

# Quotes from the Word: The Lord Is My Shepherd

## OLD TESTAMENT

The Lord is my shepherd;  
I shall not want.  
He makes me to lie down in green pastures;  
He leads me beside the still waters.  
He restores my soul;  
He leads me in the paths of righteousness  
For His name's sake (Psalm 23:1-3).

The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord,  
And He delights in his way.  
Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down;  
For the Lord upholds him with his hand.  
I have been young, and now am old;  
Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken,  
Nor his descendants begging bread (Psalm 37:23-25).

Your way was in the sea,  
Your path was in the great waters.  
You led Your people like a flock  
By the hands of Moses and Aaron (see Psalm 77:19-20).

I have gone astray like a lost sheep;  
Seek Your servant,  
For I do not forget Your commandments (Psalm 119:176).

Lead me in the way everlasting (Psalm 139:24).

He will feed His flock like a shepherd;  
He will gather the lambs with His arm,  
And carry them in His bosom,  
And gently lead those who are with young (Isaiah 40:11).

For thus says the Lord God: "Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day he is among his scattered sheep, so will I seek out My sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark day. I will feed them in good pasture, and their fold shall be on the high mountains of Israel. I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick. You are My flock, the flock of My pasture; you are men, and I am your God," says the Lord God (see Ezekiel 34:11, 12, 14, 16, 31).

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## NEW TESTAMENT

And Jesus, when He came out, saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd. So He began to teach them many things (Mark 6:33).

“What man of You, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing (Luke 15: 4, 5).

“Do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen” (Matthew 6:13).

“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.” Jesus used this illustration, but they did not understand the things which He spoke to them.

Then Jesus said to them again, “Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.

I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.

My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.

(See John 10:1-6, 7,9,11,14,16,27-28)

“The Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes” (Revelation 7:17).

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## HEAVENLY DOCTRINE

### THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD

He who leads and teaches is called a “shepherd” and those who are led and taught are called the “flock” (*Arcana Coelestia* 343).

The Lord is called “shepherd,” because He will feed them with Divine truth, and thereby lead to the good of love, and thus to Himself (*Apocalypse Explained* 701:19).

The Lord’s rescue of the spiritual world, and His forthcoming rescue by this means of the church from complete damnation can be illustrated by a comparison with a shepherd, who, like Samson or David, snatches his sheep from the jaws of a lion or bear, drives away the wild beasts that come out of the forests to raid the meadows, and pursues them to the furthest reaches, finally driving them into lakes or deserts; and then he comes back to his sheep and pastures them safely, and gives them drink from springs of limpid water (see *True Christian Religion* 122).

A person who is good is led by the Lord, and he takes no step into which and from which the Lord does not lead. The Lord leads him as if by the hand, permitting and withholding as far as a person is willing to follow in freedom. But if a person looks to the Lord he is brought by continual steps out of hell up towards heaven and into heaven. This the Lord does without the person knowing it, because if a person knew it he would disturb the continuity of that process by leading himself. It is enough for a person to learn truths from the Word, and by means of truths to know what good is, and from truths and goods what evils and falsities are, in order that he may be affected by truths and goods, and not be affected by falsities and evils. This must be revealed, because it is not known that the Divine providence is continual, and enters into the most minute things of a person’s life (see *Apocalypse Explained* 1174:2,3).

The Twenty-third Psalm means that a person who trusts in the Lord is led into all the goods and truths of heaven, and overflows with the enjoyments thereof. “My shepherd” means the Lord. “The pastures of the tender herb” symbolize the knowledges of truth and good. “The waters of rest” symbolize the truths of heaven therefrom. “Table” symbolizes spiritual nourishment. “To make fat the head with oil” symbolizes wisdom which is from good. “My cup will overflow” symbolizes intelligence which is from truths (see *Apocalypse Explained* 375).

### SHEPHERDS IN THE WORD

“Shepherds” in the Word symbolize those who teach the good of life and lead to it, which is done by means of truths (*Apocalypse Explained* 419:17).

With respect to priests they ought to teach people the way to heaven, and should also lead them. They ought to teach them according to the doctrine of their Church from the Word; and

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should lead them so that they live according to that doctrine. The priests who teach truths, and through them lead to the good of life, and thus to the Lord, are the good shepherds of the sheep. But those who teach, and do not lead to the good of life, and thus to the Lord, are bad shepherds (*New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine* 315).

Placing sheep onto the shoulders and carrying them on them means preserving everlastingly in a state of good and truth through all exertion and power. This explains why the Lord, who spoke by means of correspondences, said that when the lost sheep was found the owner placed it on his shoulder, rejoicing, Luke 15:5. 'The sheep that was lost and found' is good as it resides with someone who comes to his senses (see *Arcana Coelestia* 9836:6).

## THE LORD'S DIVINE PROVIDENCE

The Lord's providence has in view what is eternal (*Arcana Coelestia* 7007:4).

The operation of the Divine Providence for the salvation of a person begins at his birth and continues right on to the end of his life, and afterwards to eternity (*Divine Providence* 332).

Providence is the government of the Lord in the heavens and on the earth (*New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine* 276).

When the Lord is with someone, He leads him and makes provision so that all that happens, whether sad or joyful, may bring him what is good. This is Divine Providence (*Arcana Coelestia* 6303).

The Lord "leads a person as silently as an imperceptible stream or favoring current bears a vessel along" (*Divine Providence* 186).

Divine providence is overall, that is, it is present within the smallest details of all, and that people in the stream of providence are being carried along constantly towards happier things, whatever appearance the means may present. Those in the stream of providence are people who trust in the Divine and ascribe everything to Him. But those not in the stream of providence are people who trust in themselves alone and attribute everything to themselves; theirs is a contrary outlook, for they take providence away from the Divine and claim it as their own. It should be recognized also that to the extent that anyone is in the stream of providence he is in a state of peace; and to the extent that anyone is in a state of peace by virtue of the good of faith, he is in Divine providence. These alone know and believe that the Lord's Divine providence resides within every single thing, indeed within the smallest details of all, as well as that Divine providence has what is eternal in view (*Arcana Coelestia* 8478:4).

Peace has in it confidence in the Lord, that He directs all things, and provides all things, and that He leads to a good end (*Arcana Coelestia* 8455).

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## PROVIDENCE AND HUMAN PRUDENCE

People who attribute everything to their own prudence are like those who wander in dark forests and do not know the way out. And if they find it they attribute their success either to their own prudence or to fortune. All things which happen by chance are the work of Providence and that Providence acts silently and secretly, for very many reasons (see *Arcana Coelestia* 6485).

Those who acknowledge God and His Divine Providence are like the angels of heaven, who regard with aversion being led of themselves, and who love to be led by the Lord. A sign that they are led by the Lord is that they love the neighbor. On the other hand, those who acknowledge nature and a person's own prudence are like spirits of hell, who regard with aversion being led by the Lord and who love to be led of themselves (*Divine Providence* 208).

If you wish to be led by the Divine Providence use prudence as a servant. Prudence itself appears to a person as his own; and it is believed to be his own so long as he keeps shut up within him the deadliest enemy of God and the Divine Providence, the love of self. This dwells in the interiors of every person from birth; if you do not recognize it, for it does not wish to be recognized, it dwells securely, and guards the door lest a person should open it, and it should thus be cast out by the Lord. A person opens this door by shunning, as of himself evils as sins, with the acknowledgment that he does so from the Lord. This is the prudence with which the Divine Providence acts as one (see *Divine Providence* 210:2).

A love of evil which does not make itself apparent is like an enemy in ambush. Being in freedom to think and to will evil while also learning spiritual truths, helps a person learn how to guard or shut the door against these evils. If he acknowledges God and implores His help, he can be healed by the Lord (see *Divine Providence* 281:3).

## SEEING PROVIDENCE IN THE BACK

It is granted to a person to see the Divine Providence in the back and not in the face; and this in a spiritual state and not in a natural state. To see the Divine Providence in the back and not in the face is to see it after it operates and not before. And to see it from a spiritual state and not from a natural state is to see it from heaven and not from the world. All who receive influx from heaven and acknowledge the Divine Providence, and especially those who by reformation have become spiritual, when they see events in some wonderful series, see the Divine Providence, as it were, from an interior acknowledgment and confess it. They do not desire to see it in the face, that is, before it comes into operation, fearing lest their will should enter into anything of its order and tenor.

It is otherwise with those who do not admit any influx from heaven but only from the world, especially with those who have become natural from confirming appearances in themselves. They do not see anything of the Divine Providence in the back, that is, after it operates, but

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they desire to see it in the face, that is, before it comes into operation. And as the Divine Providence operates by means, and means are produced through people or the world, therefore, whether they see it in the face or in the back, they attribute it either to people or to nature, and thus they confirm themselves in the denial of it. They attribute it in this way because their understanding is closed from above and is open only from below, that is, closed towards heaven and open towards the world. And it is not granted to see the Divine Providence from the world, but only from Heaven (*Divine Providence* 187:1,2 ).

Fortune is the operation of the Divine Providence in the ultimate of order, according to the quality of a person's state. This may serve as a confirmation that the Divine Providence is in the most minute singulars of all things (see *New Jerusalem and the Heavenly Doctrines* 276).