

A Prayer
of Jesus

I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes; yea, Father, for such was thy gracious will.

PREFACE

The immediate task is to state why I am designating Paul by the descriptive term, "the stranger." supplemental to this task is to also identify the "strangers" who have followed Paul. Then the task of the volume that follows, in four books, is to justify this designation. The immediate task together with its supplement can be performed in few words; the second task will require more because of the two thousand years of false testimony that has molded and cemented Christendom's exaltation of the man to the status of "Saint Paul." It will require more than a few words to counter the false testimony of the two thousand years.

The immediate task begins here with the simple statement, which everyone knows and will not dispute, that Paul (or Saul) of Tarsus was a stranger to the small fellowship of Jesus' disciples that rallied around the Twelve after the Ascension. He was never a member of their fellowship, though he may have sometimes been in the crowds that gathered about Jesus. If he had been a disciple of the Pharisee, Gamaliel, as he claimed (Acts 22:3), he would have been in Jerusalem during Jesus' ministry in that city. I do not question this claim, as exposure to Pharisaism readily explains his early antagonism toward the little flock of disciples. He was surely aware of the activities of Jesus and of his resurrection. There is even a probability that he was in some way involved with the arrest and trial of the Lord. Perhaps it was about then that he signed on to the police force of the High Priest and, powered by the zealotry of extreme Pharisaism, began to persecute the little flock. Thereafter he was a stranger no more!

Nevertheless, he was a stranger on the day Jesus gathered his little flock about him and began to teach:

Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber; but he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the gatekeeper opens; the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers (John 10:1-5).

There is an intriguing change of number in the last sentence of this utterance. It begins in the singular, "A stranger," as though Jesus had a particular individual in mind. Then it continues in the singular, ". . . but they will flee from him," again as though he spoke of a particular person. Only then does he switch to the plural in emphasizing that the sheep not only will flee from this "stranger" but will not heed the voices of the many "strangers" they were certain to encounter. Now we back up to the beginning of the utterance and discover that the singular prevails there also as we hear Jesus saying, "he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs in by another way," he continues, "That man is a thief and a robber." Over against "that man" he then proceeds to point to another single person, himself, ". . . but he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep."

It is my position that Jesus foresaw the activities of Paul and here designated him "the stranger," "that man" who is "a thief and a robber." I do not mean that he knew the identity of this stranger and could have pointed to Paul in the crowd and said, "There is the man." (Although he was capable of that.) Anyone in his position would have known the terrible hostility that his disciples must face after his departure and the strength of the powers to oppose them – powers that would

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surely unite under an energetic and charismatic leader for the purpose of robbing him of his sheep. "That man" could oppose them in either of two ways: first, as a violent enemy intent on physically destroying them and second, as a non violent enemy coming to them in the guise of a shepherd and intent on leading them astray into spiritual destruction. Paul did both. First, violently and by his own testimony, he hounded them and hunted them to death and imprisonment. Second, non-violently, he changed his tactics, approached them in the guise of a true shepherd and led them astray from the Truth. It is certain that Jesus was not referring to some satanic spiritual power, because he clearly designated him, "That man."

Then who are the "strangers" of the last sentence of this utterance? These are the myriad clergymen who, following Paul, have throughout the two thousand years been climbing in "by another way" than the door and stealing the sheep. They are strangers to the Good Shepherd and his little flock. It is not only that Paul is "the stranger." No, he is only the first of a long line of strangers, a line that continues today to perform its terrible task.

Jesus allowed for only one flock of sheep, his "little flock," and he allowed for only one shepherd, saying,

And I have other sheep, that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice. So there shall be on flock, one shepherd (John 10:16).

Without a doubt he has only himself in mind as he points to himself as the "good shepherd." There is only one good shepherd. All the others, beginning with Paul, must, then, be included in the designation, "strangers."

We get a better view of this exclusion of all others as shepherds of his little flock by observing that the tasks of a shepherd are basically three: leader, feeder and protector. These three functions are clearly implicit in, for example, Psalm 23. "He *leads* me beside the still waters," and, "He *leads* me in paths of righteousness," define the first function. He is a feeder when "he makes me lie down in *green pastures*" and when "thou *preparest a table* before me in the presence of my enemies." He is a protector when "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for *thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.*"

Jesus surely had this Psalm in mind when he identified himself as the Good Shepherd, for it begins, "The Lord is my shepherd." We note here again the singular number. It likewise must have been fundamental in his attack on the fear of death. When he commanded his disciples, "Neither be ye called leaders" (Matthew 23:10) he was effectively eliminating "shepherd" from their job description.

Paul, however, provides for many shepherds, and himself he claims to be a feeder. His "shepherd" provision is stated in Ephesians 4:11:

And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some *pastors* and teachers . . .

The Greek for "pastors" here is precisely the same word translated "shepherd" in John 10. Then, of course, while never designating himself as a pastor or shepherd, he sees himself as a feeder:

I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. (I Corinthians 3:2)

When we look about us in Christendom, we can hardly see the sky for the horde of shepherds, or "pastors" that the church supplies to the world. It is my position that these are those whom Jesus designated "strangers," and that they bring themselves under condemnation by accepting the designation, pastor, all in total ignorance of the significance of their Lord's words. Be assured that I thoroughly understand the power of this deception because I was once one of them . . . and I was wrong. If there is hope for me, there must be hope for all.

PROMINENT FEATURES OF JESUS' GOSPEL

I have stated above why I am designating Paul "the stranger." Therefore, the first and immediate task is finished. Now on to the second, that of justifying the first. We will see, among other things, that Paul's doctrine is very "strange." This will further justify his designation as a stranger together with all those other strangers out there eagerly following him, as I did, and heaping up condemnation for themselves.