workmanship as frequently

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1 Montgomery, op. cit., The Christian Psalmist, p. xiv

2 James Moffatt,(Editor), Handbook to the Church Hymnary, (Oxford University Press, 1927), p. 437

excels the material; while, on the other hand, the inestimable materials of hymns, - the truths of the everlasting Gospel, the very thoughts of God, the very sayings of Christ, the very inspirations of the Holy Ghost, are dishonoured by the meanness of the workmanship employed upon them; wood, hay, straw, and stubble, being built upon foundations which ought only to support gold, silver and precious stones; work that will bear the fire, and be purified by it..."[1]

Our hymnologist says, "The faults in ordinary hymns are vulgar phrases, low words, hard words, technical terms, inverted construction, broken syntax, barbarous abbreviations, that make our beautiful English horrid even to the eye, bad rhymes, or no rhymes where rhymes are expected, but above all, numbers without cadence. A line is no more metre because it contains a certain concatenation of syllables, than so many crotchets and quavers, picked at random, would constitute a bar of music. The syllables in every division ought to 'ripple like a rivulet', one producing another as its natural effect, while the rhythm of each line, falling into the general stream at its proper place, should cause the verse to flow in

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1 Montgomery, The Christian Psalmist, op. cit., p. xvi

progressive melody, deepening and expanding like a river to the close; or, to change the figure, each stanza should be a poetical tune, played down to the last note. Such subservience of every part to the harmony of the whole, is required in all other legitimate poetry, and why it should not be observed in that which is worthiest of all possible pre-eminence, it would be difficult to say; why it is so rarely found in hymns, may be accounted for from the circumstance already stated, that few accomplished poets have enriched their mother tongue with strains of this description."[1]

Commenting on the relation between the structure of a hymn and its thought content, Montgomery asserts, "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,

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1 Montgomery, The Christian Psalmist, op. cit., pp. xvi, xvii

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. The reader should know when the strain is complete, and be satisfied, as at the close of an air in music..."[1]

Tried by the standard which he had himself set up as a hymnologist, Montgomery said that each of his hymns would be found wanting. However, he felt it was his Christian duty to state what he believed a hymn ought to be, and then to do his best to maintain that standard. There was always in the background of his mind the fact that early in his life he had sinned against God and man by spurning the opportunity to train for the ministry. To offset this early mistake, and to serve God with the talents he had given him, Montgomery endeavored to make his Christian contribution as a lay hymn writer and critic.

Dr. Millar Patrick, an eminent Scottish authority on hymnology, points out that "the discovery was early made in the Christian era that popular religion is moulded largely by the ideas enshrined in its hymns.

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1 Montgomery, The Christian Psalmist, op. cit., pp. xiv, xv

Sermons often fly over the people's heads; prayers uttered in their name often fail to carry their hearts and even their intelligence with them; but their songs sink into the memory, colour their thought, and fashion their theology, much more than any deliberate instruction."[1]

Religious in his poetry and poetical in his religion, James Montgomery used this beautiful medium as an instrument of instruction and edification. "One of the most precious uses of the sacred oracles," he said, "is their infinite capability of personal application to the mind and the heart, the circumstances and duties of the Christian, in every state of life, in every frame of spirit. Words of comfort, warning, counsel, or rebuke, unconsciously treasured up in the memory, often come home to the soul in unexpected moments, with all the demonstration of revealed truth; nay, sometimes, with a power of reality, as though a voice from the excellent Glory had uttered them aloud in our hearing, or the still, small whisper of the Spirit had spoken them to our very selves. These, then, are an inestimable means of grace, especially in times of trial and affliction. Now, in a smaller measure, yet in a measure most

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1 Moffatt, op. cit., Introduction, p. xiii

encouraging and edifying, the words, thoughts, images of hymns, are frequently remembered with delight, and spontaneously adopted, as though they were our own, for prayer, meditation, thanksgiving, and every other purpose which, as Scripture auxiliaries, they are calculated to answer."[1]

In 1853, about a year prior to his death, Montgomery published a collection of his hymns, in a volume called "Original Hymns." He had a dual purpose in using the term original: first, to indicate his authorship, and second, to again present his hymns in their original form, the way he wrote them and the way he intended them to remain. Many of his hymns had been borrowed without permission, and altered in doctrine and diction. In the preface to this volume, Montgomery speaks his mind on this subject: "But of the liberties taken by some of these borrowers of his[2] effusions, to modify certain passages, according to their own peculiar taste and notions, he must avail himself of the present opportunity to remind them, that if good people (and such he verily believes them to be) cannot conscientiously adopt his diction and doctrine, it is a little

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1 Montgomery, op. cit., The Christian Psalmist, pp. xxx, xxxi

2 Referring to his own writings.

questionable in them to impose upon him theirs, which he may as honestly hesitate to receive. Yet this is the Cross, by which every author of a hymn, who hopes to be useful in his generation, may expect to be tested, at the pleasure of any Christian brother, however incompetent or little qualified to amend what he may deem amiss in one of the most delicate and difficult exercises of a tender heart and an enlightened understanding. This indeed is 'a thorn in the flesh', which the sufferer must learn to bear with meekness, and, if possible, to profit by the humiliation; though a versifier of any other class might, perhaps, be forgiven, if he indignantly resented it."[1,2]

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1 James Montgomery, Original Hymns, (Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, London, 1853), pp. v, vi

2 The poet objected to having his hymns altered, yet in his Christian Psalmist(1829) he did not hesitate to alter and amend the hymns of others. After assisting Thomas Cotterill in preparing his hymn-book in 1819, Montgomery wrote: "Good Mr. Cotterill and I bestowed a great deal of labour and care upon the compilation of that book, clipping, interlining, and remodeling hymns of all sorts, as we thought we could correct the sentiment or improve the expression." (J. E. Prescott, Christian Hymns and Hymn Writers, -Cambridge, 1883, pp. 152, 153). Julian confirms this inconsistency on the part of James Montgomery: "In common with most poets and hymn-writers, Montgomery strongly objected to any correction or rearrangement of his compositions. At the same time he did not hesitate to alter, rearrange, and amend the production of others. The altered texts which appeared in Cotterill's Sel., 1819, and which in numerous instances are still retained in some of the best hymnbooks,

Fifteen of Montgomery's hymns are included in the revised edition of the Scottish Psalter and Church Hymnary; a few of these are not in their original form. It is pertinent that we compare the two texts:

"Command Thy Blessing from Above"
(stanzas 3,4,5)

Original: (p.80)
Command thy[1] blessing in this hour,
Spirit of Truth! and fill this place
With humbling and with healing power,[2]
With killing and with quickening grace.

Scottish Hymnary: (p.241)
Command Thy blessing in this hour,
Spirit of truth, and fill this place
With humbling and exalting power,
With quickening and confirming grace.

Original:
O thou, our Maker, Saviour, Guide,
One true eternal God confest!
Whom thou hast joined let none divide,
None dare to curse whom thou hast blest.

Scottish Hymnary:
O Thou, our Maker, Saviour, Guide,
One true eternal God confessed,
May nought in life or death divide,
The saints in Thy communion blest.

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as the 'Rock of Ages', in its well-known form of three stanzas, and others of equal importance, were made principally by him for Cotterill's use. We have this confession under his own hand." (Julian, op. cit., p. 764) Thus we see that our poet was guilty of this practice in 1819 and 1829; perhaps he felt his participation justifiable because of his experience as a literary critic and hymn writer. His criticism of these "offenders" in the preface to his Original Hymns was written in 1853, when he was in his eighty-second year and had probably forgotten that he, too, had been an "offender".

1 Montgomery seldom uses capitals for pronouns denoting Deity.

2 The italics, used for the purpose of showing the differing lines, are mine.

Original: With thee and these for ever found,
May all the souls who here unite,
With harps and songs thy throne surround,
Rest in thy love and reign in light.

Scottish Hymnary: With Thee and these for ever bound,
May all who here in prayer unite,
With harps and songs Thy throne surround,
Rest in Thy love, and reign in light.

The fifth stanza of the hymn "Angels from the Realms of Glory" is deleted from the Scottish Hymnary[1], either because it made the hymn too long or the language was too severe and offensive:

Original (p.186): 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,
Worship Christ the new-born King.

"Songs of Praise the Angels Sang"
(1st stanza)

Original (p.72): Songs of praise the angels sang,
Heaven with hallelujahs rang,
When Jehovah's work begun,
When he spake, and it was done.

Scottish Hymnary (p.38): Songs of praise the angels sang,
Heaven with hallelujahs rang,
When creation was begun,
When God spake, and it was done.

"Pour out thy Spirit from on High"
(1st stanza)

Original (p.264): Pour out thy Spirit from on high;
Lord, thine assembled servants bless;

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1 The Scottish Hymnary is cited as one example; many other hymnals also differ from Montgomery's originals.

Graces and gifts to each supply,
And clothe thy priests with righteousness.

Scottish Hymnary: (p.333)

Pour out Thy Spirit from on high;
Lord, Thine ordained servants bless;
Graces and gifts to each supply,
And clothe Thy priests with righteousness.[1]

Judging from the aforementioned views of our poet on the subject of altering hymns, that is, the altering of his hymns, he would not have approved of the minor changes made in the few examples here cited. However, most observers and critics would agree that these are changes for the better, clarifying the thought, improving the structure, and this, without unduly distorting the doctrine involved.

In analyzing the religious thought and doctrine contained in Montgomery's hymns, for the sake of fidelity, the originals will be used exclusively. Montgomery's views on the cardinal doctrines of the faith will not only be determined from his hymns, but also from his sacred writings, some of which were written for private devotional purposes and were never intended

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1 The other alterations in this hymn pertain to the tense used: four changes from first person plural to the third person plural. Montgomery would have resented this. First person is most common in his hymns for it spoke of his need or his praise, and indirectly, that of others.

to be used for congregational singing.

MONTGOMERY'S CONCEPT OF GOD:

Appended to the Moravian hymnal, which was our poet's spiritual meat and drink during those formative years at Fulneck, was a doctrinal review. This section of the hymnal bore the following title page: "EXTRACT OF THE TWENTY-ONE DOCTRINAL ARTICLES OF THE AUGUSTAN OR AUGSBURG CONFESSION: FOR THE USE OF THE BRETHREN'S CONGREGATIONS, AND IN PARTICULAR OF THE CHILDREN."

Article I contained statements concerning God: "First, we avow and teach, with one consent, agreeable to the conclusion of the Council of Nice, that there is only one Divine Being, who is named and truly is GOD. Yet in this one Divine Being there are three Persons, equal in power and co-eternal, GOD the Father, GOD the Son, and GOD the Holy Ghost: all three one Divine Being; which is eternal, without parts, without end, of immense power, wisdom, and goodness; one Maker and Preserver of all things visible and invisible. And by the word Person, is not understood a part nor a property existing in another, but one, who subsists by himself, in the same sense in which the fathers made

use of this word."[1]

Majestically, Montgomery hymned many of these theological tenets in the form of doxologies:

All glory to the Father be,
  Coequal glory to the Son,
And to the Holy Spirit, -- Three,
  In union of the Godhead One.
As 'twas ere measured time begun,
  Is now, and shall forever be,
While self involving ages run
  The circle of infinity.

All glory to the Father be,
  All glory to the Son,
All glory to the Spirit, -- Three
  In power and Godhead One.
.....
  In eternal Godhead One.[2]

The same trinitarian note is sounded in his Gloria Patri:

Maker, Upholder, Ruler! -- thee,
  Let all that live adore,
(FATHER) Who art, and wast, and yet shall be,
  God blessed evermore.

Redeemer, Prophet, Priest, and King!
  Appointed Judge of all!
(SON) Let ransomed souls thy triumph sing,
  And foes before thee fall.

Spirit of life, and light, and love!
  To us thy gifts impart;
(SPIRIT) From heaven descending like a dove,
  Come dwell in every heart.

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1 Liturgic Hymns of the United Brethren, (Translated from the German, London, 1770) p. 3 (appendix)

2 Montgomery, op. cit., Original Hymns, pp. 309, 310

Thee, Father, Son, and Spirit! thee,
  Let heaven and earth adore;
Thou art, thou wast, and thou shalt be
  One God for evermore.[1]

Our hymn writer explicitly taught that God created the world ex nihilo; he attributed the substance of all created things to the power and will of God. The things which are impossible with men are possible with God. Man cannot make anything out of nothing; but only out of existing matter, however, God had power to call into being the substance of His creation, when previously it had no existence.

In the beginning, God said 'Be!'
And all things were, -- heaven, earth, and sea...[2]
.....

With men impossible!
.....
All things are possible with God,
He speaks,and it is done.[3]
.....
His six days' work had brought
The universe from nought.[4]

Stressing the idea of a definite beginning of creation, our poet refuted the idea of the eternity of the universe and the consequent dualism between God and the universe.

It is of the very nature of God to be creative,

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1 Montgomery, op. cit., Original Hymns, pp. 307, 308
2 Ibid, p. 2
3 Ibid, p. 26
4 Ibid, p. 11

God in creation thus displays
His wisdom and his might,[1]

and He is still creating:

Still the creative voice is heard;
A day is born from every night.[2]

There is a harmony and purpose in this activity which is natural to God:

While all his works with all his ways
Harmoniously unite.[3]

The products of this creative activity of God testify to His existence:

"There is a God," all nature cries
All knowledge proves "there is a God."[4]

Montgomery united nature and man in the praise of God. He did not reduce Christianity to the level of nature, but rather redeemed nature by raising it to the level of Christian supernaturalism. His mysticism was not pantheistic. He strongly opposed a sentimental, deistic reliance on mere natural revelation; his love of nature and his love of God in Christ were so strongly and closely interwoven that, along with Cowper, he helped to transform the 18th century God of Nature into the

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1 Montgomery, op. cit., Original Hymns, p. 7
2 Ibid, p. 208
3 Ibid, p. 7
4 Ibid, p. 6

Crucified Christ. Like Cowper, Montgomery believed that in order to view nature religiously, one must first know the God of the Scriptures. To any Nature-lover the world is lovely, but to the child of God to whom has come the grace that is in Christ Jesus, a more subtle beauty is revealed, and all the loveliness of things is a further revelation of the loveliness of God.

But Montgomery did not only conceive of God as lovely and loving; his poetry preached the goodness and the severity of God. Storms and plagues revealed his wrath and were agents of instruction:

> Walking on the winged wind,
> Fear before him, Death behind;
> When the Lord came down in wrath,
> Clouds and darkness girt his path.
> .....
> Go in peace, and sin no more.[1]
>
> It is the Lord! Behold his hand
> Outstretched with an afflictive rod;
> And hark! a voice goes through the land,
> "Be still, and know that I am God."[2]

Fear and confidence are poetically mingled in the following:

> To God most awful and most high,
> Who formed the earth, the sea, the sky;
> To him on whom all worlds depend,
> Our humble hearts in sighs we send.[3]

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1 Montgomery, op. cit.,Original Hymns, pp.250,251
2 Ibid, p. 249
3 Ibid, p. 234

Although shying away from the Calvinistic label, our poet, perhaps unknowingly as a layman, voices some of Calvin's views. In many of his hymns he trumpets the sovereignty of God,

> On his throne of sovereignty,[1]

and in affliction petitions Him:

> If such not be thy sovereign will,
> Thy wiser purpose then fulfill.[2]

Despite the afflictions which Montgomery suffered personally, and vicariously, he poetically professed:

> All-wise, all-mighty, and all-good,
> In thee I firmly trust;
> Thy ways, unknown or understood,
> Are merciful and just.[3]

MONTGOMERY'S DOCTRINE OF MAN:

It was Calvin's belief that "we cannot clearly and properly know God unless the knowledge of ourselves be added."[4] Our poet's written words, and very life, confirm this fact. Within the scope of his knowledge of God was his knowledge of man, personified in himself and confirmed in his experience. Montgomery knew God,

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1 Montgomery, op. cit., Original Hymns, p. 5
2 Ibid, p. 144
3 Ibid, p. 69
4 John Calvin, Institutes, (Calvin Translation Society, Edinburgh, 1843), I, 15, I

and because he knew God, he knew himself better.

God formed man, not out of nothing, but out of the dust, to become a part of the visible, material universe:

> God, his glory to display,
> With his image crowned the whole,
> Breathed his Spirit into clay,
> And made man a living soul.[1]

Man was the crown of God's creatures; made in the image of his Creator, a living soul. God deemed all of His creation good; he rested, and

> From Eden to the King of kings,
> In sinless man's primeval days,
> The voices of all living things,
> All natures's sounds, were notes of praise[2]

But,

> The days of Paradise were few,
> Man lived not long in innocence;
> He sinned, and sin his offspring slew,
> Death passed on all for his offence.[3]

Now, in the Edenic scene, instead of all creatures praising their Creator, and living in a state of bliss,

> When Adam to transgression fell,
> Concord to dissonance was changed,
> And strife, the element of hell,
> The young world's harmony deranged.[4]

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1 Montgomery, op. cit., Original Hymns, p. 3
2 Ibid, p. 260
3 Ibid, p. 14
4 Ibid, p. 260

The doctrine of the depravity of man is a strong strain in Montgomery's poetical witness. Not only is man a sinner because he is of "Adam's sin-born progeny", but also by his own choice does he commit sin. The latter is contingent upon the former; we did not become sinners by sinning, but we are sinners by nature, and by practice:

> Children of Adam, Adam's fall
> From primal innocence,
> Brought guilt and judgment on us all,
> Entailed through one offence.
>
> Trained in his image from our birth,
> We sinned ourselves, and fell,
> Like him, from heirs of heaven on earth,
> To heirs of death and hell.
>
> Transgressors while we thus remain
> In our own blood we lie;
> We must be born, be born again,
> Or die, forever die.
>
> A child of man, a child of God,
> How can such union be?
> A worm created from a clod,
> Allied to Deity![1]

In Montgomery's doctrine of man, the "worm" element is frequently mentioned, yet the figure is not overdrawn to the extent of becoming an emotional indulgence. Also, that man was created in the image of God, is stated, but not overstated. The fact that man is made in the image of God often produces pride and self-

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1 Montgomery, op. cit., Original Hymns, pp, 27,28

exaltation; the "worm" element curbs man's illusion of goodness and power, and reminds him of his creaturehood and dependence upon God.

Man, the offspring of God, unable to help himself, makes his appeal:

> To thee in whom we live and move,
> And have our being here,
> A higher, holier state to prove,
> Through Christ let us draw near.
>
> Though born in sin, to trouble born,
> Transgressors from the womb,
> Leave not thine offspring thus forlorn,
> In error, doubt, and gloom.
>
> Send out, good Lord, thy light and truth.[1]

And,

> Lo! love divine, for man undone,
> Devised the wondrous plan,
> The Son of God, God's only Son,
> Became the Son of man.[2]

MONTGOMERY'S CHRISTOLOGY AND SOTERIOLOGY:

From his Christological views, poetically penned, one can detect no trace of Montgomery's flirtation with Unitarianism in early manhood. His position, on this the most central and important part of theology, was strictly orthodox -- the orthodoxy of the Evangelicals

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1 Montgomery, op. cit., Original Hymns, p. 33
2 Ibid, p. 28

of his day. His terminology is more biblical than theological.[1]

Succinctly stated, his hymns and sacred poetry proclaim Jesus Christ as the Son of God, divinely conceived by the Holy Spirit, and supernaturally born of the virgin, Mary. Jesus Christ was truly God and truly man, his divinity and humanity being united in one Person. The Son of God was sent by God into the world not to condemn, but to save. The purpose of the divine mission was realized in the sacrificial death of Christ in behalf of sinful man. His resurrection from the dead on the third day both vindicated and interpreted His claims and mission. He died to expiate our sins; he was raised for our justification.[2] After forty days, He visibly ascended into heaven, where He initiated His heavenly priesthood at the right hand of the Father. In God's time, He will quicken the dead, return to judge mankind, and establish His kingdom and the Church triumphant.

Montgomery modified some of the Moravian

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1 This is true of all his religious thought. Montgomery was a layman, not a trained theologian. His poetry breathes of the Biblical because the Bible was his primary textbook.

2 Romans, 4:25

Christological expressions, such as their stress on the sufferings of the Saviour, and their rather gory emphasis on the shedding of His blood. This he did, without minimizing the truth involved. No one was more convinced of the sufferings of the Saviour, the need for, and efficacy of the shedding of His blood, than was our poet. He merely improved the terminology.

His medium of poetry, which vividly portrays his Christological views, begins with a call to the angels to herald the good news:

> Angels from the realms of glory,
> Wing your flight o'er all the earth,
> Ye who sang creation's story,
> Now proclaim Messiah's birth;
> Come and worship,
> Worship Christ the new-born King.[1]

The message is of such great import that he summons men of all classes and conditions to come and worship the new-born King. The lowly:

> Shepherds, in the fields abiding,
> Watching o'er your flocks by night
> God with man is now residing,
> Yonder shines the infant-light.[2]
> .....

The wise:

> Sages, leave your contemplations,
> Brighter visions beam afar,

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1 Montgomery, op. cit., Original Hymns, pp.186,187
2 Ibid,

Seek the great Desire of Nations;
Ye have seen his natal star.[1]

The good:

Saints, before the altar bending,
Watching long in hope and fear,
Suddenly the Lord descending
In his temple shall appear.[2]

The bad:

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,
Worship Christ the new-born King.[3]

Poetically professing the Deity and humanity of Christ, he wrote:

Jesus, the Son of God most high,
Whose image he expressed,
The fulness of the Deity,
In flesh made manifest:-

Jesus, the Son of Man became,
Assumed our mortal breath,
Endured the cross, despised the shame,
And poured his soul in death.[4]

The mission of the Messiah of prophecy is stated:

Messiah, from the fall foretold,
The Deity in human mould;
--That mould from which God's image lost

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1 Montgomery, op. cit., Original Hymns, pp.186,187
2 Ibid
3 Ibid
4 Ibid, p. 30

In Eden at so dire a cost,
The new creation shall restore,
And guilt efface its lines no more.[1]

More fully describing Christ's mission, Montgomery says:

The world in condemnation lay,
  And death, from Adam reigning,
O'er man maintained remorseless sway,
  While sin his soul enchaining
Foredoomed the second death to all
That shared the ruins of the fall;
  But Christ's triumphant mission
  Redeemed us from perdition.[2]

.....
God, in our nature, did not send
His Son to punish and destroy.

He sent him forth to seek and save
  The lost, the dying, and the dead
Cancel the curse, despoil the grave,
  And bruise for ever Satan's head.[3]

The Moravian emphasis on the suffering of Christ, modulated by Montgomery, is presented:

To save his people from their sins,
Jesus his suffering life begins;[4]
.....

Though holy, harmless, undefiled,
He learned obedience, from a child;
.....

Rebuke and scorn he meekly bore,
The more reviled he loved the more;
.....

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1 Montgomery, op. cit., Original Hymns, p. 29
2 Ibid, p. 49
3 Ibid, p. 14
4 Ibid, p. 29

O'er land and sea, whate'er the cost,
He came to seek and save the lost;
For this he hungered, thirsted, sighed,
Watched, prayed and laboured, lived and died.[1]

The poet finds in His sufferings a pattern for our plight:

Him let us then our pattern make,
Who toiled and suffered for our sake.[2]

With pathos and poetical power, fired by a conviction of his personal need, implication and responsibility, Montgomery recommends a spiritual pilgrimage to witness the passion and sufferings of the Saviour:

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.

Follow to the judgement-hall,
  View the Lord of Life arraigned;
O the wormwood and the gall!
  O the pangs his soul sustained;
Shun not suffering, shame, or loss;
Learn of him to bear the cross.

Calvary's mournful mountain climb,
  There, adoring at his feet,
Mark that miracle of time,
  God's own sacrifice complete,
"It is finished"; --hear the cry;
Learn of Jesus Christ to die.

Early hasten to the tomb,
  Where they laid his breathless clay:

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1 Montgomery, op. cit., Original Hymns, p. 101
2 Ibid, p. 100

All is solitude and gloom;
  Who hath taken him away?
Christ is risen! --He meets our eyes.
Saviour, teach us so to rise.[1]

Christ, through His sacrificial death, came to grips with man's sin which had estranged him from God. In becoming sin for us, personally nailing it to the cross, He accomplished the necessary atonement. Christ also "blotted out the bond that was against us by its ordinances, and hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross", or, as Lightfoot suggests, "put it out of sight"! -- καὶ αὐτο ἦρκεν ἐκ τοῦ μέσου .[2] Christ ushered in a new dispensation where grace was to be the rule rather than law, He being the fulfillment of the Law and its ordinances:

Not hecatombs he now requires,
  The daily blood of slaughtered beasts;
Quenched are the ancient altar fires,
  Extinct the line of typic priests,

Man's only Mediator stands
  Before the Father's throne to plead
His sole atonement: in his hands
  Our cause is safe; it must succeed.[3]

Montgomery points out that

Redemption in his blood begins,
  In his atonement ends.[4]

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1 Montgomery, op. cit., Original Hymns, pp.50,51
2 Colossians,2:14
3 Montgomery, Original Hymns, op. cit., p. 78
4 Ibid, p. 30

Our hymn writer establishes a healthy Christological balance between the conception of Christ as the suffering Saviour of the past, and the idea of Christ as our present, active Lord and Leader. Concerning the latter, he sings:

> Jesus, Lord, our Captain glorious!
> O'er sin, and death, and hell victorious;
> Wisdom and might to thee belong;
> We confess, proclaim, adore thee,
> We bow the knee, we fall before thee,
> Thy love henceforth shall be our song;
> The cross meanwhile we bear,
> The crown ere long to wear;
> Hallelujah!
> Thy reign extend -- world without end,
> Let praise from all to thee ascend.[1]
>
> .....
>
> Command thy blessing, Jesus! Lord!
> May we thy true disciples be;
> Speak to each heart the mighty word,
> Say to the weakest, "Follow me".[2]
>
> .....
>
> With thee, my Captain in the field,
> I must prevail, I cannot yield.[3]

THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT:

Montgomery's hymns contain innumerable brief references to the Holy Spirit. Here again, the poet is strictly orthodox. The Spirit was not some vague,

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1 Montgomery, op. cit., Original Hymns, p. 108
2 Ibid, p. 80
3 Ibid, p. 127

nebulous power, but rather the Spirit of God, the third Person of the Trinity, proceeding from the Father through the Son, co-essential, co-eternal, and co-equal with the Father and the Son. The Spirit was present and active in creation; inspired the prophets and apostles; mysteriously wrought the virgin birth of Christ, and, at Pentecost, began the most important stage of His earthly ministry, which He has carried on ever since. Dwelling in the hearts of believers, His work is to quicken and sanctify the Body of Christ, the Church.

> Know that thus the Father willed,
> Thus the Son his task fulfilled,
> That the Holy Ghost might thus
> Dwell -- the Deity in us.[1]
> .....
>
> All glory to the Father be,
> Coequal glory to the Son,
> And to the Holy Spirit, -- Three,
> In union of the Godhead One.[2]

Invoking the blessing of the Spirit, and, defining His work, Montgomery says:

> Spirit of light, explore,
> And chase our gloom away,
> With lustre shining more and more
> Unto the perfect day:
> Spirit of truth - be thou
> In life and death our guide;
> O Spirit of adoption, now
> May we be sanctified.[3]

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1 Montgomery, op. cit., Original Hymns, p.153
2 Ibid, p. 309
3 Ibid, p. 110

The Holy Spirit, having come to dwell in the believer's heart, is the Instigator of communion with God, and with other believers:

> The grace of Jesus Christ our Lord,
> The Father's love with sweet accord,
> The Holy Ghost's communion be[1]
> Our bond of peace and amity,
>
> This is the threefold cord that binds
> The sympathies of kindred minds,
> And draws them to that glorious three,
> The One eternal Deity.[2]

MONTGOMERY'S VIEW OF HOLY SCRIPTURE:

The Bible, Montgomery believed, not only contains the Word of God, but is the Word of God. Under the direction and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, men of God, the prophets and apostles, prepared the Divine Record,[3] Our poet was a believer in plenary inspiration, or the equal inspiration of every part of the Bible; and also in verbal inspiration, - that the Holy Spirit dictated the words to the writers of Holy Writ. As the Psalmist hid the Word of God in his heart that he might not sin against Him, so Montgomery saturated his mind and heart with the words of Scripture. The products of his pen evidence this fact.

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1 II Cor. 13:14
2 Montgomery, Original Hymns, op. cit.,pp.306,307
3 II Tim. 3:16

Words of eternal life to me,
O may my faith receive the whole;
Bound with my heart-strings, let them be
Hid in the secret of my soul.[1]

With firm conviction concerning the words of prophecy, he says:

Though heaven and earth shall pass away,
These words of prophecy are sure,
Unchangeable amidst decay,
And pure as God himself is pure.[2]

Pointing out the effectiveness of God's Word in the lives of men, the poet says:

Thy word, almighty Lord,
Where'er it enters in,
Is sharper than a two-edged sword[3]
To slay the man of sin.

Thy word is power and life;
It bids confusion cease,
And changes envy, hatred, strife,
To love, and joy, and peace.

Then let our hearts obey
The gospel's glorious sound,
And all its fruits, from day to day,
Be in us and abound.[4]

Convinced of the need to keep the words of Scripture as God gave them, as pure as God himself is pure, unaltered by meddling men, Montgomery pens the warning:[5]

Whoe'er to these shall add alloy,
Or take one sacred fragment thence,

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1 Montgomery, Original Hymns, op. cit., p. 22
2 Ibid
3 Heb. 4:12
4 Montgomery, Original Hymns, op. cit., pp.308, 309
5 Rev. 22:18,19

Them and their works will God destroy;
His arm shall be his truth's defence.[1]

MONTGOMERY'S VIEWS CONCERNING THE CHURCH:

Although a strict Moravian by birth, background and final affiliation, Montgomery had mingled much with different denominational groups. He was distinctly catholic, and decidedly Christian, in his ideas about the church. He believed the ἐκκλησία to be made up of those called of God out of the world into the assembly of His adopted children, the Body of Christ, of which He is the Head. Montgomery's poetry did, and still does, much to create a catholic atmosphere, by stressing the essentials which bind us together, rather than the dividing denominational differences.

Montgomery sings of the symbols of this Christian fellowship:

Union of faith, and hope, and love,
Union of heart, and soul, and mind,
Affections fixed on things above,
As one on earth, God's children bind.

Stones built on Christ, the corner stone,
A spiritual temple, lo! they rise,
While sweet ascends, before the throne,
Praise in perpetual sacrifice.

---

1 Montgomery, Original Hymns, op. cit., p. 22

Branches in Christ, the one true vine,
  Nourished by him alone they thrive;
From him the leaf, the fruit, the wine,
  Each in its season, all derive.

Members of Christ, the church's head,
  Who lives himself through every limb,
To sin, the world, and Satan dead,
  Their life in God is hid with him.[1]

Praise and petition are poetically mingled in Montgomery's review of one day spent in the Courts of the Lord:

To thy temple I repair,
Lord, I love to worship there,
When within the veil I meet
Christ before the mercy-seat.

Thou through him art reconciled,
I through him become thy child;
Abba! Father! give me grace
In thy courts to seek thy face.

While thy glorious praise is sung,
Touch my lips, unloose my tongue,
That my joyful soul may bless
Thee, the Lord, my righteousness.

While the prayers of saints ascend,
God of love, to mine attend;
Hear me, for thy Spirit pleads,
Hear, for Jesus intercedes.

While I harken to thy law,
Fill my soul with humble awe
Till thy gospel bring to me
Life and immortality.

While thy ministers proclaim
Peace and pardon in thy name,

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1 Montgomery, Original Hymns, op. cit.,pp, 122, 123

Through their voice, by faith may I
Hear thee speaking from the sky,

From thine house, when I return,
May my heart within me burn,
And at evening let me say,
"I have walked with God today".[1,2]

Montgomery seems to vacillate in his views concerning who is finally to be included in the Church. On the one hand his poetry preaches the doctrine of election:

Oh! gather in, from east and west,
  From north to south, oh! gather in
Thine own elect, and give them rest,
  Within thy sanctuary, from sin.[3]

On the other hand, the idea of universal salvation is also proclaimed:

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.
.....

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.[4]

The latter view is very prominent in his poetry; the

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1 Montgomery, Original Hymns, op. cit., pp. 93, 94

2 Here is a poetical précis of many of Layman Montgomery's theological views.

3 Montgomery, Original Hymns, op. cit., p. 122

4 Ibid, pp. 205, 206

poet prays:

O thou everlasting Father,
Give the kingdoms to thy Son;
He hath died that he might gather
All God's children into one;
For the travail
Of his soul, let this be done![1]

Montgomery visualized and anticipated an ecumenical, universal Sabbath:

Will e'er that Sabbath-morning rise,
When on the Sun of Righteousness,
Earth's wakening millions lift their eyes
His healing beams to hail and bless:--

When God's own day of rest shall be
Hallowed, by all that live and move
On peopled land, or desert sea,
While all its hallowing influence prove:--

When men of every hue and speech
Shall hasten to the house of prayer,
And Christ's disciples go and teach
The Gospel to all nations there:--

When every heart receives
The engrafted word, whose vigorous shoots
Yield in their season tender leaves,
Expanding flowers, and ripened fruits:--

Leaves of profession ever green,
And flowers of promise never sere,
Till fruits of holiness are seen,
In rich succession round the year.[2]

The Church, universal, invisible, is indefectible:

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1 Montgomery, Original Hymns, Op. cit., p. 220
2 Ibid, p. 218

A sure and tried foundation stone,
  Lord God, in Zion thou hast laid;
Grounded and fixed on Christ alone
  Thy church shall flourish undismayed.

In vain the gates of hell assail,
  Impregnable is her defence;
The Rock of Ages cannot fail,
  Nor winds, nor floods remove her thence.[1]

This eternal, divine creation of God, the Church, abides in the world as a radiant witness to the world, and a succour to men:

Thus built upon eternal truth,
  High in mid-heaven, o'er land and sea,
Christ's church holds forth to age and youth
  A beacon and a sanctuary.[2]

MONTGOMERY'S VIEWS CONCERNING THE LORD'S SUPPER:

The Moravians of Montgomery's youth held to the view that "the true body and blood of Christ are really present in the Lord's Supper with the visible bread and wine, and are imparted and received."[3] There is no extant evidence which conclusively proves that the poet believed in the "real presence" taught by the Moravians. Nor can it be proved conclusively that he held to the "symbolic" or "spiritual" interpretation. However, two phrases which he used seem to indicate he may have held

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1 Montgomery, Original Hymns, op. cit., p. 255
2 Ibid, p. 115
3 Montgomery, Liturgic Hymns, op. cit., pp. 6,7

the latter view:

To feed by faith on Christ, my bread.[1]

and,

The tokens of thy dying love.[2]

It was Montgomery's belief that in and through the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper Christ offers anew to us, as He did at the Supper, the finished offering which on the Cross He gave to God once for all. (The eternal Christ, knowing the future, anticipates by a few hours, His finished work.) He asks that we do this in remembrance of Him.[3] Montgomery speaks for himself:

According to thy gracious word,
In meek humility,
This will I do, my dying Lord,
I will remember thee.

Thy body, broken for my sake,
My bread from heaven shall be:
Thy testamental cup I take,
And thus remember thee![4]

Having thus promised to remember Christ's sacrifice, the poet now pledges that as long as he lives he will remember the suffering and love involved in that sacrifice:

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1 Montgomery, Liturgic Hymns, op. cit.,p. 105
2 Ibid
3 Luke 22:19
4 Montgomery, Original Hymns, op. cit.,p. 104

Gethsemane can I forget?
  Or there thy conflict see,
Thine agony and bloody sweat,
  And not remember thee?

When to the cross I turn mine eyes
  And rest on Calvary,
O Lamb of God! my sacrifice!
  I must remember thee: --

Remember thee, and all thy pains,
  And all thy love to me;
Yea, while a breath, a pulse remains,
  Will I remember thee.[1]

MONTGOMERY'S VIEWS CONCERNING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE:

Underlying and undergirding Montgomery's conception of the Christian life, is the earnest hunger and thirst for righteousness which issues from complete dedication to God. Consequently, many of his hymns on the theme of the Christian life are biographical in nature, reflecting the vicissitudes and visions of his own earthly pilgrimage. The element of the "other world" is present, and we may say, prominent at times. However, while Montgomery realizes that the citizenship of the Christian "is in heaven", he never forgets that the Christian is involved in the system of this world, corrupt though it may be, for a divine purpose, and that God expects His "called out ones" to serve Him on this

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1 Montgomery, Original Hymns, op. cit., p. 104

mundane sphere. Montgomery's hymns are full of the glory of immortality, but at the same time, expressive of the reality of eternal life in the Christian's earthly experience.

The Christian is rightly depicted as one who is not at home in the world; the fetters of the flesh, the winsome way of the world, the subtlety of sin through the agents of the world, the flesh and the devil, -- these are defeating and distracting to the Christian during his earthly pilgrimage. He longs to be:

> Free from the flesh, and all its ills,
> The world and Satan free,
> To range the everlasting hills
> In sinless liberty.[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]

In the traffic of the world, the Christian needs poise and pause:

> Full speed along the world's highway,
> By crowds of eager travellers trod,

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1 Montgomery, Original Hymns, op. cit., p. 162

2 Montgomery, Original Hymns (Second edition, London; Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1853), p. 231

My soul, my soul, a moment stay,
To hold communion with thy God.[1]

The world cannot give the peace and rest for which the Christian is in quest:

O where shall rest be found,
Rest for the weary soul?
'T were vain the ocean-depths to sound,
Or pierce to either pole;
The world can never give
The bliss for which we sigh;
'T is not the whole of life to live;
Nor all of death to die.[2]

The Christian's lot in life is not an easy one:

Toil, trial, suffering, still await
On earth the pilgrim-throng,
Yet learn we, in our low estate,
The church triumphant's song.[3]

There is calm amid the conflict of life for the Christian who keeps his mind fixed on God:

Him wilt thou keep in perfect peace,
Whose mind is stayed on thee;
Me, Lord, from pining care release,
And vain perplexity.[4]

The poet prays for God's continual presence and love:

Let but thy presence with me go,
Thy love be my delight,
Then shall I walk, through weal or woe,
By faith, and not by sight.[5]

Montgomery sounds a buoyant and triumphant note in his words:

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1 Montgomery, Original Hymns, op. cit., p. 164
2 Ibid, p. 166
3 Ibid, p. 155
4 Ibid, p. 146 (Isaiah 26:3)
5 Ibid

Come on, companions of our way,
Who travel to eternal day
  Through this poor world of night;
Give to the Lord, in noble songs,
The praise that to his name belongs,
  As children of the light.

Called out of darkness, by his voice,
Be that clear shining path our choice,
  Which Christ our Captain trod!
Whether with flowers and fragrance crowned,
Or thorns and thistles interwound,
  It leads the soul to God.

Though pilgrims in a vale of woes,
Thick-strown with snares, and thronged
  with foes;
  Since Jesus journeyed through,
Plant but your steps where his have prest
The ground once cursed, -- that ground
  now blest,
  Is heaven's highway for you.[1]

James Montgomery considered the Christian life a school of holy living, preparatory to holy dying and the ensuing eternal reward. Eternal life, for the Christian, is being experienced, to a certain degree, here and now; the Christian may have a foretaste here of what is to come hereafter.

Heaven is a place of rest from sin;
  But all who hope to enter there,
Must here that holy course begin,[2]
  Which shall their souls for rest prepare.

Clean hearts, O God! in us create,
  Right spirits, Lord, in us renew;

---

1 Montgomery, Original Hymns, Op. cit., pp. 123, 124

2 Italics mine

Commence we now that higher state,
Now do thy will as angels do.

.....

A goodly heritage is ours,
There is a heaven on earth for us.

Firm in his footsteps may we tread,
Learn every lesson of his love;
And be from grace to glory led,
From heaven below to heaven above.[1]

This twofold heritage of the Christian, grace and glory, is poetically portrayed:

What an heritage were this!
An eternity of bliss,
Heaven below and heaven above,
O the miracle of love!

"Abba! Father!" then might I
Through the Holy Spirit cry;
Heir of God, with Christ joint-heir,
Grace and glory called to share.[2]

.....

The Lord will grace and glory give
To those who humbly seek his face;
We live for glory while we live,
And seek it in the paths of grace,

For grace is glory here begun,
And till the heavenly prize is won,
The Christian finds, through all his race,
That grace is glory, glory grace.[3]

Montgomery believed it to be the Christian's

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1 Montgomery, Original Hymns, op. cit., p. 177
2 Ibid, p. 152
3 Ibid, p. 131

privilege and responsibility in life to work, witness, and worship. He prayed:

> Father of eternal grace,
> Glorify thyself in me:
> Meekly beaming in my face,
> May the world thine image see.[1]

And, pledging himself to witness for Christ, he said:

> Then will I strive through earth's whole round,
> Thy name, thy knowledge to diffuse;
> And send the Gospel's joyful sound
> To pagans, infidels, and Jews.
>
> From Christian hearts divinely changed,
> Were the world's likeness thus to part,
> That world, from God no more estranged,
> Would soon be like the Christian's heart.[2]

MONTGOMERY'S VIEWS ON PRAYER:

James Montgomery was a man of prayer; his poetry on prayer is one genuine, practical proof of his spiritual stature. Prayer was to him the vital, living relation between man and God; personal participation in communion and fellowship with God, a much longed-for union of an "I" and a "Thou". Montgomery would agree with the confession of Chrysostom: οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδὲν εὐχῆς δυνατώτερον οὐδὲ ἴσον . --"There is nothing more powerful than prayer and there is nothing to be

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1 Montgomery, Original Hymns, op. cit., p. 147
2 Ibid, p. 138

compared with it."

Giving himself to the task of defining this spiritual exercise, which meant so much to him, but was so difficult to define, Montgomery penned:

> 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.
>
> 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 contrite sinner's voice
> Returning from his ways,
> While angels in their songs rejoice,
> And cry, "Behold he prays!"
>
> Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,
> The Christian's native air,
> His watchword at the gates of death;
> He enters heaven with prayer.[1]

The Christian poet deemed prayer an essential for the Christian:

> We perish if we cease from prayer;
> Oh! grant us power to pray.[2]

But the Christian is always a learner in the school of prayer, praying, as did the early followers of Christ:

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1 Montgomery, Original Hymns, op. cit., p. 53
2 Ibid, p. 56

Lord, teach us how to pray aright,
With reverence and with fear;
Though dust and ashes in thy sight,
We may, we must draw near.[1]

Montgomery marvels at the condescension of God in giving His creatures access to His throne of grace:

Thou, God art a consuming fire,
Yet mortals may find grace,
From toil and tumult to retire,
And meet thee face to face.

Though "holy, holy, holy, Lord!"
Seraph to seraph sings,
And angel-choirs, with one accord,
Worship with veiling wings;--

Though earth thy footstool, heaven thy throne,
Thy way amidst the sea,
Thy path deep floods, thy steps unknown,
Thy counsels mystery: --

Yet wilt thou look on him who lies
A suppliant at thy feet;
And harken to the feeblest cries
That reach thy mercy-seat.[2]

The prayer of the Christian is addressed to God through Christ and the Holy Spirit; Christ intercedes, the Spirit pleads:

Through him who all our sickness felt,
Who all our sorrows bare,
Through him in whom thy fulness dwelt
We offer up our prayer.

Touched with a feeling of our woes,
Jesus, our High Priest stands;

---

1 Montgomery, Original Hymns, op. cit., p. 56
2 Ibid, p. 58

All our infirmities he knows,
  Our souls are in his hands.[1]

.....

Nor prayer is made by man alone,
  The Holy Spirit pleads,
And Jesus, on the eternal throne,
  For sinners intercedes.[2]

Montgomery believed in perservering in prayer:

Patient prayer has power with God.[3]

Prayer is not a burden to be borne, an obligation to be fulfilled, something due God and must be paid; prayer is the supreme privilege:

O! what a privilege to kneel,
  Fall down and worship at thy feet,
My God! my Father! and to feel
  With thee communion high and sweet: --

To pour my spirit out in prayer,
  Or, on the wings of praise ascend,
Like Moses to the mount, and there
  Commune with thee, as friend with friend.[4]

One comprehensive prayer which the poet prayed, depicts the degree of his dedication to God:

One prayer I have, -- all prayers in one,
  When I am wholly thine;
Thy will, my God, thy will be done,
  And let that will be mine.[5]

---

1 Montgomery, Original Hymns, op. cit., p. 58
2 Ibid, pp. 53, 54
3 Ibid, p. 63
4 Ibid, p. 65
5 Ibid, p. 68

MONTGOMERY'S ESCHATOLOGICAL VIEWS:

DEATH:

Death, the penalty of sin, is the destiny of all men, since all men are sinful; it represents the separation of the soul from the body, or flesh, and the latter returns to the dust from which it came. The soul is held in abeyance until the righteous Judge determines its eternal destiny. The popular connotation of the word "death", that is, merely the cessation of life, is incomplete:

> 'Tis not the whole of life to live;
> Nor all of death to die.[1]

Montgomery believed in immediate "soul segregation" after death, that is, the just in heaven, the unjust in hell, each, in their disembodied state, awaiting the judgment:

> Where are the dead? In heaven or hell,
> Their disembodied spirits dwell;[2]
> Their buried forms in bonds of clay,
> Reserved until the judgment-day.[3]

The souls of the saints anticipate the "breaking up from sleep":

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1 Montgomery, Original Hymns, op. cit., p. 166

2 Montgomery uses the terms "soul" and "spirit" interchangeably.

3 Montgomery, Original Hymns, op. cit., p. 176

> Then when our bodies, dust to dust,
> And side by side their Sabbath keep,
> May our free souls among the just
> Watch for that breaking up from sleep,
> When once again we all shall be,
> Joint heirs of immortality.[1]

To offset the idea of "soul sleep", Montgomery refers to the "reasoning" quality of the soul after death:

> ...as these frames return to dust,
> Our reasoning souls among the just,
> Shall with the Lord our God be found
> In life's eternal bundle bound.[2]

He poetically proclaims that the dust of believers sleeps "in Jesus", and that the grave faithfully keeps its trust of "the germ of immortality" until the day of judgment:

> Go to the grave, which, faithful to its trust,
> The germ of immortality shall keep;
> While safe, as watched by cherubim, thy dust
> Shall, till the judgment-day, in Jesus sleep.[3]

It is supposed that the poet, in his reference to the grave keeping its trust of "the germ of immortality" has in mind the "potential" which shall later, through the power of God, become the σῶμα πνευματικόν, the spiritual body.

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1 Montgomery, Original Hymns, op. cit., p. 192
2 Ibid, p. 125
3 Ibid, pp. 266, 267

Death, for the Christian, is but a mysterious means to a glorious end:

> A child, a youth, a man,
> The whole of life below!
> Our time a breath, our course a span;
> Whence come we? whither go?
>
> Whence come we? --From the womb
> Of dark eternity;
> And thither go we, through the tomb,--
> Behold a mystery!
>
> For though with worms and dust
> His mortal relics lie,
> Death may not hold or harm the just;
> The spirit cannot die.[1]

The Christian, a "pilgrim" and "stranger" in this world, at times eagerly anticipates the relief and release which death will afford; he longs to be:

> Free from the flesh, and all its ills,
> The world and Satan free,
> To range the everlasting hills
> In sinless liberty.[2]

The time of death is unknown to man, but known to God, and by Him predetermined:

> Thy power, thy wisdom, and thy grace
> Bestowed our being, life, and breath,
> Fixed our condition, time, and place,
> The moment of our birth -- our death.[3]
> .....
> A Christian cannot die before his time,
> The Lord's appointment is the servant's hour.[4]

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1 Montgomery, Original Hymns, op. cit., p. 169
2 Ibid, p. 162
3 Ibid, p. 117
4 Ibid, p. 266

JUDGMENT:

That Montgomery believed in "particular" judgment, as well as "general" judgment, is revealed in his many poetical references already quoted concerning the separation of souls immediately after death. Death brings the "school of life" to a close, and the state of the soul after death is unchangeable. Realizing this, the poet is constrained to remind and warn the living:

> Lost spirits, from the dark abyss,
> Cry mournfully "Beware!"
> Spirits in glory, and in bliss,
> Sing joyfully "Prepare!"
>
> Thus timely warned, and moved with fear,
> Of wrath, let us beware;
> For life or death, in this new year,
> For earth and heaven prepare.[1]

The "general" judgment is to be an actual event, with Jesus Christ as Judge, divinely commissioned by the Father. At this time, judgment is to be passed upon all men, living and dead. The deeds done in the body will constitute the data for the Judge in His judgment.

> How well, how ill, howe'er employed,
> Our health, our strength, our talents lent;
> All we have suffered and enjoyed,
> In wisdom or in folly spent: -
>
> The secret things in darkness sealed,
> All we have felt, thought, spoken, done;

---

1 Montgomery, Original Hymns, op. cit., p. 243

In heaven's pure light must be revealed,
When time's last act puts out the sun.[1]

All men must pass before Christ's judgment throne,

Till, of past, present, and to come,
Time shall cast up the destined sum,
And, name by name, through that amount,
Call every unity to account.

Where'er ensepulchred they lie,
Each then must answer, "Here am I! "
And once, but once, all Adam's race
Meet for a moment face to face.

Then shall the King on either side,
As sheep from goats, the throng divide,
And those to bliss, and these to woe,
Rejoicing or lamenting go.[2]

Many of Montgomery's eschatological views are revealed in his imaginative account of the day after judgement:

The days and years of time are fled,
Sun, moon, and stars have shone their last;
The earth and sea gave up their dead,
Then vanished at the Archangel's blast;
All secret things have been revealed,
Judgment is passed, the sentence sealed,
And man to all eternity
What he is now henceforth must be.

From Adam to his youngest heir,
Not one escaped the muster-roll,
Each, as if he alone were there,
Stood up, and won or lost his soul;
These from the Judge's presence go
Down into everlasting woe;

---

1 Montgomery, Original Hymns, op. cit., p. 158
2 Ibid, pp. 182, 183

Vengeance hath barred the gates of hell,
The scenes within no tongue can tell.

But lo! far off the righteous pass
  To glory from the King's right hand;
In silence, on the sea of glass,
  Heaven's numbers without number stand,
While he who bore the cross lays down
His priestly robe and victor crown;
The mediatorial reign complete,
All things are put beneath his feet.[1]

HEAVEN AND HELL:

Montgomery believed heaven to be a place, vaguely "up", the eternal abode of the blessed. There, in the presence of God, the blessed live in a state of bliss incomprehensible to human understanding. On the other hand, hell, a place vaguely "down", he believed to be the eternal abode of the unjust, or condemned. There, estranged from God, the unjust suffer eternal punishment and anguish.

Vividly, the poet sets forth the eternal alternative:

Infinite bliss or misery,
Woe past, woe present, woe to be;
The fulness of felicity;
These are eternity to me.[2]

In heaven, the blessed:

Hunger, thirst, disease unknown,
  On immortal fruits they feed;

---

1 Montgomery, Original Hymns, op. cit., pp. 183, 184

2 Ibid, p. 186

Them, the Lamb amidst the throne,
  Shall to living fountains lead;
Joy and gladness banish sighs,
  Perfect love dispels all fear,
And forever from their eyes,
  God shall wipe away the tear.[1]

Attempting to comprehend the incomprehensible, Montgomery penned:

A life in heaven! --O what is this?
  The sum of all that faith believed;
Fulness of joy, and depths of bliss,
  Unseen, unfathomed, unconceived.[2]

But, in hell, the unjust are

Doomed for guilt to endless pains.[3]

The eschatological thought expressed in Montgomery's poetry, stated as it is, in eloquent and dignified terms, is a beautiful medium of Christian witness and warning.

A belief and burden of the mind and heart of James Montgomery, was that one day the whole earth would be Christendom. This thought, although not normally included in the scope of eschatology, is closely related to it. Dr. D. S. Cairns, in an article entitled, "Victory in This World", challenges this position held by Montgomery and many other noted hymn-writers. He asks: "Will the whole earth ever be a

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1 Montgomery, Original Hymns, op. cit., p. 185
2 Ibid, p. 177
3 Ibid, p. 187

Christendom, or is that a mistaken and presumptuous hope?" Defining his terms, he says, "This is not the same question as to whether all souls will be ultimately brought home to God. That is a theme of what may be called the larger eschatology or doctrine of the Last Things. It is a much larger question than that raised in this article. Here we are concerned only with the world of human history. By that term, Christendom, I do not mean that the nations should be only nominally Christian, or perfectly Christian, but that they should be really Christian, with the Christian leaven conquering the pagan in the soul and in society. Or, have we no good reason to expect anything of the kind, but simply, to vary the figure, a ding-dong battle all the way with the good becoming better and the bad becoming worse till the end comes? .....If the latter view is true there is something very gravely wrong with almost the entire hymnology of modern Protestant missions, for the great majority of the best of them are either hopeful, expectant prayers for the realization of Christ's Kingdom on earth or confident assertions of faith that one day 'the earth shall be full of the glory of God as the waters cover the sea.'"[1]

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1 D.S. Cairns, "Victory in This World," The International Review of Missions, Vol. XXXI, No. 122, (April, 1942), pp. 145, 146

The author, to illustrate his point, quotes several hymns, among them, two written by James Montgomery:

> O fear not, faint not, halt not now,
> Quit you like men, be strong.
> To Christ shall every nation bow,[1]
> And sing with you this song.
>
> Uplifted are the gates of brass,
> The bars of iron yield,
> Behold the King of glory pass,
> The Cross has won the field.[2]
>
> See Jehovah's banners[3] furled,
> Sheathed his sword; He speaks, 'tis done,
> And the kingdoms of this world
> Are the kingdoms of His Son.[4]

Two more of Montgomery's hymns on this theme may be quoted:

> He mounts the mediatorial throne,
> To claim earth's kingdoms for his own:
> Him every eye again shall see
> Descend in power and majesty,
> And put all foes beneath his feet.[5]

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1 Dr. Cairns is right in his thesis, that Montgomery holds the optimistic view that the whole earth will one day be a Christendom. The altered form of the hymn quoted above supports this view, but it is not as Montgomery wrote it. The original reads: "To Christ shall Buddhu's votaries bow,..." Dr. Cairns was quoting from The Scottish Psalter and Church Hymnary, which contains the altered text. The hymn, "Lift up Your Heads Ye Gates of Brass", is a small portion of a long poem bearing the caption, "China Evangelized", and is based on Isaiah xiii.4. The original text of this hymn does not support Dr. Cairn's thesis, but many others do. (Italics mine.)

2 Montgomery, Original Hymns, op. cit.,pp.213-216

3 The original reads, "banner", singular.

4 The Scottish Hymnary, p. 389 (Orig. Hymns, p.77)

5 Montgomery, Original Hymns, op. cit., p. 29

.....

Till the latest field is won:
And all people
Bow the knee, and kiss the Son.[1]

Thus, Montgomery explicitly asserts the victory of the Gospel in earth, space, and time.

Dr. Cairns states a second view concerning the consummation of history: "Now side by side with this hopeful view of the consummation of history there has gone in the Church a much darker view, closely and even verbally akin to that found in the Jewish Apocalyptic writings, which basing itself also on certain New Testament passages has maintained that we have no good reason to look for such a world victory of the Gospel, that on the contrary every advance of that Gospel will be met by a new advance of evil, and that the battle will continue till Christ comes again in glory and in power to terminate the battle, to judge all mankind, to send the wicked to their doom, to take away the righteous to heaven and to destroy the earth. The Advent is thus purely an Advent to judgment. The reign is in

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1 Montgomery, Original Hymns, op. cit., p. 221

heaven.[1,2]

This dark and sombre view, Dr. Cairns believes to be a minority view, usually mitigated by faith in a millennium.

"The Church has at the very heart of its faith the conviction that Christ ought to reign over the world for which He died. ....Surely the merely tribunal view of history is not enough. God is not adequately seen when we think of Him in quasi-Deistic fashion as sitting above His world watching it produce justiciable beings and trying them as they emerge from the great nature system and sending them each to his own place in the eternal world. All human analogies, it is true, fail, but we surely come nearer the Christian mark when we think of Him as far more in the heart of the long struggle than any mere judge ought to be, as working out an effective purpose of Holy Love, a purpose not exhausted by Creation or the Church with its

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1 Cairns, op. cit., pp. 150, 151

2 Poetical evidence may also be presented that James Montgomery supported this second view: (Original Hymns, p. 183):

"When, while quick and dead assemble,
Flames this universe destroy,
Though the wicked quake and tremble,
Saints shall lift their heads with joy;
Raised to life, like them, may we
With the Lord, for ever be."

sacraments, but consummated so far as history can take it by the Advent."[1,2]

After a detailed review of "realized eschatology", Dr. Cairns asserts it to be lacking in this thought of a victorious reign. In his conclusion, he finds himself quite in agreement with the view expressed in the hymns which he quoted. "I cannot but believe, therefore," concluded Dr. Cairns, "that for all their uncritical blending of the different Biblical elements in the Christian doctrine of the Last Things, these songs of the Christian mission have somehow found their way to a fuller truth than has the 'realized eschatology'".[3]

MONTGOMERY'S VIEWS CONCERNING THE WRITING OF PARAPHRASES AND METRICAL PSALMS:

Considering the poet's strict views on the subject of versifying Scripture, it is rather surprising that he was the author of any Metrical Psalms or Paraphrases.[4] "In plain truth", said Montgomery, "Scripture

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1 Cairns, op. cit., pp. 150, 151

2 The punctuation, or lack of it, throughout this article, is apparently as Dr. Cairns would have it.

3 Cairns, op. cit., p. 162

4 Montgomery was the author of 62 Metrical Psalms and at least 12 Paraphrases. The content of the religious thought expressed in this portion of his sacred writings is included in the previous doctrinal review.

language, whether historical, poetic, or doctrinal, is so comprehensive, that in anywise to alter, is to impair it; if you add, you encumber; if you diminish, you maim the sense; to paraphrase is to enfeeble everlasting strength; to imitate, is to impoverish inexhaustible riches; and to translate into verse, is necessarily to do one, or the other, or both of these, in nearly every line."[1,2]

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1 Olney Hymns, (William Collins, Glasgow, 1829), Introduction by James Montgomery, p. xxxiii. (Italics mine.)

2 The criticism which Dr. James Martineau makes (in the preface to his book, Hymns for the Christian Church and Home) of Dr. Watt's metrical versions of some Psalms, is applicable in a few instances to Montgomery. Martineau said of Watts: "Every adaptation of a Jewish psalm to Christian worship affords an instance of theological adaptation; and the same rule which is applied to Dr. Watt's hymns when their Trinitarianism is expelled, Watts himself has systematically applied to David's writings in reforming and spiritualizing their Judaism....In truth, the dogmatic phraseology and conceptions of every church constitute the mere dialect in which its religious spirit is expressed; and to change the technical modes of thought peculiar to any portion of Christendom into a different or more comprehensive language is but to translate the intellectual idioms of one religious province into those of another. It is simply to remove an obstruction, which the author himself cannot remove, to his influence and appreciation in spiritual regions foreign to his own, and to introduce him to the veneration of thousands to whom otherwise he must appear as a repulsive stranger." (Martineau, Hymns for the Christian Church and Home, John Green, London, 1840) Preface, p. ix.)

One example of Montgomery's "spiritualized Judaism" is found in his version of Psalm 72:

"It cannot be denied", continued Montgomery, "and it need not be concealed, that all attempts to versify portions of Holy Writ must fail in the main purpose of poetry, which is so to adorn or dignify its themes, that by the new light thrown upon them they may be exalted beyond any previous conception of their beauty or their grandeur which obtained to ordinary minds. Now, it so happens, that the authorised translation of the scriptures, to ninety-nine out of a hundred of our countrymen, is the Bible itself, as though neither Hebrew nor Greek prototypes existed, and the oracles of God had been actually delivered in their own tongue. Hence, the most perfect metrical rendering of the most poetical passages has the

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Hail to the Lord's anointed!
  Great David's greater Son;
Hail, in the time appointed,
  His reign on earth begun!
He comes to break oppression,
  To let the captive free;
To take away transgression,
  And rule in equity.

.....

His name shall stand for ever;
  That name to us is -- Love.

(Montgomery, The Poetical Works of James Montgomery, - Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, London, 1850, - Vol. II, pp. 287, 289.)

same comparative flatness, to the multitude of readers, as the best translations of the classics have to the learned, who are familiar with the originals..."[1]

"The prime cause of miscarriage," says Montgomery, "in every attempt to paraphrase scripture passages, appears to be, that, in order to bring them within the rules of rhyme and metre, all that the poet introduces of his own becomes alloy, which debases the standard of the original. On the contrary, when he adorns a train of his private thoughts with scripture images and ideas, or interweaves with his own language, scripture phrases, that fall without straining into his verse, the latter is illustrated and enriched by the alliance, or the amalgamation. In a word, divine themes are necessarily degraded by human interpolations; while human compositions are necessarily exalted, by the felicitous introduction of sacred allusions. This is a secret of which few, that have meddled with the perilous and delicate subject, have been aware."[2]

Montgomery, as a poet, had tried his hand at Paraphrases and Psalms, and as a literary critic, had

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1 Holland, op. cit., V, p. 231
2 Olney Hymns, op. cit., Introduction, pp. xxxiv, xxxv.

studied those written by others, ancient and modern. His experience as a poet and observation as a critic led him to the firm conviction "that the harp of David yet hangs upon the willow, disdaining the touch of any hand less skilful than his own."[1]

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1 Montgomery, The Christian Psalmist, (Introduction), p. viii. (For this reference, Montgomery gives credit to the Italian poet, Angelo de Costanzo, who used it pertaining to the lyre of Virgil.)

CHAPTER FOUR

MISCELLANEOUS POETRY AND PROSE

> "I cannot deny myself the satisfaction of expressing a firm belief that neither morality nor religion can have suffered from our writings; and with respect to yours, I know that both have been greatly benefited by them..."
>
> William Wordsworth
>
> (From a letter Wordsworth wrote to Montgomery)[1]

It would be interesting to know Montgomery's reaction to Wordsworth's commendation thus stated. As a Christian literary critic, Montgomery had criticised Wordsworth for being vague and indistinct in his poetical statement of faith. Undoubtedly, Montgomery felt that morality and religion would have benefited more had Wordsworth been positive and straightforward in his assertion of Christian truth.

In his book, The Great Poets and Their Theology, Augustus H. Strong states that "Wordsworth is not a specifically Christian poet, and we shall look through his writings in vain for any evidence that he intended to teach the details of Christian doctrine. Yet the

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1 Holland, op. cit., Vol. V, pp. 202, 203

spirit of his poetry is the spirit of Christianity, and that in spite of the fact that he felt it his mission to be a poet of nature. He would never have been able to find in nature so much to awe and to console, he never could have seen in her so much truth and love, if he had not carried into his contemplations what he had learned from the gospel of Christ.... The interpretation of nature, as well as the interpretation of man, is an exclusively Christian achievement. The wisdom and love of God were never seen in nature, until Christ himself had been revealed as the Lord of nature and yet as the Redeemer of man."[1]

Wordsworth's poem,"Excursion", was reviewed by Montgomery in The Eclectic Review. The literary critic vindicates Wordsworth's claim to the proud distinction of having executed "a literary work that will live", but he laments that, amidst emanations of genius so brilliant, and speculations on the philosophy of human feeling often so striking and so just, there should be no allusion to the religion of the New Testament. "The love of Nature", said Montgomery in his

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1 Augustus H. Strong, The Great Poets and Their Theology, (Baptist Tract and Book Society, London, 1899), pp. 368, 369

review, "is the purest, the most sublime, and the sweetest emotion of the mind, of which the senses are the ministers; yet the love of Nature alone cannot ascend from earth to heaven, conducting us, as by the steps of Jacob's ladder, to the love of God; nor can it descend from heaven to earth, leading us, by similar gradations, to the universal love of man; otherwise it had not been necessary for him 'who thought it not robbery to be equal with God' to take upon himself 'the form of a servant', and die, 'the just for the unjust that he might bring us to God by Himself.'"[1]

Wordsworth was a great poet. According to the criterion of judgment by which many men determine greatness, Montgomery was not a great poet. He was, however, a great Christian poet! Hear his description of the highest aim and motive of a poet:

> What is the Poet's highest aim,
> His richest heritage of fame?
> ---To track the warrior's fiery road,
> With havoc, spoil, destruction strow'd,
> While nations bleed along the plains,
> Dragg'd at his chariot-wheels in chains?
> ---With fawning hand to woo the lyre,
> Profanely steal celestial fire,
> And bid an idol's altar blaze
> With incense of unhallow'd praise?

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1 Holland, op. cit., Vol. III, pp. 64, 65. (Eclectic Review, January, 1815, pp. 13-39)

---With syren strains, Circean art,
To win the ear, beguile the heart,
Wake the wild passions into rage,
And please and prostitute the age?

NO! --to the generous bard belong
Diviner themes and purer song:
---To hail Religion from above,
Descending in the form of Love,
And pointing through a world of strife
The narrow way that leads to life:
---To pour the balm of heavenly rest
Through Sorrow's agonizing breast;
With Pity's tender arms embrace
The orphans of a kindred race;
And in one zone of concord bind
The lawless spoilers of mankind:
---To sing in numbers boldly free
The wars and woes of liberty;
The glory of her triumphs tell,
Her nobler sufferings when she fell,
Girt with the phalanx of the brave,
Or widow'd on the patriot's grave,
Which tyrants tremble to pass by,
Even on the car of Victory.

These are the Bard's sublimest views,
The angel-visions of the Muse,
That o'er his morning slumbers shine;
These are his themes,--and these were mine.[1]

James Montgomery was one of a great galaxy of literary luminaries. His lifetime reached from the closing years of the reign of Dr. Johnson to the age of Tennyson. Some of the very greatest names in English literature were his contemporaries. Cowper, Blake, Campbell, Burns, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Crabbe, Gibbon,

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1 James Montgomery, The Poetical Works of James Montgomery, (Longman, Orme, Brown, Green, and Longmans, London, 1841), I, pp. 228-229. (Italics mine.)

Burke, Paine, Scott, Byron, Shelley, Keats, De Quincy, Southey, Lamb, Hazlitt, Hannah More, and Jane Austen were all writing during Montgomery's lifetime. Carlyle and Macaulay were in the center of the literary stage; Browning and Dickens were making their entrances as Montgomery prepared to make his exit. He lived through the period of literature when the romantic and naturalist schools of thought were throwing off their yoke of classicism; his Christian witness was pertinent and timely. As Milton in his "Lycidas" said, so could Montgomery say, "That strain I heard was of a higher mood."

Let Southey sing of war's alarms,
The pride of battle, din of arms,
The glory and the guilt,--
Of nations barb'rously enslaved,
Of realms by patriot valour saved,
Of blood insanely spilt,
And millions sacrificed to fate,
To make one little mortal great.

Let Scott, in wilder strains, delight
To chant the Lady and the Knight,
The tournament, the chase,
The wizard's deed without a name,
Perils by ambush, flood and flame,
Or picturesquely trace
The hills that form a world on high,
The lake that seems a downward sky.

Let Byron, with untrembling hand,
Impetuous foot and fiery brand,
Lit at the flames of hell,
Go down and search the human heart,
Till fiends from every corner start,
Their crimes and plagues to tell;

Then let him fling the torch away,
And sun his soul in heaven's pure day.

Let Wordsworth weave, in mystic rhyme,
Feelings ineffably sublime,
And sympathies unknown;
Yet so our yielding breasts enthral,
His Genius shall possess us all,
His thoughts become our own,
And strangely pleased, we start to find
Such hidden treasure in our mind.

Let Campbell's sweeter numbers flow
Through every change of joy and woe;
Hope's morning dreams display,
The Pennsylvanian cottage wild,
The frenzy of O'Connor's child,
Or Linden's dreadful day;
And still in each new form appear
To every Muse and Grace more dear.

Transcendent Masters of the lyre!
Not to your honours I aspire:
Humbler yet higher views
Have touched my spirit into flame:
The pomp of fiction I disclaim;
Fair Truth! be thou my muse;
Reveal in splendour deeds obscure,
Abase the proud, exalt the poor.

.....

Thou, whom I love, but cannot see,
My Lord, my God! look down on me;
My low affections raise;
The spirit of liberty impart
Enlarge my soul, inflame my heart,
And,while I spread thy praise,
Shine on my path, in mercy shine,
Prosper my work, and make it thine.[1]

Montgomery's Christian convictions were the main-spring which set the whole machinery of his poetical

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1 Montgomery, The Poetical Works of James Montgomery, op. cit., III, pp. 201-204 (Italics mine.)

work in motion. It was this which gave coherence, symmetry and soul to his writings.

In sincere humility, Montgomery retrospects prosaically as to his motives and motifs as a poet: "I followed no mighty leader, belonged to no school of the poets, pandered to no impure passion; I veiled no vice in delicate disguise, gratified no malignant propensity to personal satire; courted no powerful patronage; I wrote neither to suit the manners, the taste, nor the temper of the age; but I appealed to universal principles, to imperishable affections, to primary elements of our common nature, found wherever man is found in civilized society; wherever his mind has been raised above barbarian ignorance, or his passion purified from brutal selfishness."[1]

The Christian witness of James Montgomery was directed not only to man's spiritual need, but also to his social need. The poet's religious views threw into acute relief the poignancies of the human plight. In his so-called "secular and miscellaneous" works,[2]

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1 Montgomery, The Poetical Works of James Montgomery, op. cit., I, Preface, p. xxvii

2 This classification is used to distinguish between Montgomery's works (poetry and prose) written for a distinctly religious purpose, and those which were not. Actually, none of his works can be called "secular" in

Christian truth is wedded intimately to the empirical circumstances, -- the social, political and intellectual climate of his day.

Montgomery was twenty when the French Revolution broke; as a member of the staff of a newspaper, he felt the pressure of politics and the tension of the times. The French Revolution was hailed by many in Britain as being pregnant with promise; they hoped it would mean the end of the Bourbons and the establishment of democracy in France. But after 1792, when the French issued their Edict of Fraternity, British opinion changed and the people were gripped with alarm. The political excesses leading to bloodshed abroad, aroused those in high places on this side of the Channel. Violent reaction set in, which checked all reform and repealed many of the freedom-guaranteeing laws. Habeas Corpus was suspended; acts forbidding treasonable practices and seditious meetings were passed and rigidly enforced. The masses moved restlessly, secretly hoping that the foreign force of revolution would break the grip of the Hanoverian dynasty.

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the popular connotation of the term. Relating religion to life, as he does, no product of his pen is "secular" in the sense of being non-religious, and certainly, no one can detect in any of Montgomery's extant works that which is irreligious.

In 1795, the King's carriage was assaulted by a mob. In the year 1796 there was widespread fear of a French invasion. In 1797, Britain was confronted with a monetary crisis; in 1799, a serious food shortage.

During this decade of political crisis and confusion, Montgomery observed and cautiously interpreted the stirring events as the editor of a newspaper. Although supposedly free, the press was still shackled by government rules and regulations, and the twice-imprisoned editor chafed under the unjust and undemocratic political policy.

"The Wars of the French Revolution", were consecutively chronicled and commented upon by Editor Montgomery. In 1803, Bonaparte declared Switzerland "the open frontier of France!" The liberty-loving editor wrote: "The heart of Switzerland is broken! and liberty has been driven from the only sanctuary which she has found on the continent. But the unconquered and unconquerable offspring of Tell, disdaining to die slaves in the land where they were born free, are emigrating to America..."[1]

Napoleon's action in Switzerland, which wrung from her grasp her independence and liberty, prompted

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1 Holland, op. cit., II, p. 27

Montgomery to write his poem, "The Wanderer of Switzerland", which, when published in 1806, won for him a place on the bard-roll of living English poets. Prior to this date, the literary reputation of James Montgomery was still comparatively local. Anonymous contributions to the Poetical Register, under the pseudonym "ALCAEUS", had drawn forth much editorial praise, and produced interest and curiosity. In this lyric of liberty, Montgomery depicts by dialogue the plight of a fugitive family fleeing from Switzerland in consequence of its subjugation by the French. The "Wanderer" and his family receive hospitality in the humble home of a shepherd, beyond the frontiers. Although this poem was written during the editor-poet's period of spiritual struggle, it has a distinctly religious tone, and reflects Montgomery's warm sympathy for suffering humanity, his charitable, Christian spirit.

Shepherd: Welcome, Wanderer as thou art,
All my blessings to partake;
Yet thrice welcome to my heart,
For thine injured country's sake.

.....

Here, though lowly be my lot,
Enter freely, freely share
All the comforts of my cot,
Humble shelter, homely fare.

Spouse! I bring a suffering guest,
With his family of grief;
Give the weary pilgrims rest,
Yield the exiles sweet relief!

Shepherd's Wife: I will give them sweet relief:
Weary pilgrims! welcome here;
Welcome, family of grief!
Welcome to my warmest cheer.

Wanderer: When in prayer the broken heart
Asks a blessing from above,
Heaven shall take the Wanderer's part,
Heaven reward the stranger's love.

Shepherd: Haste recruit the failing fire,
High the winter-faggots raise:
See the crackling flames aspire;
O how cheerfully they blaze!

Mourners! now forget your cares,
And, till supper-board be crowned,
Closely draw your fire-side chairs;
Form the dear domestic round.[1]

As a friend of freedom, Montgomery rejoiced when he learned of the Abolition of the Slave Trade by an Act of the British Legislature in March, 1807. In honour of that great event, he began his poem entitled, "The West Indies", which, when published two years later, greatly contributed to and enlarged his fame as a poet. But Montgomery was not seeking fame; this poem was born of a long-standing burden of his heart. Said he: "having ever since I penned a paragraph, either in verse or prose, for a newspaper, availed myself of every fair

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1 Holland, op.cit., I, pp. 12-14

opportunity to expose the iniquities and abominations of the Slave Trade and Slavery, I gave my whole mind to the theme. It haunted me day and night."[1]

The title page of the poem bears the scriptural admonition: "Receive him for ever; not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved."[2] The religious element is prominent throughout this long poem.

Montgomery begins by declaring triumphantly the glorious fact of freedom:

> Thy chains are broken, Africa, be free!
> Thus saith the island-empress of the sea;
> Thus saith Britannia. O ye winds and waves!
> Waft the glad tidings to the land of slaves.[3]
>
> .....

Setting forth the moral and religious aspects of the problem of slavery, the poet asks:

> Is he not man, though knowledge never shed
> Her quickening beams on his neglected head?
> Is he not man, though sweet religion's voice
> Ne'er made the mourner in his God rejoice?
> Is he not man, by sin and suffering tried?
> Is he not man, for whom the Saviour died?
> Belie the Negro's powers: --in headlong will,
> Christian! thy brother thou shalt prove him still:
> Belie his virtues; since his wrongs began,
> His follies and his crimes have stamped him Man.[4]

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1 Holland, op. cit., I, p. 129
2 Philemon 5:15,16
3 Montgomery, Works, op. cit., I, p. 133
4 Ibid, pp. 145, 146

.....

Subjects by mercenary despots sold;
Victims of justice prostitute for gold;[1]

.....

Vividly versifying the evils of this terrible traffic, Montgomery wrote:

'Twas night:--his babes around him lay at rest,
Their mother slumbered on their father's breast:
A yell of murder rang around their bed;
They woke; their cottage blazed; the victims fled;
Forth sprang the ambush'd ruffians on their prey,
They caught, they bound, they drove them far away;
The white man bought them at the mart of blood;
In pestilential barks they cross'd the flood;
Then were the wretched ones asunder torn,
To distant isles, to separate bondage borne,
Denied, though sought with tears, the sad relief
That misery loves,--the fellowship of grief.
The Negro, spoil'd of all that nature gave
To freeborn man, thus shrunk into a slave,
His passive limbs, to measured tasks confined,
Obey'd the impulse of another mind;
A silent, secret, terrible control,
That ruled his sinews, and repress'd his soul.
Not for himself he wak'd at morning-light,
Toil'd the long day, and sought repose at night;
His rest, his labour, pastime, strength, and health,
Were only portions of a master's wealth;
His love--O, name not love, where Britons doom
The fruits of love to slavery from the womb.[2]

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1 Montgomery, Works, op. cit., p. 147
2 Ibid, pp. 159, 160

Lives there a savage ruder than the slave?
Cruel as death, insatiate as the grave,
False as the winds that round his vessel blow,
Remorseless as the gulph that yawns below,
Is he who toils upon the wafting flood,
A Christian broker in the trade of blood;
Boisterous in speech, in action prompt and bold,
He buys, he sells,--he steals, he kills, for gold.[1]

The hands of many nations were stained with blood in this brutal business of man's inhumanity to man. But God, who is no respecter of persons, can alone say: "Vengeance is mine, I will repay!"

--Thunder and earthquake, whirlwind, flood, and fire,
Midst reeling mountains and disparting plains,
Tell the pale world,--"the God of vengeance reigns."

Nor in the majesty of storms alone,
The Eternal makes his dread displeasures known;
At his command the pestilence abhorr'd
Spares the poor slave, and smites the haughty lord...[2]

.....

God is a Spirit, veil'd from human sight,
In secret darkness of eternal light;
Through all the glory of his works we trace
The hidings of his counsel and his face;
Nature, and time, and change, and fate fulfil,
Unknown, unknowing, his mysterious will;
Mercies and judgments mark him, every hour,
Supreme in grace, and infinite in power.[3]

Missionary-minded Montgomery, in this poem, penned not only the news of freedom from slavery, but also

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1 Montgomery, Works, op. cit., pp. 159, 160
2 Ibid, p. 164
3 Ibid, pp. 163, 164

the Christian message of salvation: freedom from sin.

> And thou, poor Negro! scorn'd of all mankind;
> Thou dumb and impotent, and deaf and blind;
> Thou dead in spirit! toil*degraded slave,
> Crushed by the curse on Adam to the grave;
> The messengers of peace, o'er land and sea,
> That sought the sons of sorrow, stoop'd to thee.
> --The captive rais'd his slow and sullen eye;
> He knew no friend, nor deemed a friend was nigh,
> Till the sweet tones of Pity touch'd his ears,
> And Mercy bathed his bosom with her tears:
> Strange were those tones, to him those tears
> were strange;
> He wept and wondered at the mighty change,
> Felt the quick pang of keen compunction dart,
> And heard a still small whisper in his heart,
> A voice from heaven, that bade the outcast rise
> From shame on earth to glory in the skies.
>
> From isle to isle the welcome tidings ran;
> The slave that heard them started into man:
> Like Peter, sleeping in his chains, he lay,--
> The angel came, his night was turn'd to day;
> "Arise!" his fetters fall, his slumbers flee;
> He wakes to life, he springs to liberty.
>
> .....
>
> To heaven the Christian Negro sent his sighs,
> In morning vows and evening sacrifice;
> He pray'd for blessings to descend on those
> That dealt to him the cup of many woes.
>
> .....
>
> Ennobling virtue fix'd his hopes above,
> Enlarged his heart, and sanctified his love:
> With humble steps the paths of peace he trod,
> A happy pilgrim, for he walk'd with God.[1]

Concluding this poem with the optimistic note of the universal, millenial reign of Christ, Montgomery wrote:

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1 Montgomery, Works, op. cit., pp. 169, 170

Nor in the isles and Africa alone
Be the Redeemer's cross and triumph known:
Father of Mercies! speed the promised hour;
Thy kingdom come with all-restoring power;
Peace, virtue, knowledge, spread from pole to pole,
As round the world the ocean-waters roll!
---Hope waits the morning of celestial light;
Time plumes his wings for everlasting flight;
Unchanging seasons have their march begun;
Millennial years are hastening to the sun;
Seen through thick clouds, by Faith's trans-piercing eyes,
The New Creation shines in purer skies.
--All hail!--the age of crime and suffering ends;
The reign of righteousness from heaven descends;
Vengeance for ever sheathes the afflicting sword;
Death is destroy'd, and Paradise restored;
Man, rising from the ruins of his fall,
Is one with God, and God is All in All.[1,2]

Montgomery availed himself of every opportunity for Christian witness; his methods were dignified, and most effective. As a Reviewer of literary contributions then current, his literary criticism is tactfully tinged with his Christian convictions. In his review of Brown's, History of Missions, our poet, the son of

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1 Montgomery, Works, op. cit., pp. 178, 179

2 Montgomery wrote a hymn for Negroes; it consists of nine stanzas; the last two are:

Our Master, JESUS, takes delight
In hearts made pure within;
Though we are black, our souls are white,
When He forgives our sin.

Our Master, JESUS, who didst give
Thyself to die for me,
Grant the poor Negro grace to live,
And grace to die for Thee.
(Original Hymns, p. 210)

missionary-parents, who died prematurely on the mission field, said: "...it is a fact awfully illustrative of the essential depravity of the heart, that while the greatest energies of the greatest minds, the utmost means of the most enlightened nations are, more or less, continually exercised in achieving the destruction of their species and the desolation of nature, the labours of the missionary are by numbers treated as visionary, and by others deemed expensive."[1]

The Reviewer reprimands Protestants for their lethargy and indolence with regard to missions, and commends the missionary zeal of the Roman Catholics: "It is to the shame of Protestants, that the professors of the true faith have shown themselves far less zealous to promulgate it than the antichristian Church of Rome. ...Wherever Popery has been enforced by fire and sword, we regard the promulgators with horror, and the converts with compassion; but wherever the truths of the Gospel -- the <u>essential</u> truths of the Gospel, however mingled with Roman mistakes in the interpretation ----- have been sincerely taught, we cannot doubt that the blessing of God has accompanied them; and it is far from being improbable that, in the day of judgment, there

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1 Holland, <u>op. cit.</u>, III, p. 87

will rise from the remotest regions of South America, the now interdicted shores of Japan, and the impenetrable recesses of China, thousands and tens of thousands to call <u>those</u> blessed, whose names are unrecorded on earth and whose good works are absolutely forgotten as if they had never existed."[1]

In this review, Montgomery propounds a theory which he had long advocated, namely, that evangelical teaching must <u>precede</u> civilization: "The wisdom of man says, 'first civilize barbarians, and then Christianize them;' and the wisdom of man has proved itself foolishness in every experiment of the kind which it has made, though it must be confessed that it has been too prudent or too selfish to make many. The wise counsel of God is very different. This says, go and preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, whether <u>Greeks</u> or <u>barbarians</u>; if to the latter, you <u>will</u> civilize them by so doing, and just in proportion as they are <u>Christianized</u> they will be <u>civilized</u>. No motives less powerful than conviction of sin, fear of hell, faith in Christ as Saviour, His love shed abroad in their hearts, and hope of everlasting life, --no motives less powerful than these can command attention from fierce, obstinate, sensual savages,

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1 Holland, <u>op. cit.</u>, III, p. 88

to plans of civilization, much less wean them from their roving, indolent, cruel habits, and make them stationary, social ,gentle, self-denying beings. If there be an instance to the contrary in all the intercourse of Europeans with untutored Pagans in Asia, Africa, or America, let it be produced as a confutation of our remark; but instances in confirmation of it may be produced in every quarter of the globe, among Greenlanders, Esquimaux, Indians, Negroes, and Hottentots."[1]

At home, Christian civilization tolerated and condoned much that was not Christian. Montgomery leagued himself with other local Christian leaders to rouse the country and to persuade the legislature against the State Lottery as a system of legalized gambling. He had, however, for years been a party to this practice, for it was then customary for the publishers of newspapers to procure lottery tickets for persons who applied for them, from any of the offices with which they had current accounts for advertising.[2] Before he could conscientiously campaign against this corruption, Montgomery had to free himself from his entanglements as one who advertized and sold lottery

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1 Holland, op. cit., III, p. 89

2 Montgomery asserted: "I was never for a moment tempted to hazard a shilling on a turn of the wheel for myself." (Ibid, p. 114)

tickets. First, he discontinued the sale of tickets. Concerning this action on his part, he said: "Familiarity with some kinds of sin deadens the consciousness of it. This was not the case with me in reference to the State Lottery. It was familiarity with it which convinced me of the sin of dealing in its deceptive wares. ...they came to buy hope, and I sold them disappointment! ...I said to myself, at length, 'I will immediately give up this traffic of delusion.' I did so, and from that moment never sold another share."[1]

"This, however", said the editor, "was only cutting off the left hand of a profitable sin, while with the right I was still accepting the hire of iniquity. The proprietors of newspapers do not deem themselves responsible for the contents of advertisements which appear on their pages, so long as these are free from libellous, immoral, or blasphemous matter. Lottery advertisements...formed a considerable proportion of the very moderate amount of pecuniary means..by which I was enabled to maintain my paper at all. But when my friend.. and I, several years after my relinquishment of lottery sales, determined to attack the great state evil itself

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1 Montgomery, Works, op. cit., II, pp. 180, 181

with open, uncompromising hostility, I felt that I could not consistently, nor indeed honestly, support him in his plans of aggression, while I was an actual accessory before the fact to the mischiefs which it was perpetuating throughout the length and breadth of the land, and especially, so far as I was implicated, within the range of my editorial influence. The question had long troubled me in secret; but, as in the former case, a final decision upon it was deferred, till my friend one day unexpectedly attacked me with a recommendation to renounce all connection with 'the accursed thing', which we both had made up our minds to hold up to public abhorrence and reprobation. The counsel was hard to a person in my circumstances: conscience and cupidity had a sharp conflict; but the battle was not a drawn one; the better principle prevailed; and after the autumn of 1816 I never admitted another lottery advertisement into my paper. Nor did I ever, for one moment, repent the sacrifice."[1]

The poet's pen became active in denouncing this enslaving evil; he wrote:

> ....To those, who, fain "their luck to try,"
> Sell Hope, and Disappointment buy.

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1 Montgomery, Works, op. cit., II, pp. 181-183

The wily sorceress here reveals,
With proud parade, her mystic Wheels;
--Those Wheels, on which the nation runs
Over the morals of its Sons;
--Those Wheels, at which the nation draws
Through shouting streets its broken laws!
Engines of plotting Fortune's skill
To lure, entangle, torture, kill.
Behold her, in imperial pride,
King, Lords and Commons at her side;
Arm'd with authority of state,
The public peace to violate;
More might be told,--but not by me
Must this "eternal blazon" be.
Between her Wheels, the Phantom stands,
With Syren voice and Harpy hands:
She turns the enchanted axle round;
Forth leaps the "TWENTY THOUSAND POUND!"[1]
That "twenty thousand" one has got;
--But twenty thousand more have not.
These curse her to her face, deplore
Their loss, then--take her word once more;
Once more deceived, they rise like men
Bravely resolve -- to try again;
Again they fail; --again trepann'd,
She mocks them with her sleight of hand;
Still fired with rage, with avarice steel'd,
Perish they may, but never yield;
They woo her till their latest breath,
Then snatch their prize -- a blank in death.

Fierce, but familiar, at their call,
The veriest fiend of Satan's fall;
---The fiend that tempted him to stake
Heaven's bliss against the burning lake;
---The fiend, that tempted him again,
To burst the darkness of his den,
And risk whate'er of wrath untried
Eternal justice yet could hide,
For one transcendent chance, by sin,
Man and his new-made world to win;

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1 On one occasion Montgomery happened to sell the sixteenth of a ticket which turned up a prize of twenty thousand pounds. The price paid for the share was 23s.6d. (Montgomery, Works, op. cit., II, p. 175)

---That fiend, while Satan play'd his part
At Eve's fond ear, assail'd her heart,
And tempted her to hazard more
Than fallen Angels lost before;
They ruin'd but themselves -- her crime
Brought death on all the race of time:
---That fiend comes forth, like Aetna's
flame;
The SPIRIT OF GAMBLING call his name;
So flush'd and terrible in power,
The Priests themselves he would devour;
But straight, by Act of Parliament,
Loose through the land his plagues are sent.
The Polypus himself divides,
A legion issues from his sides;
Ten thousand shapes he wears at will,
In every shape a devil still;
Eager and restless to be known
By any mark, except his own;
In airy, earthly, heavenly guise,
No matter,--if it strike the eyes;
Yet ever at the clink of pelf,
He starts, and shrinks into himself:
---A traitor now, with face of truth,
He dupes the innocence of youth;
A shrewd pretender, smooth and sage,
He tempts the avarice of age;
A wizard, versed in damned arts,
He trammels uncorrupted hearts;
He lulls Suspicion, Sense waylays,
Honour and Honesty betrays,
Finds Virtue sleeping, and by stealth
Beguiles her with a dream of wealth;
Till rich and poor, till fools and wise,
Haste to the headlong sacrifice,
Gaze till they slip into the snare;
---Angels might weep to see them there;
Then to the Lottery Wheels away,
The SPIRIT OF GAMBLING DRAGS his prey.[1]

The poet's righteous indignation was aroused by another national sin: the cruel custom of using "climbing boys" as human chimney sweeps. This practice had the

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1 Montgomery, Works, op. cit., II, pp. 198-201

approval of the legislature, and thus was a protected vice. After ten years of exposing and challenging the evils of the "human chimney sweep system", Montgomery and his friends encouraged their fellow-townsmen to set the first example of moving the legislature against this system of "home-slavery". It was a long fight. Seven years later, seventeen years after the commencement of Montgomery's labours and inquiries in behalf of this worthy cause, an Act for the total discontinuance of the evil practice passed both Houses, almost without a murmur of opposition, under the direct sanction of Her Majesty's Government.

Montgomery edited a publication entitled, The Chimney Sweeper's Friend, and Climbing Boy's Album, which was instrumental in bringing to pass the above victorious verdict. His personal literary contribution to that volume was a collection of poems called, "The Climbing Boy's Soliloquies." In the Prologue of that series of poems it is evident that Montgomery's Christian convictions led him to intercede in behalf of these youthful sufferers:

A WORD WITH MYSELF

I know they scorn the Climbing Boy,
The gay, the selfish, and the proud;
I know his villanous employ
Is mockery with the thoughtless crowd.

So be it; -- brand with every name
  Of burning infamy his art
But let his country feel the shame
  And feel the iron at her heart.

I cannot coldly pass him by,
  Stript, wounded, left by thieves half dead;
Nor see the infant Lazarus lie
  At rich men's gates, imploring bread.

A frame as sensitive as mine,
  Limbs moulded in a kindred form,
A soul degraded yet divine,
  Endear me to my brother-worm.

He was my equal at his birth,
  A naked, helpless, weeping child;
--And such are born to thrones on earth,
  On such hath every mother smiled.

My equal he will be again,
  Down in that cold oblivious gloom,
Where all the prostrate ranks of men
  Crowd, without fellowship, the tomb.

My equal in the judgment day,
  He shall stand up before the throne,
When every veil is rent away,
  And good and evil only known.

And is he not mine equal now?
  Am I less fall'n from God and truth,
Though "Wretch" be written on his brow,
  And leprosy consume his youth?

If holy nature yet have laws
  Binding on man, of woman born,
In her own court I'll plead his cause,
  Arrest the doom, or share the scorn.

Yes, let the scorn that haunts his course
  Turn on me like a trodden snake,
And hiss and sting me with remorse,
  If the fatherless forsake.[1]

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1 Montgomery, Works, op. cit., II, pp. 219,220

Montgomery was anxious to see all poor children, especially the "climbing boys", receive Christian instruction. He assisted in organizing and directing Sunday Schools in needy districts. The practice of instructing the illiterate poor in writing as well as religion in Sunday School brought criticism from some, but Montgomery was ready with his refutation which he printed in his paper as an editorial: "Some conscientious persons have objected to the instruction of the poor in writing at Sunday Schools; but if teaching them to read be sanctifying the Sabbath of the Lord, teaching them to write must be conferring yet higher honour on that holy day, by making it doubly beneficial to them. Our Saviour, on the Sabbath day, not only opened the eyes of him that was born blind, but healed also the man that had the withered hand. Is not teaching the ignorant to read, giving sight to the blind eye? Is not teaching them to write, transfusing virtue through the withered hand?"[1]

This editorial provoked a letter of severe animadversions from an anonymous correspondent, which Montgomery published, with the remark "that our Saviour, both by precept and example, taught that 'it is lawful

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1 Holland, op. cit., II, p. 248

to do well' on the Sabbath day; and as he has neither limited the _doing well_ to acts of mercy or necessity, nor even to such as are otherwise connected with religious duties, it must be left to every man's conscience before God to determine for himself what it is 'to do well' on the Sabbath day: but let not any one presume to lay a heavier yoke upon the necks of others than that which Christ himself had laid upon them."[1]

A further indication that our poet's eyes were not blind to the sights, nor his ears deaf to the sighs, of suffering humanity, may be found in his concern for the pathetic condition of poor, old women. One chapter in Montgomery's book, _Prose by a Poet_, bears the caption, "Old Women", and is a description of the destitution of old women who have lived less for themselves and more for others than any other class; old women whose lives have been spent in the service of those who have forsaken them! He quotes his contemporary, Coleridge, who was also conscious of this social and moral problem:

> "Oh! aged women! Ye who weekly catch
> The pittance tos't by law-forced charity,
> And die so slowly that none call it murder."

Montgomery, gifted in the writing of prose as well as poetry, dramatically, realistically reviews their

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1 Holland, _op. cit._, II, p. 248

case as he asserts old women to be "like lepers of old, driven forth from the camp of society, as if their very age were infectious;...in what utter desolation are they frequently doomed to wear out their tattered remnant of mortality, already torn to rags in the service of those who have forsaken them! And when they die, how few are sorry! --in some cases none, except it be the parish overseers, who grudge the cost of a pauper's burial, though by the demise of the unfortunate pensioner, a population of twenty thousand souls save a weekly stipend on which a lady's lap-dog would starve; that is if the pittance were laid out in the purchase of such dainties as are necessaries of life to those delicate animals, but which never enter into the imagination, much less into the mouth, of an old woman pining to death at the public expense."[1]

"Old women," concluded the Christian poet, "in their declining days have need of hearts as compassionate, and hands as diligent, to minister to them, as their own have been to minister to others from their childhood upward."

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1 James Montgomery, Prose by a Poet,(Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green; London, 1824), pp. 40,41

2 Ibid

Montgomery's religion reached beyond the region of the sacred sanctuary; it was "pure and undefiled": in person, and with his pen, he "visited the fatherless and widows in their affliction", and he endeavoured to keep himself "unspotted from the world". But, his religion also increased his scope of moral scrutiny and intensified his desire to keep others "unspotted from the world". Writing on the subject of "Juvenile Delinquency", the poet said: "Who can consider the systematic propagation of vice in such a place(London) without emotions of the deepest horror and warmest pity? .... The most unfortunate of all human beings,--Children and youth, training up in this Christian country, for the service of sin here, and its wages, death, hereafter;--death, temporal and premature by debauchery, suicide, or the sentence of law,--and eternal death, if not rescued in time from the perils of error by religious instruction, or plucked in their last moments, by the hand of Divine Mercy, like brands from the burning."[1]

The poet warns young and old alike of the ways of the world and of the futility of making the pilgrimage without a Guide:

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1 Montgomery, Prose by a Poet, op. cit., pp. 94, 105

What is the world! --A wildering maze
Where Sin hath track'd ten thousand ways,
  Her victims to ensnare;
All broad, and winding, and aslope,
All tempting with perfidious hope,
  All ending in despair.

Millions of pilgrims throng these roads,
Bearing their baubles, or their loads,
  Down to eternal night;
--One humble path, that never ends
Narrow, and rough and steep, ascends
  From darkness into light.

Is there a Guide to show that path?
The Bible:--He alone, who hath
  The Bible, need not stray:
Yet he who hath, and will not give
That heavenly Guide to all that live
  Himself shall lose the way.[1]

This sincere desire to know the Truth, and to make it known, made Montgomery's faith and message vital. Addressing a Methodist Missionary group on one occasion, he said: "'The world by wisdom knew not God.' This humiliating Scripture-truth is attested by every record of profane history. The volume of Nature is unintelligible without the commentary of Revelation. The magnificent page of heaven, inscribed with suns and stars, --the humble but more diversified pages of earth, written within and without with characters innumerable and inexpressibly significant, from the flower of the field to the forest of ages, from the pearl in the shell and

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1 Montgomery, Works, op. cit., III, p. 124

the diamonds in the mine to the mountains that hide their heads in the clouds, and the ocean that engirdles the globe, from the worm of the dust to man himself,--these, to the eye that cannot read the language in which the heavens declare the glory of God, nor see the earth filled with his goodness, present only a dumb spectacle of hieroglyphics, as undecipherable as those on the obelisks and temples of Egypt. Indeed, these are truly what the hieroglyphics were pretended to be--the symbols of a sacred language, which none but the initiated in the mysteries of the religion which they betoken can ever understand. It was the pride and the craft of the priests of the Nile to keep their secrets for ever concealed from the reprobate vulgar, but it is the duty and the delight of Christian priests to declare, to all that will hear them, the mysteries of godliness, hidden from the foundation of the world from millions and millions of the fallen race of Adam."[1]

Frequently, as editor of the reputable Sheffield newspaper, the "Iris", Montgomery would take leave of the review of the pressing political and social problems of the day in order to confront his readers with more substantial food for thought. Concerning the harvest

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1 Holland, op. cit., III, pp. 117,118

season in the year 1805, the editor wrote: "Since the Almighty set his bow in the cloud, as a token of a covenant between himself and the earth, there has never been a season (of harvest) more heart-gladdening than the present. While the great ones of the world are, on every side, conspiring against its peace, devoting its soil to desolation, and its inhabitants to death, we see the unchangeably-benevolent Father of the Universe raining down mercies from the clouds, and overflowing the land with his benefits. There is not a time when God is more visible, or when he is less remembered than amidst the joy of autumn. While Nature is offering up to her Maker the sacrifice of all her fruits, and corn fields are waving abroad and around in adoration of Him, man, rioting in abundance, denies the bounty of his Benefactor, and claims every blessing as the product of his own industry, or his inheritance by birth; forgetful of the hand that spreads the purple glory of the vintage upon the hills, and pours through the valleys the golden flood of harvest: the hand that, in anger put forth, could intercept the light of the sun, and chill the earth by its shadow alone, with a curse of everlasting sterility."[1]

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1 Holland, op. cit., II, p. 66

The witnessing and warning Christian editor reveals his religious thought in the initial "Iris" editorial of the year 1813: "At the commencement of the new year, we may venture, in a still, small voice, while the thunder, and earthquake, and fire of war are gone by for a moment, to whisper to our friends, as our conscience whispers to ourselves, 'remember that one thing is needful; choose, therefore, the better part, which shall not be taken away from you.' What that 'one thing' is, we all know, or we all may know: how awfully, how eternally 'needful' it is, none can fully comprehend but those who have felt the want or the blessing of it in the hour of death, and who will again feel the want or the blessing of it in the day of judgment."[1]

Mingled with Montgomery's miscellaneous works in poetry and prose, are pieces which are designed to make men think of eternal verities. As an editor he had a psychological advantage which gave him entrance to the so-called "secular" mind and heart; this advantage he effectively used. As a writer of poetry and prose, he subtly inserted moral and religious truth, without labeling it as such, lest men would shy away and fail to read it. He hoped to disturb men who were spiritually

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1 Holland, op. cit., III, pp. 1,2

comfortable, and comfort men who were spiritually disturbed.

The subject of "Time" was food for Montgomery's musings. Pondering Virgil's words about time: "Sed fugit, interea, fugit irreparabile tempus", Montgomery penned:

'Tis a mistake: time flies not,
  He only hovers on the wing:
Once born, the moment dies not,
  'Tis an immortal thing;
While all is changed beneath the sky,
Fix'd like the sun as learned sages prove,
Though from our moving world he seems to
move,
'Tis time stands still, and we that fly.

There is no past; from nature's birth,
  Days, months, years, ages, till the end
Of these revolving heavens and earth,
  All to one centre tend;
And, having reach'd it late or soon,
  Converge,--as in a lens, the rays,
Caught from the fountain-light of noon,
  Blend in a point that blinds the gaze:
--What has been is, what is shall last;
The present is the focus of the past;
The future, perishing as it arrives,
Becomes the present, and itself survives.

Time is not progress, but amount;
  One vast accumulating store,
Laid up, not lost;--we do not count
  Years gone but added to the score
Of wealth untold, to clime nor class confined,
Riches to generations lent,
Forever spending, never spent,
The august inheritance of all mankind.
Of this, from Adam to his latest heir,
All in due turn their portion share,
Which, as they husband or abuse,
Their souls they win or lose.

Though history, on her faded scrolls,
Fragments of fact, and wrecks of names
enrols,
Time's indefatigable fingers write
Men's meanest actions on their souls,
In lines which not himself can blot:
These the last day shall bring to light,
Though through long centuries forgot,
When hearts and sepulchres are bared to
sight.

Then, having fill'd his measure up,
Amidst his own assembled progeny,
(All that have been, that are, or yet may
be,)
Before the great white throne,
To Him who sits thereon,
Time shall present the amalgamating cup,
In which, as in a crucible,
He hid the moments as they fell,
More precious than Golconda's gems,
Or stars in angels' diadems,
Though to our eyes they seem'd to pass
Like sands through his symbolic glass:
But now, the process done,
Of millions multiplied by millions, none
Shall be wanting,--while by change
Ineffable and strange,
All shall appear at once, all shall appear
as one.

.....

Then shall be shown, that but in name
Time and eternity were both the same;
A point which life nor death could sever,
A moment standing still for ever.[1]

There is a mild melancholy about many of Montgomery's works, and yet the poet is careful not to let

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1 Montgomery, Works, op. cit., IV, pp. 137-139

it degrade into pessimism.[1,2] Despite the sinfulness of man and the sinful system of this world, he felt the Christian outlook to be one of optimism. Amid the evil of his day which he exposed and challenged, he saw good which he commended. His comprehensive view of life gave him a sense of proportion and perspective.

"The 'present times' always have been--and probably always will be,--the worst," said Montgomery. "The groans of all ages, from the golden down to the iron, over the blessedness of those that went before them, testify this paradoxical truth; but no sooner does the present time become the past, than it is canonized like all its ancestors, and its vanished felicities are sung and celebrated by poets and orators, patriots and moralists. And so will it be with our own day; when it is turned into yesterday, it will rise again on the eyes of tomorrow, as bright and benign as if sunshine and showers had alternatingly shed glory and fertility on every step of its progress. It is, however, a lamentable thing, that, as the virtues and good deeds of many men

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1 Robert Southey and James Montgomery were good friends and frequent correspondents. Concerning Montgomery's poem, "Peak Mountains", Southey said: "..it has the passion, the melancholy, and the religious ardour which are the elements of all your poetry." (Holland, op. cit., III, p. 363)

2 It will readily be admitted, that pessimism prevails in many of Montgomery's personal letters written during his period of apostacy. See chapter two of this

never appear till their tombstones are engraven with them, the superiority of the period that is passing away, should not be discovered by those who live in it, but only be recorded and deplored by their successors to justify ingratitude against Providence for the peculiar advantages which they possess, because those advantages may be accompanied with some inconveniences brought upon themselves, which their forefathers had escaped by more prudence or less caprice."[1]

Eschatology, in editorial style, is presented by the poet in an article called "The Last Day": "To every thing beneath the sun there comes a last day, -- and of all futurity this is the only portion of time that can in all cases be infallibly predicted .....In the life of every adult there occur many last days. Man is ushered into the world from a source so hidden, that his very parents know him not till he appears, and he knows not himself even then. He passes rapidly through the stages of childhood, youth, maturity, old age; and to each of these there comes a last day. The transitions, indeed, are so gradual as to be imperceptible; no more to be remembered than the moment at which we fell asleep last night, and as little dependent on

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1 Montgomery, Prose by a Poet, op. cit., pp. 119, 120

our will as was the act of awaking this morning. Yet so distinct are these several states of progressive existence, that though all bound together by unbroken consciousness, the changes are in reality as entire as the separate links of one chain. In the issue comes a last day to the whole; a man is withdrawn into an abyss of eternity, as unsearchable by finite thought as that from which he emanated at first... The facts themselves, few, simple, and commonplace as they are, cannot have been made to pass, even in this imperfect exhibition, through intelligent minds, without impressing upon them feelings of awe, apprehension, and humility, prompting to immediate and unsparing self-examination. From this there can be nothing to fear; from the neglect of it everything: for however alarming the discoveries of evil unsuspected, or peril unknown may be, such discoveries had better be made now, while escape is before us, than in that day when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed, and escape will be impossible, -- that day, which of all others is most emphatically called 'The Last Day'."[1]

James Montgomery, too, had his last day, but the influence of his life and work live on!

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1 Montgomery, Prose by a Poet, op. cit., pp. 281, 287-289

CHAPTER FIVE

IN RETIREMENT

Lyre! O Lyre! my chosen treasure,
Solace of my bleeding heart;
Lyre! O Lyre! my only pleasure,
We will never, never part.[1]

James Montgomery

Retirement, for many men, means passing from a state of activity to one of comparative inactivity. But, for Montgomery, retirement was no cessation, or even diminution, of effort and enthusiasm; it marked a transfer of his time and talents to nobler objects and aims. Free from his editorial duties and business responsibilities, he gave himself unstintedly to Christian causes.

Montgomery said he retired "not because he had made his fortune, but because he could not afford to make it at the expense of so much peace of mind as the effort increasingly cost him."[2] Politics he disliked, and business was an irksome burden. By type and temperament he was not suited for public journalism. As the editor of a public journal during tempestuous times,

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1 Montgomery, Works, op. cit., I, p. 64
2 Ibid, Preface, p. v

his position was vulnerable and his unflinching adherence to Christian principles frequently made him unpopular. Despite personal handicaps and external vicissitudes, Montgomery was the sucessful proprietor and editor of the "Sheffield Iris" for more than thirty years.[1]

The last number of the "Iris", under Montgomery's editorship, appeared on Tuesday, September 27th, 1825; it contained his farewell to his readers, in which the retiring editor said: "From the first moment that I became the director of a public journal, I took my own ground; I have stood upon it through many years of changes, and I rest by it this day. ...And this was my ground,--a plain determination, come wind or sun, come fire or flood, to do what was right. I lay stress on the purpose, not the performance, for this was the polar star to which my compass pointed, though with considerable 'variation of the needle'. ...If I have not done all the good which I might, and which I ought to have done, I have rejected many opportunities of doing mischief; a negative kind of virtue, which sometimes costs no small self-denial in the editor of a public journal to practice. While I quit a painful responsibility in laying

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1 This long term of successful service is all the more commendable when one considers the innumerable literary contributions of the editor-poet during these years.

down my office, I am sensible that I resign the possession of great power and influence in the neighbourhood. These I cannot have exercised through so many years, without having made the character of my townspeople something different from what it would have been, had I never come among them. Whether they are better or worse for my existence here, they themselves are the best judges. This I can affirm, that I have perseveringly 'sought the peace of the city' wherein I was led as an exile to dwell;[1] and never neglected an occasion (so far as I can remember) to promote the social, moral, and intellectual improvement of its inhabitants. Nor in retirement can I forget, that the same duty I still owe to them."[2]

As an expression of their esteem for the editor retiring from public life, Montgomery's political friends arranged a public dinner in his honour. Tributes and toasts were the order of the evening. Lord Milton, who

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1 The poet believed God had led him to this place of service. In 1827, two years after his retirement, he wrote: "....My whole course has been manifestly one directed by Providence. I can trace every step; and I thank God that, in this respect, He took me early out of my own hands, and caused goodness and mercy to follow me thus far all the days of my life..." (Holland, op. cit., IV, pp. 213-214)

2 Ibid, IV, pp. 124-126

presided, said of the editor-poet: "....To whatever part of his character I turn, I find everything to admire, and nothing to find fault with. ....I direct your attention to his constant endeavours to promote the comfort and morals of society. There is not an institution of a benevolent character in Sheffield to which he has not contributed; not merely in the way in which we have all contributed, by rendering pecuniary assistance, but by his time and talents; which I account a greater offering. ..Long may he live to behold around him the good he has effected, standing as a monumentum aere perennius!..."[1]

In reply, the poet spoke at length. Among other things he reviewed the themes with which his pen had been employed through the years: "I sang the Abolition of the Slave Trade, that most glorious decree of the British legislature, at any period since the Revolution by the first parliament, in which you, my lord, sat as the representative of Yorkshire.[2] Oh! how should I rejoice to sing the Abolition of Slavery itself by some parliament of which your lordship shall be a member!

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1 Holland, op. cit., IV, pp. 135-137
2 Lord Milton

This greater act of righteous legislation is surely not too remote to be expected even in our day. Renouncing the slave trade was only 'ceasing to do evil'; extinguishing slavery will be 'learning to do well'. ....

"Again: I sang of love, -- the love of country, the love of my own country; for

> ----next to heaven above,
> Land of my fathers, thee I love;
> And, rail thy slanderers as they will,
> With all thy faults, I love thee still.[1]

I sang, likewise, the love of home, its charities, endearments, and relationships, all that makes 'Home sweet home'; ....I sang the love which man ought to bear towards his brother, of every kindred, and country, and clime upon the earth: I sang the love of virtue, which elevates man to his true standard under heaven: I sang, too, the love of God, who is love. Nor did I sing in vain. ...."[2]

When Montgomery sold his newspaper, the medium through which he had sung the aforesaid themes, he carefully considered the character and credentials of the prospective purchasers; he was more interested in principle than price, for he said he would not have sold

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1 Montgomery here presents a portion of his poem, "To Britain". (Works, II, p. 205)

2 Holland, op. cit., IV, pp. 142, 143

the "Iris" with the prospect of its becoming the vehicle of sedition and irreligion, for a thousand guineas.[1]

Montgomery retired a man of modest means; he was thoroughly Christian in his conception of money, its purpose, value, use and abuse. "I am not rich," he said, shortly after retiring, "I never took the means to be so; I have often said that I could not afford to pay the price of wealth; and that there was neither a law of Nature nor an Act of Parliament to compel me to become rich, I would not sell all my peace of mind, nor consume my time in gathering what I might never enjoy. I do not despise money; I love it as much as any man ought to do, and perhaps something more at particular times; but a small provision is enough for my few wants, and the Lord has made that provision for me. I owe it all to Him; I cannot say that my skill, or industry, or merit of any kind has acquired it; I have received it as a free gift at his hands, and to Him I would consecrate it, and every other talent, as an unprofitable servant at the best, and too often as a slothful and wicked one...." [2]

The poet's consecrated talents were put to good use. Innumerable opportunities for service presented

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1 Holland, op. cit., IV, p. 121
2 Ibid, p. 215

themselves and Montgomery was so conscientious that he found it difficult to decline.[1] His religious views did not make him bigoted or unduly biased, and his benevolent, catholic spirit and open mind gave him entrance to many fields of interest and enquiry. Phrenology was then popular, and the poet prepared and presented a paper on the subject. His object was less to discuss or deny the claims of phrenology as a method of ascertaining the leading characteristics of the mind from the external formation of the head, than to refute certain conclusions of a moral nature, too hastily drawn by the bold disciples, and too passionately regarded by some timid oppugners, of this so-called science. In two previous papers on the subject, presented to the Sheffield Literary and Philosophical Society of which Montgomery was a founder and active leader, he had pointed out that phrenology involved no issues of fatality, nor could it, from the mere circumstances of organical conformation, elevate one class of our fellow creatures into intellectual eminence, or consign another class to perpetual mental degradation.

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1 Montgomery was only in his fifty-fourth year when he retired. Physically, he had never been strong and robust. The demands of his active life in retirement put a strain on his frail constitution, and he eventually had to become less active.

"If," said Montgomery, "phrenology were merely, like Hindooism, a system of castes, and every tribe of mankind, by a fatality of organization, were, according to its doctrines, doomed to be, through all stages of society, savage, semi-barbarian, or civilized, the same as their fathers had been in one or the other of these stages, --if phrenology were such a system of castes, I for one would abjure it without requiring any further evidence of its utter absurdity, and point-blank contradiction to all the records of history, the testimony of living experience, and the whole result of man's knowledge of himself and his species. A science, involving such anomalous consequences, could not be of God, and would not stand. His works are perfect, however slowly their issues may be produced; --they are perfect, because they include in their very rudiments the principles by which they must go on to perfection, if not unnaturally obstructed; and even then the interruption can be only temporary, while their power and tendency to progression revive in undiminished activity the moment the hindrance is removed. If this be the case in all inferior subjects of the animal and even of the vegetable creation, is it possible that the masterpiece of the Almighty should be the only incorrigibly defective work

of his hand? No; let science search out every secret of the universe, she has nothing to fear except error; --error in the guise of truth, or truth adulterated with error; --every pure truth that she can discover must be a new revelation of God in his visible universe, and a new confirmation of the authenticity of that word which reveals the things that are unseen and eternal; --things absolutely undiscoverable by physical investigation, and necessarily irrefutable by that which could not have found them out. Let, then, phrenology be established throughout in all its ramifications so far as positive facts compel inductions as the only alternatives of those facts, and the Christian need not tremble for his religion, nor the philanthropist for his hope of the ultimate civilization of every class of the human race, whatever be their present darkness of mind, depravity of manners, or preposterous developments of skull."[1]

Montgomery's philanthropic interests ran the full gamut of the register of worthy causes. Institutions and societies in which he had long been interested, and which, in some instances, he had helped to establish, he now vigorously supported by traveling, speaking and

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1 Holland, op. cit., IV, pp. 166, 167

writing in their behalf. For years, because of his business ties, the poet was unable to leave the Sheffield area, but now, with his new-found freedom, he began to make extensive tours for Missionary and Bible Societies, giving his Christian witness and soliciting funds in their behalf. As he travelled about, he found in men and nature food for his poetic genius. On a Missionary Tour through Wales, the poet observed many historic sites; concerning the old Conway Castle he wrote: "It is true that Conway (Castle) is a 'dried specimen' of a genus of fortress almost extinct in this country, being entirely encompassed with a wall and bastions in a respectably ruinous condition for picturesque effect, and perfect enough to give a good historical idea (if I may call it so) of what an ancient British stronghold was in its glory --- I ought rather to say in its terror, when a city was a bastille to its inhabitants, under feudal tyranny, and an annoyance to the adjacent country, which it held in servile subjection, while it was nominally for its protection that it defied all assaults from invading enemies. Thank God! I say, from the ground of my heart, that we have no more need of castles now, than we have of monasteries; our government

is more secure without the former, and more strong to defend its subjects, than ever it was with them; and our religion flourishes much better without the latter, than it did when monks and nuns monopolized all the good things of this life which the king and his barons had not previously seized, while the people fed upon the offals and crumbs that fell from the tables of both, which their labour supplied with all the barbarous luxuries of the dark ages, when gluttonous feasting, and furious fighting, and fantastic devotion, constituted the hospitality, the heroism, and the piety of our forefathers."[1]

The poet's perpetual concern for those socially and religiously underprivileged gave him reason never to want for something to do during his retirement: he was the president of an association which made library facilities available for mechanics and apprentices; he took an active part in all subscriptions for the poor, and he was a member of the Society for the Relief of Distressed Widows. Activities strictly religious, principally interdenominational, which commanded much of his time and talent, were: the Sunday School Union, the

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1 Holland, *op. cit.*, IV, p. 276 (Italics mine)

Religious Tract Society,[1] the Bible Society, and the Missionary Society. The cause of missions was always of primary interest to Montgomery, because of his missionary parents and also because he was eager to see all men saved through faith in Jesus Christ.

Amid all his activity and service for the church and society he found time to take up his lyre; seemingly his service enlarged his soul and intensified his song. In his moments of solitude, the aging poet mused about life and death:

> There is a veil no mortal hand can draw,
> Which hides what eye of mortal never saw;
> Through that (each moment by the dying riven)
> Could but a glance be to the living given,
> How into nothing, less than nothing, all
> Life's vanities, life's verities would fall,
> And that alone of priceless worth be deem'd,
> Which is most lightly by the world esteem'd!
>
> Enough is known; there is a heaven, a hell;
> Who 'scapes the last and wins the first doth well:
> Whither away, my soul -- in which wouldst thou

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1 Montgomery made a classic statement concerning the writings of religious tracts: "The Shakespeare of Tract writing is probably yet unborn; nevertheless I am persuaded that there is within the compass of the human intellect that peculiar mental power which is exactly adapted to this species of composition. He should have the strength, the originality, the simplicity, and the piety of a Bunyan: brevity and perspicuity should be united in the treatment of a subject in itself striking and important." (Ellis, op. cit., p. 45)

Emerge from life, were death to smite thee now?[1]

Montgomery's high regard for the Scripture, and his godly jealousy to keep it from becoming altered or adulterated, is evidenced in his review, in 1828, of a new translation of the German epic, Klopstock's "Messiah". "I cannot," said the poet, "be quite reconciled to the idea of making the sufferings, death, and resurrection of our Saviour the theme of an heroic poem. St. Paul, when caught up into the third heaven, heard things which it is not lawful for man to utter. In the simple, solemn, and affecting narratives of the Evangelists we read things that can hardly be told in any other manner than as we find them there. They are translatable into any other language which men or angels speak, and with equal effect in all to those who can understand the plain words in their own tongue, which, corresponding with the original records, set forth the circumstances of that most wonderful of all the revealed counsels and purposes of God in its accomplishment -- the redemption of the world. Every incident of the details, I acknowledge, may be made the theme of pulpit eloquence or glowing verse, -- of sweet discourse, of tender

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1 Montgomery, Works, op. cit., IV, p. 193

recollection, or exalting gratitude, -- till their 'hearts burn within them' who hear or talk of these things by the way, 'and eyes begin to shine'; but to compile a mausoleum of fiction over the few relics (holy and beautiful, and not to be touched by profane hands) which have been preserved for the Church to the end of time, by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, is barely pardonable.[1] I speak with hesitance (though not on that account the less from conviction), because such experiments on sacred subjects have been made by some of the greatest of men 'not inspired of God.' Yet I would rather have seen, with 'Mary Magdalen and that other Mary,' 'the body of Jesus' laid in 'Joseph's own new tomb, hewn out of the rock,' than that gorgeous sepulchre in modern Jerusalem built over the supposed place in the garden, with its array of ministering priests, and thronged with pilgrims, adoring the dumb symbols, amidst the blaze of lamps, the fumes of incense, and the sounds of music. As the latter, glorious indeed in its kind, is to the former, so is Klopstock's magnificent epos to the faithful testimony of the Evangelists, brief, and comparatively imperfect as each separate portion is, but combined, presenting both(Urim and Thummim) light and perfection, before

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1 Italics mine.

which that which the poet has made glorious 'hath no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth'".[1,2]

For two successive years, 1830 and 1831, Montgomery had the honour of giving lectures on poetry at the Royal Institution in London. The poet was well qualified for this task; his lectures, which were later published in book form, proved to be not only instructive but inspirational. One lecture in the series was entitled, "What is Poetical?", concerning which question the poet said: "...with all its sorrow, and pains, and sordid anxieties, there is much poetry in real life. All is not 'vanity and vexation of spirit under the sun,' to him who can honestly and innocently enjoy the commonest blessings of Providence. Who can behold this beautiful world, and imagine for a moment that it was designed to be the abode of miserable beings? The earth, arrayed in verdure, adorned with flowers, diversified with hill and dale, forest and glade, fountains and

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1 Holland, op. cit., IV, pp. 323,324

2 This extremely conservative view held by the poet concerning the writing of epic or heroic poems on scriptural themes, is consistent with his strict views on the subject of versifying scripture in the form of metrical psalms or paraphrases. (See chapter III, pp. 147-151)

running streams, engirdled with the ocean, over-canopied with heaven; --this earth, so smiling and fruitful, so commodious and magnificent, is altogether worthy of its Maker; and not only a fit habitation for man, created in the image of God, but a place which angels might delight to visit on embassies of love. All nature, through all her forms of existence, calls on man to rejoice with her in the goodness of the universal Parent. The stars in their courses, the sun in his circuit, and the moon through her changes, by day and by night display his glory; the seasons in succession, the land and the waters, reciprocally distribute his bounty. Every plant in its growth is pleasing to the eye, or wholesome for food; every animal in health is happy in the exercise of its ordinary functions; life itself is enjoyment.

"Yet in the heart of man there is something which disqualifies him from the full fruition of the blessings thus abundantly dealt around him; something which has introduced disorder into his mind, and disease into his frame; darkening and bewildering his intellect; corrupting and inflaming his passions; and hurrying him, by a fatality of impulse, to that excess in every indulgence, which turns ailment into poison; and from the perversion of the social feelings produces strife, misery, and

confusion, to families, to nations, to the world. That enemy, that destroyer, what is it? --- Sin! Yet so mysteriously and mercifully does God, in his providence, out of evil educe good; that much of the felicity of life as it is, arises out of the misery with which it is beset on every hand."[1]

In another lecture of this series the thought of good coming from evil is again mentioned; Montgomery, who had suffered much personally and vicariously, said: "..The wisdom and kindness of God are most graciously manifested in thus educing good from evil. There is so much floating and perpetual distress in the world, and in every part of it, that were a person of the firmest nerve to know all that is enduring for one hour only, in one place, --the present hour, at this moment, throughout this great city, --and were he able to sympathize with it, in every case, and all at once, as though the whole were under his eyes, within hearing, in his neighbourhood, in his family, --his spirit would assuredly sink under it, and if life were prolonged, and reason not totally overthrown, he would never relapse into gaiety. On the other hand, there is so much selfishness in

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1 James Montgomery, Lectures on Poetry and General Literature, (Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, Green, & Longman, London, 1833), pp. 53, 54

our nature, that if the groans of the whole creation around could neither reach our ears, nor touch our hearts, we should be of all animals the most insensate, the most ferocious. It is good for us to be afflicted in the affliction of others, but it would be death or madness to be so beyond that indefinable line, which Providence has drawn, and within which we are unconsciously kept by the power that wheels the planets in their orbits, and suffers not a sparrow to fall to the ground without permission."[1]

Concluding his reflections concerning man, the poet said, "man is so 'fearfully and wonderfully made,' as to require for the health of his body, the expansion of his intellect, and the purifying of his heart, other and sterner excitements than those of either sensual and enervating pleasure, or of placid and serene enjoyment. From his own personal maladies, and from a strong but well-governed sympathy with the fiery trials of his fellow-creatures of all kinds and conditions, he may derive, if not positive happiness, the means at least of infinitely increasing his happiness, by learning to suffer with resignation, by loosening his affections from

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1 Montgomery, Lectures on Poetry and General Literature, op. cit., pp. 229, 230

the world, and by having his heart and his treasure in heaven..."[1]

Positive happiness and joy was the poet's portion on the first day of August in the year 1834, the day which marked the abolition of slavery. It was a day of triumph and gratitude for all friends of freedom and humanity in Great Britain, and a day of rejoicing and liberation for the Negroes in the colonies. Montgomery took an active part in the festival proceedings of that eventful day in Sheffield, and his "Songs on the Abolition of Negro Slavery in the British Colonies" were sung throughout the land.

Blow ye the trumpet abroad o'er the sea;
Britannia hath conquer'd, the Negro is free:
  Sing, for the pride of the tyrant is broken,
His scourges and fetters, all clotted with blood,
  Are wrench'd from his grasp, for the word was but spoken,
And fetters and scourges were plunged in the flood:
Blow ye the trumpet abroad o'er the sea,
Britannia hath conquer'd, the Negro is free.

Hail to Britannia, fair liberty's isle!
Her frown quail'd the tyrant, the slave caught her smile:
Fly on the winds to tell Afric the story;
  Say to the mothers of mourners, "Rejoice!"
Britannia went forth, in her beauty, her glory,
  And slaves sprang to men at the sound of her voice:

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1 Montgomery, Lectures on Poetry and General Literature, op. cit., pp. 230, 231

--Praise to the God of our fathers; 'twas He,
JEHOVAH, that conquer'd, my country! by thee.[1]

.....

Black, white, and bond, and free,
  Castes and proscriptions cease;
The Negro wakes to liberty,
  The Negro sleeps in peace;
Read the great charter on his brow,
  "I AM a MAN, a BROTHER now."[2]

.....

Hear it and hail it; --the call,
  Island to island prolong;
Liberty! liberty! --all
  Join in the jubilee-song:
Hark! 'tis the children's hosannas that ring;
  Hark! they are free-men whose voices unite;
While England, the Indies, and Africa sing,
  "AMEN, HALLELUJAH!" at "Let there be light!"[3]

Montgomery not only longed to see all men free, but he desperately desired that all men should be saved. The comprehensive, ecumenical scope of his missionary vision included the Jew, whose spiritual darkness he believed, could only be dispelled by the liberating light of the Gospel. In a poem entitled, "The Tombs of the Fathers" the poet depicts the Jews holding a "Solemn Assembly" in the valley of Jehoshaphat, the ancient burial place of Jerusalem, where they were obliged to pay a heavy tax for the privilege of mourning at the sepulchres

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1 Montgomery, Works, op. cit., IV, p. 226
2 Ibid, p. 225
3 Ibid, p. 232

of their ancestors.

In Babylon they sat and wept,
  Down by the river's willowy side;
And when the breeze their harp-strings swept,
  The strings of breaking hearts replied:
  --A deeper sorrow now they hide;
No Cyrus comes to set them free
From ages of captivity.

All lands are Babylons to them,
  Exiles and fugitives they roam;
What is their own Jerusalem?
  --The place where they are <u>least</u> at home!
  Yet hither from all climes they come;
And pay their gold, for leave to shed
Tears o'er the generations fled.

.....

"Where is thine oath to David sworn?
  We by the winds like chaff are driven:
Yet unto us a Child is born,
  Yet unto us a Son is given;
  His throne is as the days of Heaven:
When shall he come to our release,
The mighty God, the Prince of Peace?"[1]

Thus blind with unbelief they cry,
  But hope revisits not their glooms;
Seal'd are the words of prophecy,
  Seal'd as the secrets of yon tombs,
  Where all is dark, --though nature blooms,
Birds sing, streams murmur, heaven above,
And earth around, are life, light, love.

The sun goes down; --the mourning crowds,
  Re-quicken'd, as from slumber start;
They met in silence here like clouds,
  Like clouds in silence they depart:
  Still clings the thought to every heart,
Still from their lips escapes in sighs,
--"By whom shall Jacob yet arise?"

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1 Quotation marks are here used by the poet to set off the complaint of the Jews.

The Christian poet had an answer and an admonition:

> By whom shall Jacob yet arise?
> --Even by the Power that wakes the dead:
> He whom your fathers did despise,
> He who for you on Calvary bled,
> On Zion shall his ensign spread;
> --Captives! by all the world enslaved,
> Know your Redeemer, and be saved![1]

Montgomery's catholicity of spirit enabled him to worship and work with different denominations including the Established Church, the Methodists, and the Dissenters.[2] There was one unique service which meant much to the poet, concerning this he said: "I do not like to miss going to church on Ascension Day, because, apart from the profit of the regular service, it is the only occasion when one meets with the clergy and members of different congregations in the same place of worship."[3]

The poet was progressive and optimistic in his thinking and writing. His optimism is typified in a speech which he made on the occasion of the coronation of Queen Victoria in 1838: "....Should heaven be pleased to prosper and prolong Queen Victoria's life to a period as late as that of the youngest of her four

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1 Montgomery, Works, op. cit., IV, pp. 175, 179, 180

2 The various Christian denominations the poet vividly portrayed as being, "DISTINCT as the billow, and ONE as the sea." (Ellis, op. cit., p. 84)

3 Holland, op. cit., VII, p. 83

immediate predecessors, what may not be expected from the proficiency of arts, commerce, civilization, and that which is the glory and defence of all -- Christianity, in extending, multiplying, and enhancing their respective blessings..."[1]

As a long resident of industrial Sheffield, Montgomery had become industry-conscious. During his more than fourscore years of life, he witnessed revolutionary changes in industry: the factory era dawned and rapidly developed as new inventions were introduced; factory workers began to unite to protect themselves and assert their demands; Watt's steam engine, which was used commercially in 1776, precipitated rapidly the Industrial Revolution, and transformed long, rough, Atlantic voyages into pleasant holiday trips. Lumbering mail-coaches were outrun by the furious drive of the fascinating "fiery horse"; gas left the laboratory of the chemist and was harnessed to serve; fantastic feats were being planned for electricity.

For some, the strides of science and the signs of progress were alarming; many conscientious Christians deemed such activity unchristian, evil per se. Progressive, mature Montgomery had pertinent counsel for those

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1 Holland, op. cit., V, p. 318

thus perturbed: "As for the alarm which some good persons feel at the progress of science, its actual discoveries and the imagined peril of pursuing them, -- of what has the believer in the gospel to be afraid? The Book of Nature, however minutely read and explored, cannot invalidate the Book of Revelation. No truth can contradict another truth. It is one of the strongest proofs of the authenticity of the divine records, that, though delivered long before the most extraordinary discoveries were made in every department of natural history, no fact clearly ascertained in the latter has disproved any fact clearly stated in the former. What is true must stand true for ever; what is false, must as surely perish --lapse into oblivion, having served only a temporary purpose, fall by another falsehood or by an antagonistic truth, or perpetrate suicide, self-slain by involving a contradiction. Truth is never to be dreaded in the cause of truth; it ought therefore, never to be blinked or suppressed, though particular portions of it are only to be asserted on due occasions."[1]

Although he was harassed and handicapped by frequent moods, and melancholy,[2] James Montgomery grew

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1 Holland, op. cit., V, p. 180, 181

2 Montgomery said melancholy marked him for her own from his ninth year, at the latest. (Ellis, op. cit., p. 55)

old gracefully. "The heart," wrote the poet to a friend he had known a quarter of a century, "when it is right is always young, and knows neither decay nor coldness; I cannot boast of mine in other respects; but assuredly, in the integrity of its affections it has not grown a moment older these five and twenty years."[1] Montgomery was a good steward of time, considering it a sacred trust, for which he was accountable to God. The fleeting nature of time concerned the conscientious poet; in a vivid word-picture he described his temporal chase: "...the loose feathers that fall from the wings of Time, I pick up as I can, while I run after him, panting like a greyhound."[2]

Seeing the flash of winter-lightning at midnight, the poet mused about the quick tempo of life and the fleeting quality of fame:

> The flash at midnight! -'twas a light
> That gave the blind a moment's sight,
> Then sunk in tenfold gloom;
> Loud, deep, and long the thunder broke,
> The deaf ear instantly awoke,
> Then closed as in the tomb:
> An angel might have pass'd my bed,
> Sounded the trump of God, and fled.
>
> So, life appears; --a sudden birth,
> A glance revealing heaven and earth,

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1 Holland, op. cit., IV, p. 12
2 Ibid, II, p. 150

It is and it is not!
So fame the poet's hope deceives,
Who sings for after-times, and leaves
A name--to be forgot:
Life is a lightning-flash of breath,
Fame but a thunder-clap at death.[1]

Having reached the age of fourscore years, Montgomery wrote: "....An eightieth birthday can occur once only, once in a life, though this were prolonged to the age of Methuselah; and having now reached the last milestone, distinctly marked on the pilgrimage (Psalm xc.10.) from the cradle to the grave, beyond which there is no track except over stumbling-stones and among pitfalls to the end of all things on earth, I am necessarily looking onward and backward, around and within me, to ascertain where I am, what I am, and whither I am going. Of the past, I may say, 'Goodness and Mercy have followed me all the days of my life;' and of the future, my heart's desire and prayer is, that I may, in my last hour, have the blessed hope in me to realize the fulfilment of the remaining clause of the text (Psalm xxiii.6.), 'I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.' The whole of a Christian life is thus set forth, in such few and beautiful words as are to be found nowhere but in Scripture given by inspiration of God, and

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1 Montgomery, Works, IV, p. 163

they involve a fulness of divine meaning, which the revelations of a happy eternity alone can unfold to the comprehension of a created mind, --and that a re-newed mind, made perfect in love..."[1]

Our Christian poet, who,

> ...nightly pitched his moving tent
> A day's march nearer home[2]

had about a fortnight's march ahead when he was considering a trip to Fulneck for the high festival among the Moravians during Passion Week and Easter. The following letter, if not the last letter he wrote, is the last extant letter: "Tomorrow," said Montgomery in this letter to his niece dated April 12, 1854, "had I been free from hindrances otherwise than personal, I should have made an Easter campaign to the scene of my childhood, and the best days of my youth: to live the latter over again; and especially to spend another Maundy Thursday, which then was (I may frankly own it) to me the happiest day in the year: the evening reading in the chapel, of our Saviour's agony and bloody sweat, in the Garden of Gethsemane, was almost always a season of holy humbling and affecting sympathy of my soul with His, who then was wont to make His

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1 Holland, op. cit.,VII, pp. 190, 191
2 Montgomery, Original Hymns, (Longman, 1853, London) p. 231

presence felt. And on Good Friday, Great Sabbath, and Easter Sunday, each had its peculiar visits in spirit, and of these the remembrance is sweet and consoling; and even yet, after so many years of estrangement and unfaithfulness on my part, since I chose my portion for myself in the world, rather than in my father's house and among my Christian brethren, I can say, -- 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits!' --hoping, praying, and earnestly desiring that I may yet add the context --(Psalm ciii. 3,4.) 'Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies."[1]

During his retirement Montgomery wrote a poem entitled, "Parting Words," the message of which was pertinent at the conclusion of his earthly pilgrimage:

Let me go, the day is breaking,
  Dear companions, let me go;
We have spent a night of waking
  In the wilderness below;
Upward now I bend my way,
Part we here at break of day.

Let me go, I may not tarry,
  Wrestling thus with doubts and fears;
Angels wait my soul to carry,
  Where my risen Lord appears;

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1 Holland, op. cit., VII, pp. 254, 255

Friends and kindred, weep not so,
If ye love me, let me go.

We have travell'd long together,
  Hand in hand and heart in heart,
Both through fair and stormy weather,
  And 'tis hard --'tis hard to part,
Yet we must: --!Farewell!' to you;
Answer, one and all, 'Adieu!'

'Tis not darkness gathering round me,
  Which withdraws me from your sight;
Walls of flesh no more can bound me,
  But, translated into light,
Like the lark on mounting wing,
Though unseen, you hear me sing.[1]

Heaven's broad day hath o'er me broken,
  Far beyond earth's span of sky;
Am I dead? --Nay, by this token,
  Know that I have ceased to die;
Would you solve the mystery,
Come up hither, --come and see.[2]

James Montgomery laid down his lyre with his life on Sunday, April 30th, 1854, --but the melody and the message of his life and lyre linger on!

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1 Italics mine.

2 Montgomery, Works, op. cit., IV, pp. 335, 336 (Based on the text, Gen. 32:26, "And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh.")

CHAPTER SIX

GENERAL ESTIMATE

"Genius, like incense, gives not
forth its sweetness but in self-consuming flames."

James Montgomery[1]

Montgomery would have disclaimed any qualities of genius in himself; he recognized it in others, and others saw it in him. William Wordsworth, in the year 1836, sent Montgomery some of his volumes with the following inscription: "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."[2]

Not all poets possess genius, and not all men of genius can be poets. Of the English bishop and author, Jeremy Taylor, Montgomery said, "...with all his genius, learning and industry, Jeremy Taylor never could be a poet, because he never went beyond himself -- beside himself, if you will. He has put the question beyond doubt: he tried verse; but his lines are

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1 Montgomery, Prose by a Poet, op. cit., p. 153
2 Holland, op. cit., V, p. 203

like petrifactions, glittering, and hard, and cold; formed by a slow but certain process in the laboratory of abstract thought; not like flowers, springing spontaneously from a kindly soil, fresh and fragrant, and blooming in open day. The erudite divine is always in his study. ..."[1]

James Montgomery was saintly, but not a divine; he was an earnest, practical seeker after truth, but not an erudite scholar dealing in abstractions. His interest in, and burden for mankind afforded him little time to spend in the secluded study. Not as an armchair strategist but rather as a mingler among men, he felt the pulse of his age, diagnosed its ills, and prescribed social and moral cures. The heartaches of humanity he made his own. He was existentially involved and personally committed to social and religious tasks. He went beyond himself; he spent himself. Indeed, his genius, like incense, emitted sweetness only in self-consuming flames.[2]

The poet possessed great moral courage, but his physical strength was incommensurate with his moral strength. "I am the feeblest of human beings in my

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1 Montgomery, Lectures on Poetry, op. cit., pp. 90, 91

2 A restatement of the introductory quotation of this chapter.

own strength, " he wrote, "but I trust I could go through any trial, or even death itself, if the conscientious discharge of a corporate trust, or a religious obligation, required it."[1]

Undoubtedly, Montgomery was born a poet; his poetic genius was early clothed in Christian humility. "Genius," said the poet, "if not the child, is the nurseling of pride: the youth, deeply conscious of possessing it, cherishes the 'sacred and solitary feeling' with a jealousy that tolerates no rivalry; it is the 'divinity that stirs within him,' and he worships it with a constancy and ardour of devotion that shame the lukewarmness and formality with which others serve the true God. Perhaps no youth thus eminently gifted ever passed the age of eighteen in a Christian country who did not, at that sanguine period, when man is most confident in his strength, because most ignorant of his weakness, resist and reject the evidences of the glorious gospel of Christ, and exult in having discovered the truths of Infidelity in the darkness of the light of nature. To such an one the doctrine of the cross is not only 'foolishness,'

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1 Ellis, op. cit., p. 70

as it is 'to the Greek', but 'a stumbling block' also, as it is 'to the Jew.' It requires the sacrifice of all that is most dear to the unregenerated man, and enjoins a humility of spirit, and a brokenness of heart, which is death to that mode of ambition that exists in the carnal mind. We do not say that this elevated feeling must be extinguished by the grace of God, any more than the other passions of our nature, which sin has corrupted; but, like them, it must be renewed in the converted sinner, and, from being an insatiable appetite for self-exaltation, it must become a fervent, unquenchable zeal for the glory of God."[1]

Montgomery's life refuted the current idea of his time that there was something inconsistent and incongruous between a cultivated intellect, refined taste, and the profession of evangelical piety. He had a scholar's erudition, a saint's faith, and a childlike spirit.

Montgomery is best known today for his hymns; that is as he would have had it, and as he predicted.[2] His four hundred hymns alone, to say nothing of his

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1 Holland, op. cit., VII, pp. 272, 273

2 Toward the end of his life the aged poet was asked which of his works would last. He replied, "None, save perhaps a few hymns."

other contributions, literary and otherwise, would have been a respectable harvest for a lifetime. The great authority on Hymnology, John Julian, says: "As a poet, Montgomery stands well to the front; and as a writer of hymns he ranks in popularity with Wesley, Watts, Doddridge, Newton and Cowper. ..The secrets of his power as a writer of hymns were manifold. His poetic genius was of a high order, higher than most who stand with him in the front rank of Christian poets. His ear for rhythm was exceedingly accurate and refined. His knowledge of Holy Scripture was most extensive. His religious views were broad and charitable. His devotional spirit was of the holiest type. With the faith of a strong man he united the beauty and simplicity of a child. Richly poetic without exuberance, dogmatic without uncharitableness, tender without sentimentality, elaborate without diffusiveness, richly musical without apparent effort, he has bequeathed to the Church of Christ wealth which could only have come from a true genius and a sanctified heart."[1]

But Montgomery was more than a writer of hymns. The general poetic productions of his prolific pen also reveal his spiritual stature; his familiarity with the

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1 Julian, op. cit., pp. 764, 765

Bible is everywhere apparent in his writings, the 'language of Zion' flows naturally from his heart through his pen. He was pious without ostentation, humble without disguise. He revealed religious regions of poetic thought and emotion to which many other poets were strangers. A spiritual passion pervades his poetry. His art does not exist for art's sake but for humanity's sake and for God's sake. His poetic themes are comprehensive in scope, they include whatever is beautiful in creation, or excellent in virtue; all that is elevating and essential in religion and pertinent in human destiny; thoughts that breathe and emotions that burn; joyful hopes and solemn sighs. His buoyant love of liberty and his stinging hatred of oppression, error and injustice abound in his works. His love of progress is refreshing.

As a business man and the editor of a newspaper, Montgomery made a distinct Christian contribution. His uncompromisingly Christian position gave him a reputation which was above reproach. He did not hesitate to use his paper as the medium of the Christian message; to the hard-handed men of Sheffield, that capital of toil and traffic, he brought a shining light.

As a layworker and philanthropist, he put into

practice what his pen had preached. His benevolence was wide in its range of living, active sympathy. He was known far and wide for his catholicity, missionary interest and social consciousness. He championed every cause of God and good. He interceded on behalf of the underprivileged and unfortunate. The eulogy which he penned for another may aptly be applied to himself:

Oft his silent spirit went,
  Like an angel from the throne,
On benign commission bent,
  In the fear of God alone.

Then the widow's heart would sing,
  As she turn'd her wheel for joy;
Then the bliss of hope would spring
  On the outcast orphan boy.

To the blind, the deaf, the lame,
  To the ignorant and vile,
Stranger, captive, slave, he came
  With a welcome and a smile.

Help to all he did dispense,
  Gold, instruction, raiment, food,
Like the gifts of Providence,
  To the evil and the good.

Deeds of mercy, deeds uhknown,
  Shall eternity record,
Which he durst not call his own,
  For he did them to the Lord,

As Earth puts forth her flowers,
  Heaven-ward breathing from below;
As the clouds descend in showers,
  When the southern breezes blow.

Thus his renovated mind,
  Warm with pure celestial love,
Shed its influence on mankind,
  While its hopes aspired above.

Full of faith at length he died,
And victorious in the race,
Won the crown for which he vied,
--Not of merit, but of grace.[1]

James Montgomery was not a stranger to conflict; his life was a battle without and within. His personal character was fired in the furnace of affliction. A perpetual, psychological civil war was being waged within. The gentle pathos and mild melancholy of his poetry are a reflection of this fact, but his personal correspondence reveals the fury of the fight. That the latter may be used as a reliable criterion of judgment of the real self, the poet agrees. "A man's genuine autobiography," he asserts, "must be sought for in his friendly and confidential correspondence; in letters written on all kinds of occasions, in all moods of his mind, and intended for the eyes of none but those who could at once understand their slightest allusions as well as their minutest details... In confidential epistolary correspondence, people are more really themselves than in any other way of exercising their faculties in reference to their fellow-creatures; and these memorials have the advantage, not only of being

"Warm from the heart and faithful to its fires,"

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1 Montgomery, Works, op. cit., IV, pp. 252, 253

but they are positive acts, not mere records; and the revealing of the writers in their real characters..."[1]

The second chapter of this thesis sets forth the life-long tempest and turmoil in the heart and soul of James Montgomery as revealed in his personal correspondence. At first it is disconcerting, to say the least, to the reader of the works of Montgomery, particularly of his hymns, to learn of the spiritual depression of the poet. How can one who writes of the peace of God and the blessings of the Christian life experience such strife in his soul? How can the author of hymns expressing Christian joy, assurance and certainty experience such an absence of joy himself and feel unassured and uncertain in his own faith? The questions are logical, pertinent, relevant.

In the opinion of the writer of this thesis, James Montgomery was intellectually honest, transparently sincere, overly sensitive. His frail constitution, innate melancholy, rigorous religious rearing, punitive experiences in the form of two imprisonments, his buffetings in business, his opposition to oppression, injustice and evil --all of these factors must

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1 James Montgomery, The Christian Correspondent, (William Ball, London, 1937), I, Preliminary Essay, pp. 30,31; 17

be taken into consideration in our evaluation of his religious thought. He wrote as he suffered; he referred to some of his works as "the warm effusions of a bleeding heart,"[1] and he said his poetic lyre was the "solace of his bleeding heart."[2]

Some of Montgomery's mental agonies were self-imposed, the product of his sensitive nature and melancholic mental make-up. They were, nevertheless, real to him. His sensitive nature was more than the poetic nature or temperament commonly found in artistic types; it was a psychological handicap, if not innate, at least early acquired,[3] which enlarged his fears, intensified his doubts and disturbed his spiritual equilibrium. His faith undergirded him more than he realized, or could realize in his moods and melancholy. His was a gradual, rather then a crisis type of conversion: he worked out his salvation with fear and trembling.

Montgomery's biographers, Holland and Everett, believe there are two explanations of the "psychological phenomenon" which we have been discussing:

1. "That, from whatever cause, he lacked that

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1 Holland, op. cit., I, p. 284
2 Montgomery, Works, I, p. 64
3 In the opinion of the writer of this thesis it was innate.

amount, if not that sort, of faith in the Atonement -- that direct and immediate act of appropriating to himself the merits of Christ as his Saviour, which is at once the duty and the privilege of believers to exercise, and by virtue of which they are not only assured of their admission to the divine favour, but filled with peace and joy through believing; failing this experience, the crux of an important controversy,[1] many otherwise really good people walk all their lives in spiritual doubt, obscurity, and distrust; in the twilight instead of the sunshine, of gospel privilege; or, 2. That his mind was so constituted, per se, or so peculiarly influenced by his physical organization, that deep and solemn, rather than bright and joyous impressions on whatever subject, and of course most of all, in religious experience, became familiar to his soul, sensitive as it was, to an extraordinary degree; and hence in those apprehensions of scriptural truth, which

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1 Everett, one of Montgomery's biographers, was a Wesleyan Methodist and this first argument could have easily been written by him for it savours of some of the tenets of that denomination. Montgomery was never a Methodist; his attendance at Methodist Chapels had both blessed and confused him. The doctrine of sanctification, as they interpreted it, worried the poet, and incidentally, may have been responsible, in part, for his spiritual plight.

to "common natures", whether actually more healthy and robust, or merely less self-accusing than his own, yield hope, if not joy, he was wont rather to realize the awful, the responsible relation of man to the issues of time in eternity, than that merely cheerful and complacent recognition of the mercy of God in Christ, which is, happily, the more ordinary attribute of the real Christian. The clearest streams are not always either the deepest, or the purest; and there are 'deep things' in revelation, and in human feeling, too, which neither disturb nor interest the 'passing crowd' of mankind."[1]

There is truth in each of these arguments. The former, however, the writer of this thesis believes is related to, if not contingent upon the latter. Montgomery's letters evidence the fact that he at times lacked faith, or shall we say assurance in the atonement because of his psychological handicap. Indeed, he could not talk of "an experience," a crisis conversion; but his hymns, yea, all of the products of his pen and the deeds of his life, reveal and confirm the fact of his conversion beyond the shadow of a doubt.[2] To quote

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1 Holland, op. cit., VII, pp. 280, 281

2 "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them." (Matthew 7:20)

again Montgomery's views on religious experience: "Were I to estimate the reality of my own religious experience," said the penitent poet at the age of sixty-seven, "by the standard to which others have attained, or even by some of the technical rules they have laid down, I should sink into despair. I feel my place of safety, therefore, to be that to which I do know I am permitted to come, --the foot of the cross."[1]

James Montgomery has bequeathed to the Church a wealth of service and sacred song for which he will always be remembered. His footprints are indelible in the sands of time.

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

The pains of death are past,
  Labour and sorrow cease;
And life's long warfare closed at last,
  His soul is found in peace.

Soldier of Christ, well done!
  Praise be thy new employ;
And while eternal ages run,
  Rest in thy Saviour's joy.[2]

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1 Holland, op. cit., V, p. 296
2 Montgomery, Original Hymns, (Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, London, 1853) pp. 330, 331

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