

THE SHEPHERD, GOD AND MAN.

HEB. XIII. 20, 21.

1. THERE is no peace but that which God makes through His Son. That He might bring us peace, Christ took the ancient words into His lips, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God!" and, entering with full sacrifice into His Father's will, made the reconciliation which ends the long strife between man and God. His death is the consummation of obedience, the last descending sweep which completes the bond of unity. Now a circle, strong as love, runs from heaven to the grave, from the grave again to heaven. The calm of His eternal will flows into our troubled life. The obedience of the Second Man constrains our faith, insures our faithfulness.

2. There is an interweaving of the grace and work of Christ with those of the Father. All is of God; yet Christ is the Great Shepherd of the sheep. The Son must pour out His soul unto death for our redemption; yet God the Father brings Him from the dead. The simplicity of the union between the Divine and the human in the person of Christ bewilders us. Our laboured theology misses its point. Where we mark off a boundary, there is none. God brings Christ from the dead by the blood which Christ Himself poured forth. The Father makes us perfect through the Son who is the Author and Perfecter of our faith, Himself the first and the last—the living One. Let us not separate the inseparable. Let us not say, Here is the Man Christ Jesus: there far above Him is the Father. It is all the heroic Man, and, equally, all the loving, generous, more than heroic God. And who can be the Great Shepherd of the sheep, but that same gracious Friend of the lowly whom David trusted long ago in the valley of the shadow of death?

God here, man there—that does not descriminate the Father from the Son at any point, in any hour of redeeming activity—in sorrow, pain, or shame, joy, hope, or majesty. We have our Christ in all the lowliness of His manhood, and our God there also. We have our fellow man, Christ, in His passion and death, and there also we find His Father and ours. Therefore, our hope in Christ is hope in God. Our Christianity is faith in the life and love of the Eternal.

3. The prayer, "Make you perfect." Perfect in every good thing to do the Father's will. Bright possibility! Heavenly ideal! Could you ask the rose of its dreams and desires, when it awakes in spring-time, would it not answer, "To set on every twig a cluster of blossoms, with the fire of the rising sun and the soul of sweet odour in each of them; to go on yielding them, my tribute to Him who makes lovely things, the rose among the loveliest, to deck His world"? Our hope goes forth where the beauty of the Son of Man reveals the perfect type; and this prayer guides and sustains the desire of the Christian to yield the blossoms and fruit of holy life.

To do the will of God like Him who said, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God." It is the cross bearing its fruit—our crucifixion with Christ to the world; our consecration, in the deepest springs of will and power, with Christ to the Father. The salvation of the redeemed soul is by Him who brought again from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant. He brings us from death by our conformity to the death of His Son. We are raised with Christ, and our affections are set on the things above; then there is peace. Our will and life are in the ocean-stream of Divine love that makes the climate of this world genial and creates the Paradise beyond.

ROBERT A. WATSON.