

Apostle how he "had gone astray like a sheep that was lost," in thrice denying his Master. Probably the same "gracious, chiding look" was again turned on him, as his Lord, still in the character of a Shepherd, addressed to him His last-recorded words on earth, "Follow thou Me."

Closely interwoven with the parable of the Good Shepherd, is the symbol of the door. "I am the door; by me if any man enter in . . . he shall find pastures." The fold is the Church, the Church Militant on earth, the Church Triumphant in heaven. To both, the only entrance is through our Mediator, Christ Jesus. (Eph. i. 13, 18.) He has broken down the wall, and substituted an open door. We enter His earthly fold by being baptized into His name, and the merits of His death obtain for us an entrance into His everlasting kingdom. (2 Peter i. 11.) The last symbol which we shall notice is one which our Lord here applies to Himself, and in no other place is it used in the same sense.

The Church, both Jewish and Christian, is frequently described under the figure of a vine, or a vineyard. (Ps. lxxx. 8, and following verses; Isa. v. 1; Matt. xxi. 33; 1 Cor. iii. 6, 9); her Lord, never, except in this one instance. The fruit the disciples were to bring forth, is that of the Spirit (Gal. v. 22)—love, joy, peace, and all Christian virtues. But in order to attain this end, they must be united to their Master as closely as a branch to the tree on which it grows. The sap rises from the root through the trunk and branches, giving life and vigour to the whole plant—the branch, cut off, withers and dies, and can no longer bear fruit. So we are made members of Christ by Baptism—the Holy Spirit then bestowed on us will keep our hearts in love and obedience to God as long as we listen to His admonitions. But if we wilfully resist Him, and cut ourselves off from God's people, He will leave us to ourselves, till we become

useless, unprofitable, fit only for everlasting fire. More especially do we invite this fate, by neglecting the Holy Ordinance which Christ has appointed for the renewal of our supplies of grace. He who turns away from the Lord's Supper, virtually excommunicates himself, and severs his connection with that Vine, "without whom he can do nothing."

It may be remarked in conclusion, that several of the symbols above described are repeated, in still more forcible language, in St. John's last work, the Book of the Revelation. The Lamb of God is there the central figure throughout. See Rev. v. 6, 12. Triumphant in His heavenly kingdom, He still bears the marks of the sufferings He underwent on earth for us (ch. v. 5). In this mysterious book there is a singular combination of apparently opposite emblems. Thus, immediately before being described as a Lamb, our Lord is called "the Lion of the tribe of Judah," and in ch. vii. 17, "He shall lead them unto living fountains of waters," the symbol of a Lamb is merged in the office of a Shepherd. In ch. xxi. 22, 23, we have the three symbols combined—Light, the Temple, and the Lamb, as if to impress more forcibly on our minds that all previous types converged to a point in the great Antitype. There is also an allusion to the door, in Rev. iii. 7, 8: "He that openeth, and no man shutteth;" "I have set before thee an open door."

But the glowing language of the inspired writer culminates in the magnificent description of the personified "Word" in the 19th chapter. Even more plainly than in the beginning of his Gospel does the Evangelist tell us, that this mighty Being, "whose eyes are as a flame of fire, and who goes forth crowned with many crowns, conquering and to conquer," is the same as that "Word which was made flesh, and dwelt among us," yet was, and is, and shall be for evermore, "King of kings, and Lord of lords."

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Few can enter often the fairy-land of fancy and return to earth unscathed; and yet no wounds are received within those magic borders; that sweet realm itself

never disappoints. It is the step downwards that shakes and chills the frame and dispels the illusion.