



The Shepherd of My Soul

Charles J Callan OP, Brother Hermengild TOSF

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No types more beautiful could have been chosen under which to picture the character of our Lord and the souls He came to redeem than those of a shepherd and his flock. As nothing on earth could more fitly illustrate the infinite love and sacrifice of the Saviour than the enduring labors and tenderness of a shepherd, so nothing here below could better portray the multiple wants of our spirits than the needful dependent nature of sheep. After the knowledge we possess of our Redeemer, only a slight acquaintance with the characteristics of pastoral life, as it exists in oriental countries, is needed to discern the charming fitness of these comparisons. The similarity is at once striking and most easily understood. Hence it is that our Lord, as well as those who described Him before He came, so often appealed to shepherd life when speaking of the Messiah's mission; hence, also, it is that He was so fond of calling Himself the Good Shepherd, and of alluding to the souls He loved as His sheep. It is the purpose of the pages that follow to trace some of these beautiful and touching resemblances of the shepherd and his flock, on the one side, roaming over the hills and plains of Palestine, and the Saviour of the World with the souls of men, on the other, pursuing together the journey of life. We have taken as our guide, in noting these charming likenesses, the Twenty-second Psalm, or the Psalm of the Good Shepherd, every verse of which recalls some feature or features of pastoral life, and sings of the offices, tender and varied, which the shepherd discharges towards his flock. As this shepherd song was composed and written in the Hebrew tongue, the language of ancient Palestine, we have employed here a literal translation from the original language, simply because it expresses much more beautifully and more exactly than does any rendering from the Latin or Greek the various marks and characteristics of the shepherd's life and duties. The oriental languages, like the people who speak them, are exceedingly figurative and poetic in their modes of expression; and hence, for our present purpose, it is only by getting back as closely as we can to the original that we are able adequately to appreciate the beauty and poetry of that simple but charming life about which the Psalmist is singing. Although the Shepherd Psalm refers, in its literal sense, to the human shepherd attending and providing for his sheep, it has also another higher meaning, which its author gave it, and this has reference to Christ in His relations with the souls He has made and redeemed. It is by reflecting on this sense of the psalm, and on all His gracious dealings with us, that we are enabled to realize how rightly and justly our Saviour is called the Shepherd of Our Souls and how beautifully the Psalmist, in the shepherd song, has depicted His relations with us. And how important this is how much it means for our spiritual welfare and spiritual advancement to reflect on the many mercies of Christ and on the love He bears each one of us. If the considerations that follow assist their readers to appreciate more fully and love more ardently the Divine Shepherd of Souls, who daily and constantly throughout our lives is ministering to our spiritual needs and trying to further our eternal interests, the desire and aim which prompted their writing will be fully and perfectly realized.

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