

WRITINGS OF JAMES MONTGOMERY

by James Montgomery

A collection of theological writings, sermons, and essays by James Montgomery, compiled for study and devotional reading.

4 Chapters

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Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh.

Matthew 2:11. The fulfilment of the promise that had been awaited by the expectant angels around God's throne through the long, sad years of human sinfulness, was at last accomplished. Through high heaven the commandment had gone forth that the holy Babe of Bethlehem, just then brought into the world, was to receive the adoration of all the angelic host. No inferior worship was to be His.; for to Him they were to sing, led by the angelic messenger of His coming, the great Hallelujah chorus of "Glory to God in the highest;" and around the humble hostelry where was His manger-bed, they celebrated His worthy praise. There had been no need for such command when the eternal Son from all eternity had adorned the throne of infinite majesty. No need for heavenly host to be commanded to worship Him then; for it had ever been their ceaseless joy to sound forth His hallowed name. Still less such need when He entered paradise and there received the poor thief, the first trophy of His cross, and earliest follower on that way. He had been seen of angels during all His self-sacrificing life; and in Gethsemane's garden, prior to the cross with all its ineffable agony of all-atoning worth. They had been spectators of the awful conflict, and of the conclusive and irreversible victory; and heaven's gates had been high uplifted to let the King of glory, the Vanquisher of Satan and all his legions, enter in everlasting triumph over all. But the angels might have hesitated to adore the lowly Babe, for whom earth, sinful earth, had no welcome and no room at all. No reception, but from the first, rejection, rejection, and still rejection, right on to His cross of shame; and He is still the rejected One, and still the despised. So, therefore, it stands written, "When He bringeth in the First-begotten into the world, He saith, Let all God's angels worship Him;" and since neither the ambient heavens above Bethlehem, nor the fragrant meadows around, could contain the innumerable multitude of worshipping spirits, a glorious deputation sang unto the lovely Infant, God's eternal Son, heaven's highest praise. Then came the Magi from afar, seeking Him Who was born King of the Jews — their wisdom plainly manifest; they were seeking for Jesus. Led by their starry guide, by Bethlehem's manger their weary quest terminated, for there they found Him, blessed Object of their long search. So it has ever been from that bright hour until this very day. No one has ever sought for Him aright and failed to find heavenly guidance, and sure success at length or speedily. Entering the house, they saw the young Child and His mother — Christ first, Christ preeminent then and always — and falling down before Him, Him they worshipped, Him only. No sort of reverence, nor even one poor gift to the virgin mother, for they did not approach Him by her mediation. Firstly, they gave themselves to Him in humble adoration, and so their presents became acceptable. Then, next, they offered gold — their tribute to His kingly majesty. Then, the frankincense, as to God manifest in flesh. Not incense, but one of its two chief ingredients; for none but Aaron might compound the sacred perfume, which, in its fulness, symbolised the perfection of Christ Himself. Lastly, came the offering of myrrh, prophetic of His death as the victim, when wine mingled with myrrh was given to dull the keen anguish of His pain. He tasted, but He would not drink. Tasted to show His appreciation of the sole kindly deed; but refused, because He had chosen the appalling cup His

Father had given Him to drink, and He would drink this with all its bitterness of wrath and fierce indignation against Him; then, and then only, bearing the sins of His people. Myrrh, too, as associated with the burial rites of the nobler families of Israel; and also as showing forth His high-priestly glory as the one anointed with the holy oil, typical of the Holy Spirit to be given without measure, and that descended from His head even unto the hem of His garment; thus baptising all His own, as at Pentecost, into one mystic body, Himself, the one, only, all glorious Head, ever living in the power of His own endless life. G.S.M.

S. Poetry

Poetry Bible Treasury, 2nd Edition, Volume 1, November 1857 (1st. Edition, June [01 1856 018])

[01] Faith and Its Fruits.

Where'er the patriarch pitched his tent, He built an altar to His God; And sanctified, where'er he went, With faith and prayer, the ground he trod.

Through all the east for riches famed, (Heaven's gifts) he set his heart on none; Nor when the dearest was reclaimed, Withheld his son, his only son.

Wherefore in blessing he was blest;

Friendless, the friend of God became;

Long wandering, everywhere found rest;

Long childless, nations bear his name. Nor nations born of blood alone; The father of the faithful he, Where'er his promised seed is known, Faith's heirs are his posterity. My God, if called like him to roam, Glad may I all for thee forsake; My God, what thou hast made my home, Let me thy sanctuary make.

Thy law, thy love, be my delight, Whate'er I do, or think, or am, Walking by faith, and not by sight, Like a true child of Abraham.

James Montgomery.

S. The Test of Love

The Test of Love

(John 14:21) The Lord Jesus, on the night of His betrayal, gathered the twelve around Himself, and instituted the memorial supper, enjoining them to break the bread and drink the wine as showing forth His death until His return — not to the earth in judgment, but to the air, to receive His own to Himself (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18). In Matthew 26:27 the Lord enjoins them — "Drink ye all of it." They all were to drink of the wine, foreknowing that the time would come when the cup would be withheld from the greater multitude of professing Christians. He did not say, "Eat ye all of it," for that injunction would be quite unnecessary. But He did say, "Drink ye all," and Mark records the fact, "they all drank of it," while Luke records the institution, and St. John makes no distinct mention of the supper, since the testimony of the two other Evangelists suffices.

According to the old ordinance cited in Matthew 20:19, we learn that on the day of His resurrection came Jesus and stood in the midst of them, and that eight days after, being gathered a second time, He came again in conformity with His promise in Matthew 18:20, and it seems to be a reasonable deduction that they were already fulfilling His request, as also in Acts 2:1, for we have no knowledge of any other purpose that could produce such absolute unity of action, as it is written, "They were all with one accord in one place." Again, in Acts 2:42, "They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." These were the salient acts of their Christian life. Yet once more, in Acts 20:7. It is clearly stated that when the disciples [or, we] had come together on the first day of the week to break bread, Paul preached to them. They did not come together for the purpose of hearing even Paul preach, but with a far more important object, viz., to fulfil the Lord's injunction to break bread and thus show forth His death until He should come. Lastly, in Acts 2:1-47. it is to be noted that they continued, etc., and therefore must have commenced some time previously, as indeed we have seen was the fact. In 1 Corinthians 10:16 we learn something more of the details of the supper. The cup of blessing necessarily comes first in the enumeration, for it is written, Christ loved us before we loved Him. But in the next chapter (1 Corinthians 11:1-34) we have the Lord's table in its original order, viz., the breaking of the bread first, and then the drinking of the wine next. It is extremely important and instructive to note that the table of the Lord is shown as having a place for all believers on a common standing, without any distinction or discrimination — no priest, no clergyman, or minister, or president — each privileged to partake of the elements separately. We have the lordship of Christ clearly stated no fewer than seven times in 1 Corinthians 11:23-29, "I have received of the Lord," "that the Lord Jesus, "when he had given thanks," "He took the cup," "the Lord's death," "whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord," "not discerning the Lord's body." "Christ is Son of his own house, whose house ye are"; and Lord over His own table, of course, also. If any man preside where Christ is, and where the Holy Ghost is in each believer, and amongst them all, the man daring to preside, by that action, displaces Christ, and goes far on the way to "quench the Spirit" by that act of presidency. For Christ has never said to any man, "Give thou," or, "Administer thou."

But Scripture says, in His own words, "Take ye," "Eat ye," "Drink ye all of it," and no man has any authority to come between the Christian and His present Lord. In thus calling attention to the very words of the Lord Himself, there is not the least wish or intention to grieve any one, but only to call to God's beloved people's memory all that the Lord our God hath spoken. For have not those who are entangled in human systematic theology unwittingly forsaken the ways of the Lord for the arrangements of men "But the truth of God must be plainly spoken at all costs, even though it lead to a strait path, and a narrow way, wherein few care to tread. But the truth must needs be spoken, more especially the special truth so intimately associated with Christ's one request, and the one request made on the night of His betrayal, to His Hebrew disciples, and confirmed to Gentiles by the Holy Ghost speaking through the apostle of the Gentiles — His one request, "This do in remembrance of me." He was present to rule at the first, and is as really present on each recurring first day of the week. Present as really in this twentieth century as He was then. Faith week by week perceives Him present. Love rejoices in its reality, while hope looks forward to the period when He shall come in fulfilment of His promise, I will come and receive you unto myself."

It has been said that one day is as good as any other for the celebration of the Lord's supper. But not so. The first day of the week is that chosen by Himself at Emmaus; and on the same day at Jerusalem, it was confirmed by Him; and a week later again confirmed. At Pentecost the Holy Ghost from heaven came amongst them consequent upon the Lord's triumphant ascension. In addition to this, the suitability of the first day is strikingly manifest. To show forth Christ's death on Friday would be to perpetuate His apparent defeat by death! To show forth His death on Saturday would be to announce the transient triumph of the grave! But to show forth the Lord's death on the first day of the week is to signalise His triumphant resurrection and full and irreversible victory over the world, and sin and Satan, death and the grave, by the glory of the Father.

It is also important to observe that not until the full truth as to the Lord's table and His "supper had been stated in the Corinthian Epistle is anything revealed concerning gifts, excepting the gift common to all believers, the gift of the Holy Ghost, the only gift indispensable at the Lord's table, where the youngest christian is as much at the disposal of the Lord, the Spirit, for the vocal expression of praise, as even a Paul or an Apollos. At the termination of creation's wonderful day, divine majesty established a single, simple test of obedience. The tree of life was quite freely accessible to man. But the fruit of the tree of knowledge was as strictly prohibited, under the most terrible sanction of death. But the tree of life was practically rejected, and the tree of knowledge was partaken of, with the issue of death and not life. The beautiful tree of life is despised and rejected by the great mass of mankind until this day; and, "Knowledge, knowledge," is still the cry. "Educate the people and elevate the masses," and still the gracious Saviour weeps over the world that cast Him out. "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." When the work of redemption was completely accomplished another test was established the test of love for believers in Himself. "If a man love me he will keep my word"; "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me"; "He that loveth me not keepeth not my words." And this is the simple test in *brief, That we do this in remembrance of Him; and that, loving Him, we love our brother also. It is no great, costly, difficult thing the dying Saviour asks of you, but nevertheless it is the test of love. G.S.M.

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