The Gentle Shepherd As Fierce Warrior

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Religion, culture and morality rest upon and arise from six (6) inches of topsoil. Topsoil comes from lakes, rivers and glaciers. Water comes from heat. Fire comes from atmosphere. Air comes from space. Sound comes from expansion. Time comes from God. God comes from God, and existence comes from conflict (Heraclitus: "War is the father of all things.").





The Bible and The Church use the metaphor of a shepherd to describe the attitude and the actions of God and the mission of The Church. The metaphor appears in every Christian liturgy and every spiritual practice.

A shepherd's job is to foster by nourishing a group of animals upon whom society depends, specifically, a herd of sheep. The general

term for a person who looks after the welfare of any kind of group of animals is pastor. A pastor nourishes a group of animals upon whom a society depends. A shepherd is a pastor specializing in the care and nurture of sheep.

Both words, shepherd and pastor, come into symbolic use to indicate one tending a creature or a thing which is important to an individual or a society. The word minister is not a synonym for the words shepherd and pastor. A minister is a lesser someone, a servant. A shepherd or pastor

is a superior someone, a master. Despite their polarity, both metaphors, shepherd and pastor on the one hand and minister on the other, describe the role of clergy and laity of all religions.

How does a shepherd care and nurture a herd of sheep? They perform several related duties. These include:

- → Feeding

 → Watering
- **→**Treating

→ Midwifing

- → Medicating
- →Protecting
- **→**Transporting
- →Delivering
- **→**Loving



Seven of these duties are seen as expressions of gentleness, of the dulcet hand, even though three of the seven (Midwifing, Treating and Medicating) usually require the infliction of pain, but for an ultimately salutary purpose, not for the infliction of pain, much less of harm.

Two of these duties are seen as expressions of ferocity, of the violent hand, even though one of them (Delivering) has one outcome that is painful but not harmful (shearing). The other outcome of Delivering, of course, is harmful (slaughter).

Besides Delivering, the other pastoral or shepherd's duty seen as an expression of ferocity is Protecting. Protecting often involves killing. Killing is a ferocious act even when done in sang froid. The reason is, life is intrinsically valuable, it is its own inalienable right to be by virtue of being self-caused. Overriding the inalienable right of self-existing life to exist is a ferocious act.



Shepherds must be prepared to kill to protect the sheep in their charge. Pastoral duties include killing when necessary. Of such is the "Good Shepherd."

Life is a struggle from start to finish. At no time is life not in the conflict of struggle. And the struggle to survive is a fraction of the total struggle in which life is engaged

at all times and places. The heart struggles to beat, the lungs to function, families to love, enterprises to exist. Conflict (war as Heraclitus puts it) is the father of all things and the fate of all life. Life starts, passes and ends in conflict. Religion, culture and morality are continuous, unending struggle. The inalienable right of self-existing life to exist must be forcibly maintained or it will be just as forcibly overridden. Peace is a state of mind to be earned, not a condition of life to be achieved, much less a goal of history to be cherished. Hope is a fool's entertainment and not ever a policy.

There never is "peace in our time," nor will be. Man's ineffable, ineluctable and interminable destiny in this world is conflict (war as Heraclitus puts it). Finitude is struggle. Time is war. Space is conflict. Land is violence. Yet, the altogether is both beauty and glory, if yet also passing.

This situation illustrates the central paradox of life (Greek para + docta = that which transcends accepted doctrine), reflected in Christian Theology and Proclamation, which is that transcendent infinitude expresses itself in finite vitality as the decisive personality of history.

A shepherd spends every minute, day and night, struggling to foster the herd in their charge. Sometimes they own the herd, sometimes they are an hireling. Owner or hireling, their duties are the same.



Their duties seen as expressions of gentleness are as much a struggle as their duties seen as expressions of ferocity. This fact may be overlooked. Feeding and Watering must be taken to the herd or they to it. This involves keeping them together, a duty often assigned to dogs bred to the purpose. Midwifing, Treating and Medicating, likewise, must be brought to them or they to it. And who has tried to arrest the vagaries of an animal not wishing to be touched, and without benefit of a corral or barn? Dogs work very hard to make that happen. Transporting a herd from one location to another is fraught with possibilities for mishap. And even Loving the animals, playing with them, applauding their gambols, congratulating their feats, puts one in danger of being played with in a manner native to the animal but chancy to the shepherd, such as biting, scratching, kicking, ramming. All things involve struggle. Existence is the child of struggle and its victim.

Let us examine the duty of Protecting sheep. Here are some aspects of its discharge:

- →Prevent their harming one another
- →Prevent them going unfed or unwatered
- →Prevent their exposure to harmful weather
- →Prevent their exposure to becoming lost or disoriented
- →Prevent their exposure to self-imposed dangers
- →Rescue them from self-imposed dangers
- →Treat and medicate their injuries
- ■Keep oneself healthy and operating
- →Discourage or destroy predators

All of these duties are a constant struggle requiring ceaseless vigilance. An old cliche of ageless applicability and vast import.

What about discouraging or destroying predators? Urbanites tend to think they live free of predators. In fact they do not, but their impression is they do. Suburbanites less so. They are aware of predators, some more than others. Rural and especially country residents are aware of predators. If they have moved from urban to rural or country conditions for their bucolic appeal they find the phenomenon of predation soon enough lifted from the theoretical comfort of their textbooks on science and other ideologies to a commanding presence at their door or window, or a persistent presence inside their rooms and woodwork.

Groups of animals, especially vegetarians, attract predators. Sheep attract predators. Most predators of sheep are canine but anciently and in some places modernly they are also feline. Sometimes they are avian and sometimes even reptilian.





A shepherd's duty includes willingness to kill and be killed to protect the sheep in their care. For the sake of the sheep, it is better to kill than to be killed. Thus, shepherds learn the use of strategies, tactics and weapons that prevent sheep from succumbing to predators. It is a large and dangerous responsibility that requires an array of skills and usually admits of no mistakes.

Since predators intend to kill sheep to eat them -- and sometimes the shepherd to eat them -- and not merely to harass or bully them, the choices a shepherd faces with respect to predators and sheep is direct and two-fold: either keep the sheep away from the predators or keep the predators away from the sheep. There is no peaceful coexistence between sheep and predators. No just getting along.

Proximity is not an option. If proximity occurs, a shepherd's choice is direct and one-fold: kill the predator to eliminate the proximity. Of such is the pastoral duty.

A shepherd must know the ways of the types of predators who might achieve proximity with their sheep. How do wolves hunt? How do cats hunt? How do bears hunt? How do eagles, hawks, snakes and alligators hunt? And finally, how do men and women hunt? All of these are

predators a shepherd must know and know how to fight successfully, either by warding them off or by killing them. The goal is to keep sheep and predators out of proximity with one another. Shepherds eliminate relationships between sheep and predators.

A shepherd must know how to keep sheep and predators separated. Inclusiveness is not an option among sheep and predators or among shepherds and predators. A shepherd must know the geography and prevailing weather of the places where he tends and pastures the sheep. He must know the haunts and habits of predators relative to that geography. He must know what attracts the attention of predators



and what repels them. He must know what to do in situations of proximity between sheep and predators and be able to do it.



And a shepherd or pastor must be skilled in the deployment and use of weapons that can be used to maintain separation between sheep and predators. These weapons are of three types:

- → Passive weapons
- → Area weapons
- → Standoff weapons

Passive weapons include fencing of various kinds, both field and farm, lights, fires, buildings, etc. Modernly, passive weapons could include

ground sensors, satellite imagery, GPS tracking, night vision equipment and aiming devices, etd.

Area weapons include hand guns, flock and herd dogs, communication devices, vehicles and horses used to close with predators, lights, fires, whistles and other devices that repel predators.

Standoff weapons include rifles, flock dogs, lights, fires and outposts staffed by assistants or well-wishers.



Little David essayed to battle big Goliath because he had a standoff weapon (sling) whereas Goliath had area weapons (sword and spear). Goliath could not close with David quickly enough to use his weapons. The standoff weapon, cooly handled by an expert, took down Goliath outside his weapons' effective range. A shepherd compelled to use an area weapon is approaching mission failure. David was alive because he could kill lions, bears, wolves and cats before they could close with him to use their superior area weapons. The modern long gun or high power rifle is comparable to David's sling.

A predator in proximity of sheep is going down. Sheep yes, predators no. If proximity occurs, one lives and the other does not. This is the Protecting duty of a shepherd, of a pastor.

Every Father, Mother, Clergy, Teacher, Doctor, Attorney and Soldier is a shepherd. Every one of these Professionals is a gentle warrior.

In the culture of the Latin Church, which is Western Europe, the Americas, much of Africa, some of the Middle East, Eastern Europe and Asia, Australia and New Zealand, the symbol of a gentle

warrior is a figure of the High Middle Ages, the Knight, and in particular the Knight who is a Warrior Monastic.

This figure has inspired romance and informed the art of war. Special attention fixes upon the Warrior Monks of the Cistercian reform, the Knights of the Temple of Solomon. Régine Pernoud's study of the Templars is without peer and indispensable for students of shepherds and warriors. Besides cleaning out heaps of romantic drivel purporting to be historical facts regarding these Knights, she brings to view the fact that extensive original records and first-hand accounts of Templar activities exist regarding all aspects of their life, and long known to, and she illuminates their goals and activities using those accounts. The Templars were Pastors, Shepherds, tasked as Warrior Monastics.



In her recital are descriptions of how the Templars fought, their orders of battle, how they bivouacked, lived in community, made and broke alliances, managed money, etc. Templars and other warrior monastic orders sublimated the theory and art of war, including the art of engineering. Régine Pernoud provides specifics.

One expects the image of the Christian Knight to continue as the symbol of the gentle warrior, the shepherd of God's flock, in the Latin Church. Perhaps the only surprise is how many of

us, in what varied roles of life, that symbol knows, by St. George!

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