

THE SHEPHERD AND THE SHEEP.

"And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him; for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him; for they know not the voice of strangers." – John 10:4,5.

IN the days of our Lord's first advent, as today, there were many widely recognized leaders and teachers; and various systems of human philosophy claimed the attention of thinking men. Among the Jews much uninspired teaching was added to the sacred literature of the Law and the Prophets, while the neighboring Greeks were diligently dealing in philosophic speculation and ever seeking something new. And now the long expected, but generally unrecognized, Messiah of Israel was about to introduce a new system of teaching, the philosophy and the ethics of a new dispensation of divine providence and grace, the outgrowth and the antitype of Judaism.

But the changes were to be so radical and revolutionary, and so different from all human expectations among either Jews or Gentiles, that the Lord realized that its announcement would be to the Jews in general a stumbling-stone and to the Greeks foolishness, and that, under the blinding influence of the prince of this world, to the few only would it be manifestly the power of God and the wisdom of God. (1 Cor. 1:23,24.) And this few he knew would be the meek and humble-minded ones in Israel. Such he characterized as his sheep, sheeplike meekness being the chief trait of their character, the same symbol being applied also to the Lord himself – "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world."

Upon the few who had thus far received his teaching and become his disciples, as well as upon all such subsequently, he desired to impress the lesson of meekness and to assure them of his tender care over them. Therefore he says, "I am the good Shepherd: the good

shepherd giveth his life for the sheep," etc. And no matter how many others might claim to be the shepherd, he declared himself to be the only true one, and that he would prove it, even to the sacrifice of his life for them.

Again he said, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture." But how does this harmonize with that other statement – "He that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep?" How could our Lord both enter by the door and also be the door? In this way: According to God's plan of salvation the way of man's recovery from death and of his access to eternal life was to be legally opened up by a ransom sacrifice; and when our Lord Jesus freely offered himself to fulfil that requirement of the divine plan, he thereby entered the divinely arranged door of opportunity to become the Savior of the world and the Shepherd of the Lord's sheep. He entered the door of the divine plan and thus became to us the door of opportunity, the way of access to eternal life, and was also therefore counted worthy to be the good Shepherd to lead the lost flock of humanity back to the fold of God, in whose favor is life and **[R1647 : page 132]** at whose right hand there are pleasures forevermore. (Psa. 16:11.) He that entered in by the way of Jehovah's appointment is thus both the door of access to God and the good shepherd of the sheep. "To him the porter [the holy spirit of God] openeth [the way to the sheep]." This opening was done in all the various ways which proclaimed him to us as the beloved Son of God, in whom the Father was well pleased, and our Redeemer and Savior – in the testimony at his baptism, and again on the mount of transfiguration; in the veiled heaven and the rent rocks on the occasion of his death; in the fact of his resurrection and its testimony by angels and eye-witnesses; in the perfect agreement of all the prominent features of his life and character with the testimony of prophets regarding him; and in the authority and character of his teaching and the simplicity and purity of his character which outshone that of every other man, so that even those who did not recognize him as the Son of God, declared, "Never man spake like this man."

And the sheep, thus assured, recognize Jehovah's Anointed as their shepherd; and thenceforth they "hear his voice." "And he calleth his own sheep *by name* [he is interested in them, not only as a general flock, but as individuals] and leadeth them out."

While the Lord thus proclaimed himself the true shepherd and the only door into the fold of God, he characterized all others as strangers, false and hireling shepherds, and thieves and robbers; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we may be saved than the name of Jesus. (Acts 4:12.) Plato, uninstructed in divine truth and blindly groping about with the torch of human reason, in seeking to solve the mysteries of human life, may at times have struck a chord of the divine harmonies with thrilling effect upon thoughtful minds; but soon the clash of discords broke the spell or led the mind into channels of error. So also with Aristotle, Socrates, Confucius and other seekers after God, before life and immortality were brought to light by Jesus Christ. Such men could not be classed as false shepherds; for they evidently were seeking and following the best light they had. Rather, they, or at least some of them, were bell sheep which themselves had lost the way and were wandering upon the mountains, and leading the flocks to the best pastures and the purest waters they could find. But those who, after light has come into the world, and after they themselves have seen and realized it, love darkness rather than light, and who, instead of pointing men to Christ, direct them to the human philosophies of Plato, or Darwin, or others – all such merit the appellations which the Lord applies to them. They truly are thieves and robbers, teaching men that they can climb up into God's favor and into his fold by some other way than that which God hath appointed – through faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ. Such teachers are the hireling shepherds to whom the Master refers; they have little or no real interest in the sheep and seem reckless of their eternal interests, their own present advantage being always of paramount importance. They want to be known as popular leaders and teachers, or original thinkers and great philosophers; or they are linked with old systems of

error which furnish liberal remuneration, or at least a livelihood which they could not so easily secure in any other way.

Such are the hirelings, whose number in these days is legion. And now that the wolf of infidelity has boldly made its appearance among the sheep, these hireling shepherds are scattering in all directions and leaving the sheep to wander about alone. Some of these shepherds are fleeing away from the old systems and running after Darwin and Huxley and Spiritism and so-called Christian Science; and many of them are industriously endeavoring to dissuade the sheep from all faith in the inspiration of the sacred Scriptures. Witness the prominent cases of Dr. Chas. A. Briggs, Prof. Henry Drummond, Dr. Lyman Abbott, Prof. Swing, Dr. Smith, and the recent and startling developments in the great Chicago University where the president, Dr. Harper, and the entire faculty and all the students are boldly declaring themselves against the divine authority of the Bible, and the reliability of its records. The **[R1647 : page 133]** great Parliament of Religions held in Chicago last summer was a most remarkable manifestation of the disposition of prominent hireling shepherds, who sought to attract the attention of the sheep to the various heathen philosophies **[R1648 : page 133]** – Buddhism, Brahminism, Mohammedanism, Shintoism, Confucianism, and others, saying in effect, These, whom we have been accustomed to think of as heathen, are really about as much Christian as we are, except in name. Therefore let us receive them as brethren and make common cause with them. And the people looked in astonishment upon this new departure, scarcely knowing what to think. This great movement, as we pointed out in our issue of Nov. '93, was a most significant feature of present-day tendencies in religious circles. And now some of those representatives of the heathen religions have returned to their homes, and reports have already come back from Japan to the effect that at a great mass meeting in Yokohama the people were gathered to hear the reports from Christian America. And the returned Japanese delegates told them they had been most agreeably disappointed; for instead of having been invited to America, as they surmised, to be Christianized or perhaps indirectly

ridiculed, they actually found that the Christians were in great doubt themselves about their religion, and were eager to learn what the foreigners had to say of their religions and what points of their philosophies could be engrafted upon Christianity. Indeed, they pointed to America as a hopeful field for the propagation of their faiths, and mentioned that an influential and wealthy convert had been made during the sessions of the Parliament. Thus the hireling shepherds are bewildering, confusing and scattering many of the timid sheep who are not sufficiently attentive to the voice of the good Shepherd which speaks through his inspired Word.

Yet only the wayward and heedless sheep can be harmed and scattered by these things. The obedient, trusting sheep will all be tenderly cared for by the good Shepherd, to whose voice they hearken and the softest tones of which are familiar to their ears. There are really, we thus see, two classes of the sheep, as the Lord indicates – the obedient ones just described, who are easily led by the voice of the Shepherd, and a more listless and somewhat wayward class who need some driving and guiding with the crook. The former are the sheep of this flock referred to in verse 16, while the latter are those "*other sheep*" whose number shall also be greatly augmented, when, by and by, the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the earth as the waters cover the sea – *i.e.*, during the Millennial reign of Christ – when there will not be conflicting voices seeking to drown the voice of the good Shepherd.

Nor need we be surprised at the exceedingly small number who now diligently hearken and obediently follow the Shepherd's voice; for the Lord forewarned us it would be only a little flock, saying, "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom." It is a choice flock the Lord is selecting now – a flock that needs no driving nor coaxing, but who meditate in it day and night. The good Shepherd does not propose to drive any sheep into his kingdom; and he desires for the high office to which he is calling them in this age only such as need no driving, and who gladly follow him

through evil and through good report. "And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth *before* them [to lead, and not behind them to drive], and the sheep follow him; for they know his voice."

Of the sheep of this flock the Master says, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me,...and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." (John 10:27-29.) How blessed is the assurance of heavenly guidance and protection now to all the sheep of this flock, the truly consecrated and obedient.

"And a stranger they will not follow, but will flee from him; for they know not the voice of strangers." If the stranger come with enticing words, saying, Let me show **[R1648 : page 134]** you a broader salvation than that you have learned from the apostles and prophets to hope for; that eternal salvation is to be universal, and that not one of God's creatures shall ever perish, the true sheep says, That sounds very benevolent, and yet it has not the ring of the Shepherd's voice in it; for he tells us of "wolves in sheep's clothing" and of "vessels of wrath fitted to destruction" and warns against "presumptuous sins" and of a possible destruction for all wilful sinners and "whosoever loveth and maketh a lie," and plainly says that the devil and those following him shall be destroyed. (Rev. 21:8; Matt. 25:41; Heb. 2:14.) No, this voice that prophesies smooth things, contrary to the Word of God, is not the voice of the good Shepherd.

If he come again with a show of logic and of worldly wisdom (which is foolishness with God) and says – Let me show you a more reasonable way of salvation than by the barbarous Bible method of an atoning sacrifice; viz., a salvation by a process of evolution and the survival of the fittest, according to which theory there was no original human perfection, no fall, and consequently no necessity for a ransom sacrifice – the sheep says, No, I cannot receive this teaching; for the voice of the good Shepherd tells me there is no other way than the one

he opened up for us by freely offering up his life on our behalf, and I am not prepared to begin at the first chapter of Genesis and reconstruct the whole Bible after your theory.

Then he hears other voices declaring that the unalterable purpose of God is the eternal torment of a very large majority of his human creatures; some even declaring that such has been God's purpose, determined long before man's creation. No, says the true sheep, I cannot think that of God: though I cannot understand all your reasonings, nor fully combat your doctrine with the Scriptures, I surely cannot credit such a slander on my Heavenly Father's name; but this I do know – that "the Judge of the whole earth will do right," and so I will trust him where I cannot trace him, and wait for further light.

Such is the attitude of all the true sheep; and such being their attitude, God is both able and willing to shield and protect them under all circumstances and at all times; and the good Shepherd of his appointment shall lead them into green pastures and beside the still waters. They shall be abundantly fed with the "meat *in due season*," – with the spiritual food so necessary to their life and to their growth and development; and such temporal things as are needful will not be withheld. Truly we can say with the Psalmist, "I have never seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."

While all the true sheep of this flock may indeed rejoice in the loving care of the good Shepherd, it is also a further cause for rejoicing that all the other sheep now lost and wandering, and blinded by the god of this world and misled by other voices, are also to be sought out and found and rejoiced over when the Lord, in his own good time, shall spread "a feast of fat things and of wines on the lees well refined." And then there shall be one fold and one Shepherd.

Though only a "little flock" is now recognized as the Lord's sheep, there shall by and by be a mighty host (John 10:16); and the redeemed of the Lord shall go forth with songs and ever lasting joy

upon their heads. Glorious plan of salvation! how worthy it is of the character of our God!
