

THE TRUE FOLD NOT A PEN.

MANY OF THE LORD'S SHEEP are penned in behind various creeds of men and thus hindered from obtaining the food and exercising the liberty which Christ, the great Shepherd of the sheep, intended they should have. It is contrary to the will of the great Chief Shepherd that his sheep should be separated from each other by pens, and hindered from the proper liberties of the fold. There is one general enclosure behind which all the true sheep of this age and flock will be found; and to it the Lord informs us there is but the one door – himself.

We might assume that all know something about this *one fold* and its *one door*; but this would be a mistake; many are so confused by the numerous man-made folds of Christendom that they confound these with the true. Some "wolves" are disappointed to find that the Good Shepherd who gave his life for the "sheep" has provided certain limitations beyond which the sheep cannot go if they obey his voice (his Word), and beyond which they do not desire to go if they are actually his sheep.

Let those who like call this true fold, with its well-defined walls, "a man-made pen"; – those who enjoy its security, enjoy also its liberty. It has one and only one wall, great and high, which so far has kept out the "wolves," except such as pretend to be sheep – who come arrayed in sheep's clothing. This wall is *faith in Christ* as man's *ransom-sacrifice* – finished at Calvary.

None whom that fence excludes are "sheep." And behind that simple, yet strong, creed-fence there is all the liberty proper for the Lord's "sheep;" – though probably not nearly enough for the "goats."

Further, while it is wrong for under-shepherds or anyone else to erect denominational fences inside this true fold, or to entice the "sheep" into them, and thus to restrain their liberties within the fold, – it is not

only proper, but a part of the true under-shepherd's duty to protect the flock within the true enclosure of the true fold, from the "wolves in sheep's clothing" wherever found. No doubt it was as a type of the true Shepherd of the Lord's flock, that David [*i.e.*, the Beloved], while defending his flocks, slew a lion, and a bear, and delivered the sheep of his charge.

Our Lord, the great Chief Shepherd, set an example to the under-shepherds; and all true ones of his appointment must needs have the same spirit or soon lose their office. It was he who forewarned the **[R3142 : page 38]** true sheep, saying, "Beware of false prophets [teachers], which come to you in sheep's clothing [professing to be of the Lord's flock, but in reality not such, because they do not trust in the great sacrifice offered once for all for their sins], but inwardly they are ravening wolves [who would destroy your faith in the *ransom*, and thus destroy you as "sheep"]. But he that is a hireling and not the shepherd,...seeth the wolf [the false teacher] coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth; and the wolf [the false teacher] catcheth them and scattereth the sheep....I lay down my life for the sheep." – Matt. 7:15; John 10:12-15.

It is not the approval of the "wolves," in sheep's clothing or without it, that is to be courted by the true under-shepherd. He will, however, have the approval of the Chief Shepherd, and of all the developed sheep who have their senses exercised by reason of use. The Apostle Paul battled hard against such false teachers, who affected to be believers, "sheep," while they were not such. Speaking on this subject he said to the Elders (under-shepherds) of the Church at Ephesus: –

"I take you to record this day that I am pure from the blood of all....Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves and to all the flock, over which the holy Spirit hath made you overseers [shepherds], to feed the Church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood [– faith in which purchase constitutes them 'sheep']. For I know this, that after my departing grievous wolves shall enter in among you [in sheep's clothing,

of course, otherwise they would not be received], not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise speaking contrary things [things different from what I, Paul, have taught] *to draw away disciples* [followers] *after themselves*. *Therefore watch*, and remember that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears." – Acts 20:26-31.

The Apostle Peter, too, made a similar appeal to the under-shepherds, saying, "The elders which are among you I exhort....Feed the flock of God, as much as in you is, taking oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a willing mind." "But as there were false prophets [in the past – 'wolves in sheep's clothing'] even so there shall be false teachers among you, who *privily* [deceptively, covering the real purport of their teachings] shall bring in [to the fold] damnable heresies [errors leading to condemnation and rejection] even denying the Lord that *bought* them.... And *many shall follow* their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of." – 1 Pet. 5:1-4; 2 Pet. 2:1,2.

The Apostle John also cautions us, saying: "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward....He that *abideth* in the doctrine of Christ [that the Son of Man came to give himself a *ransom* for all – Matt. 20:28; 1 Tim. 2:6] he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you [as a would-be teacher of the 'sheep'] and bring not this doctrine [of the *ransom*, taught by Christ], receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed; for he that biddeth him God-speed [or who even indirectly helps to spread the 'damnable heresy' that we were not *bought* by the Lord] is partaker of the evil work [of him who publicly and openly does so]." – 2 John 8-11.

Thus we see that the duty of under-shepherds to protect the flock from deceptive wolves, as well as to feed them meat in due season, has been recognized from the start; – because from the start there have been such wolves. And since the holy Spirit gave special warnings that in the

end of the age "evil men and leaders astray" would wax more and more bold, and that through their instrumentality Satan would propagate error, and affect to be a messenger of light, is it not due time for all the sheep to recognise these facts, and not to be deceived by "feigned words"* and "fair speeches"*? The true sheep must not judge of fellow sheep by the pelt; for a wolf can wear a sheep's pelt: they must learn to note the Shepherd's voice and manner – directly through his Word, and indirectly through those whom he shall use as his representatives to "*feed the flock* over which the [R3143 : page 38] holy Spirit hath made them overseers [shepherds]."*

Not only did the Apostle Paul thus direct the under-shepherds, but he points out the advisability of this to the flock, since it is thus that the Chief Shepherd leads and feeds and keeps his flock. – Heb. 13:17; Eph. 4:11-16; 1 Cor. 12:27-31; Psa. 91:11,12.

Let us stand fast, therefore, in *that* liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free; – allowing no one to pen us up by human creeds; – neither allowing any to lead us out beyond the bounds fixed for us by the Chief-Shepherd, into liberties, licenses and speculations that he never authorized. Let us abide in Him, keeping ourselves in the love of God, as saith the Apostle.

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