"HOW MUCH BETTER THEN IS A MAN THAN A SHEEP?"

MATT. XII:12.

BY A. J. GORDON, D.D., BOSTON, MASS.

An absurd question! you may exclaim at first. But it was a very pertinent question when Jesus asked it. And it is just as truly so today. For do you not know that our American congress has given vastly more attention to the protection of sheep's wool than it has given to the protection of the home and family? And this is a typical fact which illustrates the conduct of worldly rulers and secular shepherds in all time. Therefore, it is necessary for us to answer anew the question: "How much better is a man than a sheep?"

Answer first: "The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep," (John x:11), which, being interpreted, means: "The Son of God gave himself for the sons of men." Our first computation of the worth of man, then, is not in an earthly currency but in a heavenly; not in the denomination of "corruptible things as silver and gold" but of "the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." Think of that, ye monopolists and Christian millionaires, who have ground humanity between the upper and nether millstones of combination and capital in order to make gain and grist for yourselves, till the Lord has cried out repeatedly: "Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge who eat up My people as they eat bread?"

Here is the difference between man's estimate of man and God's estimate: The one will grind the masses into food for his own stomach, if he can do so; the other—"the Son of God—will give his own body to be ground into food for man, saying, as he offers us his own wounded and bleeding members: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread that I give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." The philosopher, Compte, is said to have instituted and kept what he called "Man's Supper," in which he partook of a crust of bread and a cup of water, saying, as he did so: "This I do in remembrance of the great multitude who have only a crust to feed upon." But such a sacrament is not needed: for the Lord's Supper, instituted centuries ago, declares all this and vastly more. By it our Lord says to our hungry, oppressed and suffering humanity, "I give myself to you, My body to be your loaf, My blood to be your life, take, eat ye all of it." When was ever such valuation set on man as this? "Every man has his price," says the proverb. And the politician is in the market bidding for him; and the capitalist is in the Exchange bidding for him; and the man-slayer stands in the door of his saloon bidding for him. All these are bidding him down, vieing with each other in deadly competition to see which will get him for the smallest and most paltry price. But Jesus Christ steps into the circle and sternly asks of the bidders: "How much better is a man than a sheep?"
Look on him, made in the image of God, and, though bruised and broken by the fall, capable of being restored to that image, and re-clothed with glory and honor and immortality! And is this all that he is fit for, to be sheared of his daily income by the saloon; to be robbed of his fleece by the usurer, and to be sold in the shambles by the monopolist? I will not bid him down, I will bid him up. "As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father, and I lay down my life for the sheep," (John x:15). Here is the Divine valuation of man; Christ’s invoice of humanity. Look at the price—the Lord Himself — and then estimate the purchase. Never was such fine gold of purity and perfection coined into a single life; never was such weight of priceless suffering crowded into a single death. And all this the purchase money of our redemption. "Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" asks Jesus. And He answers His questions by giving Himself. We want no more powerful argument for missions than this: "Who loved me and gave Himself for me"—Himself, so infinitely much, for me, so insignificantly little. Then woe to the Christian who can hoard his gold, when the dying millions are crying out for more missionaries to be sent to them; and our burdened and anxious Boards are crying out for more money with which to send them.

"How much better is a man than a sheep?"

Answer second: "I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir" (Is. xiii. 12). The seer looked on, through the long perspective of prophecy, to the day when the heavens shall be shaken; when the sun shall be darkened and the moon shall withdraw her light. In this time, when God shall punish the world for its evil he "will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible"—then "a man shall be more precious than fine gold." Here is something new in the history of the race. For ages the gold brokers of this world have counted humanity as only so much crude ore to be reduced and coined into cash for their vaults. But now the golden age has come when a man stamped with the image and superscription of God will pass for what he is worth—the highest currency on earth. Hear this, ye missionaries of the Cross! You have forsaken all to go down into William Carey’s "Gold Mine," while many of your brethren at home are filling their safes with thousands and ten thousands of superfluous wealth, leaving you short-handed and discouraged for want of helpers which they might send you if they would only give as the Lord has prospered them. And in hours of heart-sinking and faintness you sometimes wonder what you will get for all your thankless sacrifices. Be of good cheer. You are mining men, and that for the most part out of the lowest strata of humanity; and though your products have little value in this world’s market, wait a
little. There is a financial panic approaching in which yellow gold will go down, while there will be an astonishing rise in your securities. Listen to the report of the coming crash, as it appears on the bulletin-board of James, v: “Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped together treasures for the last days.” Did you ever hear of such a gold panic as that? Boom the market; form syndicates; pass silver bills; enlist the banks! It is of no use. The day of judgment has come. “Your gold and silver is cankered.” Millionaires become insolvent, banks suspend, and the only people who have anything to depend on are those who laid up somewhat in the savings bank of heaven.

But what news for the missionary on St. James’ bulletin-board? Listen: “Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth and hath long patience for it until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; establish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.” “The coming of the Lord.” And what of that? Ah, that is going to revolutionize society. Read the Messianic Psalm 72d and learn for yourself the change that will be ushered in by the millennium. Money will go down, man will come up. Immanuel will now control the market in the interest of his clients. “And to Him shall be given the gold of Sheba,” and “He shall deliver the needy when he crieth, the poor also and him that hath no helper.”

And most wonderful of all: “A man shall be more precious than gold.” Hear that, O long-suffering and patient missionary; your stock will be at par now—as it never has been before. The poor souls which you dug from the dark caverns of heathenism, and which you coined in the mint of redemption, will be worth millions of such “corruptible things as silver and gold.” Did the mother of the Gracchi present her own children to those who inquired concerning her treasures, saying: “These are my jewels?” How much more will the missionary exult in his spiritual children in that day when the Lord shall “make up his jewels,” presenting them before the Redeemer, and before the angels, saying: “These are my riches!” Moffat, who is that black man who stands by your side, and what do you count him worth? And the aged apostle of Africa replies: That is African, the once bloodthirsty and raging man-slayer, now become as gentle and tender as a lamb since Jesus laid him on His shoulders rejoicing. Do you ask me what he is worth? He is “more precious than fine gold. Yea, than the golden wedge of Ophir.” Who is that, O William Carey, whom you are introducing with such joy to your Lord? That
is Khrishna Pal, my first convert from among the heathen of India. Listen, and you shall hear him sing.

"O thou my soul forget no more
The friend who all thy sorrows bore."

And who is this, O Boardman beloved, whom you are leading up to the throne with such thanksgiving? This is San Quala, whom God gave me from the dark-faced Karens, and who himself in turned thousands to Jesus Christ.

"Where can I invest most safely and profitably?" is the question constantly asked on 'Change. Invest in souls; seriously, deliberately and solemnly we urge you to invest in souls. There is no insurance on gold and silver that will protect them against the fires of the last day. But saved and glorified souls—these are "the gold tried in the fire," out of which your crown of rejoicing shall be wrought. Get money, you may or may not, O Christian. But as you care aught for the rewards of heaven, fail not of getting souls. Get them at your own door; get them from the ends of the earth; but fail not to get them.

"I feel age creeping on me. I know that I must soon die. I hope it is not wrong to say it, but I cannot bear to leave this world with all the suffering in it!"—Earl of Shaftesbury.

SCHLEGEL, and Madame de Stael after him, called "architecture, frozen music." From some of the music we have heard in so-called sanctuaries during the past five years we have concluded that the praise was frozen in the icy surroundings of an aesthetic performance, in which all the warmth of devotional fervor had somehow been utterly lost. Is it not possible for even our missionary spirit so to be chilled by the icy rigidity of a heartless formalism, that even while we are boasting of our efficient organizations, God sees that they are like frozen corpses, from which all life is gone?

ARE OUR PASTORS FAITHFUL?

The large number of our non-contributing churches, after making a liberal allowance for unintentional omission, and churches having only a nominal existence, also the trifling amount given to the Foreign Mission Work by congregations whose wealth runs up into the millions, shows the necessity of some new movement. I have been attending a prominent evangelical church in a great city for the last three years and more, ministered to by one of the most mature preachers in our church, and during the whole time he has made no reference to the foreign work from the pulpit. The attention of the officers of the church has been called to the strange omission but no explanation has been given. If men who have the ear of the church are silent, God will raise up others. "The stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber and help destroy it." This is beyond endurance.—A Parishioner.