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said—'Heaven and earth shall pass away: but My words shall not pass away'. We wait then the fulfilment of the declarations of that prophet about whom Moses spoke when he said 'A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; Him shall ye hear.' Acts 7:37. We would remind ourselves of the statement God made Balaam make in Numbers 23:19 'Hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall he not make it good?' Paul assures us that at the coming of Christ 'those also which sleep through Jesus will God bring with Him'. We ask 'bring with Him where?' 'Into the Kingdom, of course', we reply. But He wants us to have an abundant entrance into that Kingdom. That will depend entirely upon your fidelity in this the day of opportunity. The means of entrance into the Father's House is the precious blood of Christ; that is appreciated by faith! The means of gaining a position in the Kingdom is by faithfulness to the Man who is out of sight at the moment. Invisibility tests us—Israel said about Moses 'Up make us gods that will go before us, for as for this Moses we wot not what is become of him.' Your place in the coming kingdom will reveal to others how much you valued the Man who today is out of sight. He commends, not for success necessarily, but for faithfulness. 'For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake.' Phil. 1:29.

THE ROYAL OWNER

A. C. ROSE

Such is the literal meaning of the title 'Lord' so frequently applied to the Son of God in the pages of the New Testament. He who had not where to lay His head was the rightful owner of every roof-tree. 'Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor that we through His poverty might become rich'. The Possessor of heaven and earth would not enjoy His vast estates alone. It did not suffice that man was the crown of His creation, he must be made the companion of His counsels, whatever the cost. So it has

come to pass that many of us who once groaned and panted beneath the lash of a merciless taskmaster, now sing and smile in the sunny radiance of our sovereign Master's face.

One of the most illuminating similes of this Divine Owner is the Shepherd. He Himself is the author of the type as may be seen in John 10:3, 'He calleth His own sheep by name and leadeth them out. And when He putteth forth His own He goeth before them and the sheep follow Him for they know His voice.' Herein is the vital difference between shepherd and hireling. One is the careful owner, the other is he 'whose own the sheep are not' (John 10:12). Every member of that flock is the personal property of the Good Shepherd; a double bond ensures His claims. They are His by the original right of creatorship; His by the supreme right of redeemership. 'The flock which He has purchased with His own blood' (Acts 20:28). Nor was He acting alone when this irrevocable bond was signed and sealed. He said: 'Fear not little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.' To this end the Father sent His Son for the sacrificial shepherd work of giving His life for the sake of the sheep. 'Therefore doth My Father love Me because I lay down My life' (John 10:17). Nor is He entirely satisfied when the lost has been found, and the torn has been healed, and the wanderer has become a follower. He secures His property to Himself with pledges tender as love, stronger than steel. 'My sheep shall never, never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father who gave them to Me is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand' (John 10:28, 29). What security from sleepless enemies; what seclusion amidst thronging crowds; what satisfaction when earthly streams run dry!

It is meet that we who are apparently only 'lambs amongst wolves' should thus rejoice in our princely Owner and in the abundant provision for us whether we pass through green pastures or down the valley death-shadowed. It is also right that we should consider our heavy weight of responsibility to respond to all that has been so graciously done for us. 'O come let us worship and bow down. Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. For

He is our God and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand' (Psa. 95:6, 7). A true apprehension of what grace has wrought for us will necessarily have this effect, bowing us in speechless gratitude before our Benefactor. There is danger, however, lest a partial knowledge should leave us proudly upon our feet. It was ever so in olden time, for the flock which had been so signally delivered from Egypt was a source of grief to the great Shepherd. 'He fed them according to the integrity of His heart and guided them by the skilfulness of His hands' (Psa. 78:72); but He has left the sorrowful confession on record that forty years long was He grieved with them. And because of their pride which produced unbelief their carcasses fell in the wilderness. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews reviewing this tragedy pleads: 'Let us therefore fear lest a promise being left us . . . any of you should seem to come short' (Heb. 3:19; 4:1).

An unclaimed promise and an unfulfilled command are in the same category in the divine economy. Faith, born of the Spirit and Word of God, is in urgent demand, lest the sheep of the heavenly pasture, the heirs to exceeding great and precious promises, should appear like swine wallowing in the mire of materialism and self-pleasing. Let us examine ourselves whether we be in the faith or no. Indulge in a little wholesome doubt as an antidote to prevailing highmindedness. 'Because of unbelief they were broken off and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded but fear' (Rom. 11:20). Are not many who name the name of Christ to-day, similar to the man with the muck-rake? Careful for dirty straws blown from the dunghill, careless of the unfading crown of glory in the angel's hand.

Divine ownership is a reality. It is a principle which will weigh in the balances of the judgment seat. 'Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God's' (1 Cor. 6:19, 20). Let us not shrink from the inevitable inference. His property; His for this brief experiment of time; His for eternity!

'Whose I am and Whom I serve,' testified the prisoner apostle. His first word of surrender long before had been: 'Who art Thou, Lord?' and his second: 'Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?'

There and then the great transfer was made and the master of Israel became the Galilean's bondman. His place henceforth in his Conqueror's train; his earthly portion insult and hate and scorning; his present guerdon joy unspeakable and full of glory. His, a star in the darkest night, a balm for the sharpest woe, Christ crucified—risen—coming.

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