

1 "The Shepherd of Our Souls"
2 *Parochial and Plain Sermons* vol. VIII sermon 16
3 St. John Henry Newman
4 April 30, 1843

5 "I am the good Shepherd: the good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep." John x. 11.

6 OUR Lord here appropriates to Himself the title under which He had been foretold by
7 the Prophets. "David My servant shall be king over them," says Almighty God by the
8 mouth of Ezekiel: "and they all shall have one Shepherd." And in the book of Zechariah,
9 "Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the man that is My fellow, saith the
10 Lord of Hosts; smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered." And in like
11 manner St. Peter speaks of our returning "to the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls."
12 [Ezek. xxxvii. 24. Zech. xiii. 7. 1 Pet. ii. 25.]

13 "The good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep." In those countries of the East where
14 our Lord appeared, the office of a shepherd is not only a lowly and simple office, and an
15 office of trust, as it is with us, but, moreover, an office of great hardship and of peril. Our
16 flocks are exposed to no enemies, such as our Lord describes. The Shepherd here has
17 no need to prove his fidelity to the sheep by encounters with fierce beasts of prey. The
18 hireling shepherd is not tried. But where our Lord dwelt in the days of His flesh it was
19 otherwise. There it was true that the good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep—"but
20 he that is an hireling, and whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and
21 leaveth the sheep, and fleeth, and the wolf catcheth them and scattereth the sheep. The
22 hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep."

23 Our Lord found the sheep scattered; or, as He had said shortly before, "All that ever
24 came before Me are thieves and robbers;" and in consequence the sheep had no guide.
25 Such were the priests and rulers of the Jews when Christ came; so that "when He saw
26 the multitudes He was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and
27 were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd." [Matt. ix. 36.] Such, in like
28 manner, were the rulers and prophets of Israel in the days of Ahab, when Micaiah, the
29 Lord's Prophet, "saw all Israel scattered on the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd,
30 and the Lord said, These have no Master, let them return every man to his house in
31 peace." [1 Kings xxii. 17.] Such, too, were the shepherds in the time of Ezekiel, of whom
32 the Prophet says, "Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should
33 not the shepherd feed the flocks? ... They were scattered, because there is no
34 shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were
35 scattered:" [Ezek. xxxiv. 2, 5.] and in the time of the Prophet Zechariah, who says, "Woe
36 to the idle shepherd that leaveth the flock!" [Zech. xi. 17.]

37 So was it all over the world when Christ came in His infinite mercy "to gather in one the
38 children of God that were scattered abroad." And though for a moment, when in the
39 conflict with the enemy the good Shepherd had to lay down His life for the sheep, they
40 were left without a guide (according to the prophecy already quoted, "Smite the
41 Shepherd and the sheep shall he scattered"), yet He soon rose from death to live for

42 ever, according to that other prophecy which said, "He that scattered Israel will gather
43 him, as a shepherd doth his flock." [Jer. xxxi. 10.] And as He says Himself in the parable
44 before us, "He calleth His own sheep by name and leadeth them out, and goeth before
45 them, and the sheep follow Him, for they know His voice," so, on His resurrection, while
46 Mary wept, He did call her by her name [Note], and she turned herself and knew Him by
47 the ear whom she had not known by the eye. So, too, He said, "Simon, son of Jonas,
48 lovest thou Me?" [John xxi. 15.] And He added, "Follow Me." And so again He and His
49 Angel told the women, "Behold He goeth before you into Galilee ... go tell My brethren,
50 that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see Me."

51 From that time the good Shepherd who took the place of the sheep, and died that they
52 might live for ever, has gone before them: and "they follow the Lamb whithersoever He
53 goeth;" [Rev. xiv. 4.] going their way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feeding their
54 kids beside the shepherds' tents [Cant. i. 8].

55 No earthly images can come up to the awful and gracious truth, that God became the
56 Son of man—that the Word became flesh, and was born of a woman. This ineffable
57 mystery surpasses human words. No titles of earth can Christ give to Himself, ever so
58 lowly or mean, which will fitly show us His condescension. His act and deed is too great
59 even for His own lips to utter it. Yet He delights in the image contained in the text, as
60 conveying to us, in such degree as we can receive it, some notion of the degradation,
61 hardship, and pain, which He underwent for our sake.

62 Hence it was prophesied under this figure by the Prophet Isaiah, "Behold, the Lord God
63 will come with strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him ... He shall feed His flock like
64 a shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and
65 shall gently lead those that are with young." [Isa. xi. 10, 11.] And, again, He promises by
66 the mouth of Ezekiel, "Behold, I, even I, will both search My sheep, and seek them out.
67 As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are
68 scattered; so will I seek out My sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they
69 have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day." [Ezek. xxxiv. 11, 12.] And the Psalmist
70 says of Him, "The Lord is my Shepherd, therefore can I lack nothing. He shall feed me
71 in a green pasture, and lead me forth beside the waters of comfort." [Ps. xxiii. 1, 2.] And
72 he addresses Him, "Hear, O thou Shepherd of Israel, Thou that leadest Joseph like a
73 sheep, show Thyself also, Thou that sittest upon the Cherubims." [Ps. lxxx. 1.] And He
74 Himself says in a parable, speaking of Himself, "What man of you having a hundred
75 sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and
76 go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his
77 shoulders, rejoicing." [Luke xv. 4, 5.]

78 Observe, my brethren, it is here said that Christ, the Lord of Angels, condescends to lay
79 the lost sheep on His shoulders: in a former passage of the Prophet Isaiah it was said
80 that He should "gather them with His arm, and carry them in His bosom." By carrying
81 them in His bosom is meant the love He bears them, and the fulness of His grace; by
82 carrying them on His shoulders is signified the security of their dwelling-place; as of old
83 time it was said of Benjamin, "the beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by Him ... and

84 the Lord shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between His shoulders;"
85 [Deut. xxxiii. 12.] and again, of Israel, "As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over
86 her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the
87 Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him." And again, in the
88 Prophet Isaiah, "Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth; their idols were upon the beasts and
89 upon the cattle ... hearken unto Me, O house of Jacob ... which are carried *by Me* from
90 the womb ... Even to your old age I am He, and even to hoary hairs will I carry you; I
91 have made and I will bear, even I will carry, and will deliver you." [Deut. xxxii. 11. Isa.
92 xlvi. 1-4.] He alone, who "bowed Himself and came down," He alone could do it; He
93 alone could bear a whole world's weight, the load of a guilty world, the burden of man's
94 sin, the accumulated debt, past, present, and to come; the sufferings which we owed
95 but could not pay, the wrath of God on the children of Adam; "in His own body on the
96 tree," [1 Pet. ii. 24.] "being made a curse for us," [Gal. iii. 13.] "the just for the unjust, that
97 He might bring us unto God," "through the Eternal Spirit offering Himself without spot to
98 God, and purging our conscience from dead works to serve the Living God." [1 Pet. iii.
99 18. Heb. ix. 14.] Such was the deed of Christ, laying down His life for us: and therefore
100 He is called the Good Shepherd.

101 And hence, in like manner, from the time of Adam to that of Christ, a shepherd's work
102 has been marked out with special Divine favour, as being a shadow of the good
103 Shepherd who was to come. "Righteous Abel" was "a keeper of sheep," "and in process
104 of time" he "brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had
105 respect unto Abel and to his offering." [Gen. iv. 2, 4.] And who were they to whom the
106 Angels first brought the news that a Saviour was born? "Shepherds abiding in the field,
107 keeping watch over their flock by night." [Luke ii. 8.] And what is the description given of
108 the chosen family when they descended into Egypt? "Thy servants," they say, "are
109 shepherds, both we and also our fathers;" [Gen. xlvi. 3.] and what, in consequence,
110 was their repute in Egypt, which surely is a figure of the world? "Every shepherd is an
111 abomination unto the Egyptians." [Gen. xlvi. 34.]

112 But there are three favoured servants of God in particular, special types of the Saviour
113 to come, men raised from low estate to great honour, in whom it was His will that His
114 pastoral office should be thus literally fulfilled. And the first is Jacob, the father of the
115 patriarchs, who appeared before Pharaoh. He became, as Abraham before him, a
116 father of many nations; he "increased exceedingly, and had much cattle, and maid-
117 servants, and men-servants, and camels, and asses," [Gen. xxx. 43.] and he was visited
118 by supernatural favours, and had a new name given him—Israel for Jacob. But at the
119 first he was, as his descendants solemnly confessed year by year, "a Syrian ready to
120 perish;" and what was his employment? the care of sheep; and with what toil and
121 suffering, and for how many years, we learn from his expostulation with his hard master
122 and relative, Laban—"This twenty years have I been with thee," he says; "thy ewes and
123 thy she-goats have not cast their young, and the rams of thy flock have I not eaten. That
124 which was torn of beasts I brought not unto thee; I bare the loss of it; of my hand didst
125 thou require it, whether stolen by day, or stolen by night. Thus I was; in the day the
126 drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes.

127 Thus have I been twenty years in thy house; ... and thou hast changed my wages ten
128 times." [Gen. xxxi. 38-41.]

129 Who is more favoured than Jacob, who was exalted to be a Prince with God, and to
130 prevail by intercession? Yet, you see, he is a shepherd, to image to us that mystical and
131 true Shepherd and Bishop of souls who was to come. Yet there is a second and a third
132 as highly favoured in various ways. The second is Moses, who drove away the rival
133 shepherds and helped the daughters of the Priest of Midian to water their flock; and
134 who, while he was keeping the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, saw the Angel of the
135 Lord in a flame of fire in a bush. And the third is David, the man after God's own heart.
136 He was "the man who was raised on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the
137 sweet Psalmist of Israel;" [2 Sam. xxiii. 1.] but he was found among the sheep. "He took
138 him away from the sheep-folds; as he was following the ewes great with young ones,
139 He took him; that he might feed Jacob His people, and Israel His inheritance. So he fed
140 them with a faithful and true heart, and ruled them prudently with all his power." [Ps.
141 lxxviii. 71-73.] Samuel came to Jesse, and looked through his seven sons, one by one,
142 but found not him whom God had chosen: "And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all
143 thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth
144 the sheep." And when he came "he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance,
145 and goodly to look to; and the Lord said, Arise, anoint him, for this is he." [1 Sam. xvi.
146 11, 12.] And again, after he had been in Saul's court, he "went and returned from Saul,
147 to feed his father's sheep at Bethlehem;" [1 Sam. xvii. 15, 28, 35-37.] and when he
148 came to the army his brother reproached him for "leaving those his few sheep in the
149 wilderness;" and when he was brought before Saul, he gave an account how a lion and
150 a bear "took a lamb out of the flock," and he went after them, and slew them both, and
151 delivered it. Such were the shepherds of old times, men at once of peace and of war;
152 men of simplicity, indeed, "plain men living in tents," "the meekest of men," yet not easy,
153 indolent men, sitting in green meadows, and by cool streams, but men of rough duties,
154 who were under the necessity to suffer, while they had the opportunity to do exploits.

155 And if such were the figures, how much more was the Truth itself, the good Shepherd,
156 when He came, both guileless and heroic? If shepherds are men of simple lives and
157 obscure fortunes, uncorrupted and unknown in kings' courts and marts of commerce,
158 how much more He who was "the carpenter's Son," who was "meek and lowly of heart,"
159 who "did not strive nor cry," who "went about doing good," who "when He was reviled,
160 reviled not again," and who was "despised and rejected of men"? If, on the other hand,
161 they are men of suffering and trial, how much more so He who was "a man of sorrows,"
162 and who "laid down His life for the sheep"?

163 "That which was torn of beasts I brought not unto thee," says Jacob; "I bare the loss of
164 it; of my hand didst thou require it." And has not Christ undertaken the charge of our
165 souls? Has He not made Himself answerable for us whom the devil had rent? Like the
166 good Samaritan, "Take care of him," He says, "and whatsoever thou spendest more,
167 when I come again I will repay thee." [Luke x. 35.] Or, as in another parable, under
168 another image: "Lord, let it alone this year also ... and if it bear fruit, well; and if not, then
169 after that thou shalt cut it down." [Luke xiii. 8, 9.] "In the day the drought consumed me,"

170 says Jacob; and who was He who at midday sat down at that very Jacob's well, tired
171 with His journey, and needing some of that water to quench His thirst, whereof "Jacob
172 drank himself, and his children and his cattle"? Yet whereas He had a living water to
173 impart, which the world knew not of, He preferred, as became the good Shepherd, to
174 offer it to one of those lost sheep whom He came to seek and to save, rather than to
175 take at her hand the water from the well, or to accept the offer of His disciples, when
176 they came with meat from the city, and said, "Master, eat." "The frost" consumed me "by
177 night," says Jacob, "and my sleep departed from mine eyes;" and read we not of One
178 whose wont it was to rise a long while before day, and continue in prayer to God? who
179 passed nights in the mountain, or on the sea? who dwelt forty days in the wilderness?
180 who, in the evening and night of His passion, was forlorn in the bleak garden, or
181 stripped and bleeding in the cold judgment hall?

182 Again: Moses, amid his sheep, saw the vision of God and was told of God's adorable
183 Name; and Christ, the true Shepherd, lived a life of contemplation in the midst of His
184 laborious ministry; He was transfigured on the mountain, and no man knew the Son but
185 the Father, nor the Father but the Son.

186 Jacob endured, Moses meditated—and David wrought. Jacob endured the frost, and
187 heat, and sleepless nights, and paid the price of the lost sheep; Moses was taken up
188 into the mount for forty days; David fought with the foe, and recovered the prey—he
189 rescued it from the mouth of the lion, and the paw of the bear, and killed the ravenous
190 beasts. Christ, too, not only suffered with Jacob, and was in contemplation with Moses,
191 but fought and conquered with David. David defended his father's sheep at Bethlehem;
192 Christ, born and heralded to the shepherds at Bethlehem, suffered on the Cross in order
193 to conquer. He came "from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah;" [Isa. lxiii. 1-3.] but
194 He was "glorious in His apparel," for He trod the people "in His anger, and trampled
195 them in His fury, and their blood was sprinkled upon His garments, and He stained all
196 His raiment." Jacob was not as David, nor David as Jacob, nor either of them as Moses;
197 but Christ was all three, as fulfilling all types, the lowly Jacob, the wise Moses, the
198 heroic David, all in one—Priest, Prophet, and King.

199 My brethren, we say daily, "We are His people, and the sheep of His pasture." Again,
200 we say, "We have erred and strayed from Thy ways, like lost sheep:" let us never forget
201 these truths; let us never forget, on the one hand, that we are sinners; let us never
202 forget, on the other hand, that Christ is our Guide and Guardian. He is "the Way, the
203 Truth, and the Life." [John xiv. 6.] He is a light unto our ways, and a lanthorn unto our
204 paths. He is our Shepherd, and the sheep know His voice. If we are His sheep, we shall
205 hear it, recognize it, and obey it. Let us beware of not following when He goes before:
206 "He goes before, and His sheep follow Him, for they know His voice." Let us beware of
207 receiving His grace in vain. When God called Samuel, he answered, "Speak, Lord, for
208 Thy servant heareth." When Christ called St. Paul, he "was not disobedient to the
209 heavenly vision." Let us desire to know His voice; let us pray for the gift of watchful ears
210 and a willing heart. He does not call all men in one way; He calls us each in His own
211 way. To St. Peter He said, "Follow thou Me;" of St. John, "If I will that he tarry till I come,
212 what is that to thee?" Nor is it always easy to know His voice. St. John knew it, and said,

213 "It is the Lord," before St. Peter. Samuel did not know it till Eli told him. St. Paul asked,
214 "Who art Thou, Lord?" We are bid, "try the spirits, whether they be of God." But
215 whatever difficulty there be in knowing when Christ calls, and whither, yet at least let us
216 look out for His call. Let us not be content with ourselves; let us not make our own
217 hearts our home, or this world our home, or our friends our home; let us look out for a
218 better country, that is, a heavenly. Let us look out for Him who alone can guide us to
219 that better country; let us call heaven our home, and this life a pilgrimage; let us view
220 ourselves, as sheep in the trackless desert, who, unless they follow the shepherd, will
221 be sure to lose themselves, sure to fall in with the wolf. We are safe while we keep
222 close to Him, and under His eye; but if we suffer Satan to gain an advantage over us,
223 woe to us!

224 Blessed are they who give the flower of their days, and their strength of soul and body
225 to Him; blessed are they who in their youth turn to Him who gave His life for them, and
226 would fain give it to them and implant it in them, that they may live for ever. Blessed are
227 they who resolve—come good, come evil, come sunshine, come tempest, come
228 honour, come dishonour—that He shall be their Lord and Master, their King and God!
229 They will come to a perfect end, and to peace at the last. They will, with Jacob, confess
230 Him, ere they die, as "the God that fed them all their life long unto that day, the Angel
231 which redeemed them from all evil;" [Gen. xlviii. 15, 16.] with Moses, that "as is their
232 day, so shall their strength be;" and with David, that in "the valley of the shadow of
233 death, they fear no evil, for He is with them, and that His rod and His staff comfort
234 them;" for "when they pass through the waters He will be with them, and through the
235 rivers, they shall not overflow them; when they walk through the fire, they shall not be
236 burnt, neither shall the flame kindle upon them, for He is the Lord their God, the Holy
237 One of Israel, their Saviour."

238 Note

239 John xx. 16.