The True Sheep.

“I am the Good Shepherd, and I know My sheep mine, and are mine known Me of Mine”

St. John X. 14.

Our Lord here says, that He and His Sheep know each other; that His knowledge of them is one of the tokens of the Good Shepherd; and that their knowledge of Him is one of the tokens of the true sheep. “Verily—Amen, verily—Amen, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheep-fold, but climbeth up some another way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice; and he calleth his own sheep by name; and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth hath let out his own sheep, he goeth before them; and the sheep follow him: for because they know his voice. And But a stranger will they not follow, but will fly from him, for they know not the voice of strangers.” “I am the Good Shepherd, and I know My sheep Mine and are mine known of Mine me.” “But ye you
donot believe not, because yo are not of My sheep, so I said unto you. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.”

Now what is this knowledge by which His true sheep are known?

There are many kinds of knowledge, of which only one can be the true.

There is a knowledge which even fallen angels have of Him. St James tells us that “the devils believe and tremble.” St. Luke that the spirit of an unclean devil cried out in Christ’s presence with a loud voice saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with Thee, Thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art Thou come to destroy us? I know Thee who Thou art; the Holy One of God;” and that devils come out of many, crying out and saying, Thou art Christ the Son of God. And He rebuking them He suffered them not to speak; for they knew that He was Christ.” And others again cried out, saying, What have we to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of God? Art Thou come hither to torment us before the time?”

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This is a knowledge of the spiritual intelligence, which may be possessed in energetic wickedness, and with direct resistance of the will against the will of Christ.

Again there is also a Knowledge which all the regenerate possess. The preaching of the Church, the reading of Holy Scriptures, the public commemoration of fasts and festivals, the tradition of popular Christianity, and all the Knowledge which from childhood we unconsciously imbibe, give us a general Knowledge of the evangelical facts, and of the history of our Lord. But besides and before all this, there is a Knowledge which is in the grace of regeneration itself. There is in every living soul born again of the Holy Ghost a gift of enlightening. The great truths and laws of God's Kingdom are as a germ implanted in the conscience; latent, indeed, and undeveloped, but there in virtue and in power.

For this cause, baptism is called our illumination. It is impossible to say what it may bestow upon the spiritual capacities of the soul; what faculties and perceptions, what passive and subtel qualities

\footnote{Heb. X. 32.}
may be infused into us by our regeneration.
There seems to be in those who are baptized, whether holy or unholy, an inward sense which hardly so much answers to truth as anticipates it. They know it almost before they hear it. They, as it were forbade it before it is declared. As the whole power of ????? seems by nature to exist in children needing only to be wisely elicited by questions and leading thoughts; so in those who are born again, the first axioms and principles of truth seem mysteriously impressed by the grace of baptism.

The knowledge of Christ, of His name and person, that He is the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, born of the Virgin, crucified, buried, risen, ascended into heaven, and coming again to judge both the quick and the dead, all these things seem as a sort of second consciousness, which men may sin against, but cannot get rid of. It clings to them whatsoever they do, wheresoever they
go, howsoever they deny it. The worldly, trifling, lightminded; the impure, false, and sensual; even blasphemers, scoffers, infidels, --- all are held in a bondage of consciousness, which, like the unseen but all-seeing Eye, follows them everywhere. It pierces them with fear, and, when they sin, turns their hearts within them into stone. It is this that makes evil men so irritable, sullen, reckless, and desperate. When they are most raging and vehement against the truth, it is because it is then most intensely torturing them. We often think that men are beyond the power of truth, because they burn with so much wrath against it, defying and bitterly reviling it. But all this vehement emotion shows how deep the barbs have pierced, and what a struggle and convulsion of soul they are making to tear out the truth which galls them. Their anger gives the lie to their professed unbelief. It is one of the offices of truth to reveal this wickedness of the human spirit; and their very opposition is a
testimony to the Divine character of truth itself. Theirs is as the testimony of the unclean spirits: “Art Thou come to torment us before the time? We know Thee who Thou art; the Holy One of God.”

“This is the condemnation judgment, that because the light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than the light, because for their deeds works were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light neither and cometh not to the light, lest that his deeds should works may not be reproved.”

It is Truth doing its work of just judgment upon sinners. What some take as an evidence against their regeneration is, indeed, the proof of it. Why is the wickedness of an angel worse than that of a man? Because he holds a higher nature in unrighteousness.

It is this same passive capacity kept from great perversions, and instructed by the teaching and worship of the Church which makes up the knowledge of most baptized people; of such, I mean as live Christian lives in the main;

\[1\] St. John III. 19, 20.
that is to say, the great bulk of those who are blame-
less and orderly within the fold of the visible Church.
It is a kind of energetic knowledge; an illumination
which shines mildly but truly, clearly but faintly;
and in hearts that cast many shadows upon
themselves. The Christian knowledge of such persons
is little more than a history of moving events or a
theory of pure morality, or a scheme of elevated doctrine.
It is, so far, their guide, their law of life, their consolation;
but their knowledge of Christ is something retrospective
rather than present, of a fact rather than of a Person,
having a relation to His life on earth rather than
to His presence now. The way in which most
Christians speak of Him is more as of a system
than as of a Lord; and His Name stands rather
as a symbol of a doctrine than as a title of One
that is living and mighty; whose searching
insight "is sharper than any two-edged sword
piercing to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit,
and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner
of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Such indeed is He whom men quote and speak of as a term equivalent with Christianity. He is a Divine Person, not an abstract name; One to whom we are all laid bare; "neither is there any Creature that is not manifest invisible in His sight; for all things are naked and opened unto the to His eyes, of Him with whom we have to do to whom our speech is." 1

This, then, cannot be the knowledge of which the Good Shepherd spoke when He said, “I know My Mine sheep, and am known of Mine mine know Me.” It must be something of a deeper kind, something more living and personal. It is plainly, therefore, such a knowledge as He has of us. It is that mutual Consciousness of which we speak when we say that we know any person as our friend.

We do not mean that we know him by name; for many strangers we know by name; many whom we have never seen, or further care to know; neither do we mean only that we

1 Heb. IV. 13.
know all about him, that is to say, who he is, and whence, of what lineage, or from what land, or what has been his history, his acts and words, and the like; for in this way we may be said to know many who do not know us, and with whom we have nothing to do. When we say we know any one as our friend we mean that we know not only who he is, but what, or as we say, his character, -- that he is true affectionate, gentle, forgiving, liberal, patient, self-denying; and still more, that he has been and is, all this to ourselves; that we have made ????? of him; and have cause to know this character as a reality, of which we have, as it were, ?????, by often meeting with him, seeing him at all times, under all circumstances and in all changes, familiarly conversing with him, doing service to him, ourselves receiving from him in turn tokens of love and goodness. It is in this way we know our friends; what
they are, what they mean, wish, and imply;
how they would judge, speak and act in all cases;
what every look, tone, and word signifies.
It is a knowledge not in the understanding
so much as in the heart; in the perceptions of
feeling, affection, and sympathy; by which
we are drawn towards them and grow to them,
love them; choose them out from all others, as
our advisors, guides, companions; live with
them, and live for them; trust in them with
a feeling that we are safe in their hands, and
at rest in their hearts; that they love us and
would do anything for our good; and though
we be often away from them, and alone,
and at times seldom see them, yet we are as
if always with them --- always happy in the
thought of them, know that they are always
the same to us, and knowing besides, both
where and how we shall find them if we desire
or need. This is the knowledge of friendship and
of love. It is something living and personal, arising out of the whole of our inward nature, and filling all our powers and affections.

And such is the knowledge the true sheep have of the Good Shepherd. “I know Mine sheep and am known of Mine Mine know Me.” As He knows us through and through — all that we have been and are, all that we desire and need, hope and fear, do and leave undone, all our thoughts, affections, purposes, all our secret acts, all our hidden life, which is hid with Him in God; so do His true sheep know Him, — His love, care, tenderness, mercy, meekness, compassion, patience, gentleness, all His forecasting and prudent watchfulness, His indulgent and pitiful condescension. They have learned it by the grace of regeneration, by the illumination of their spiritual birth, by the light of His holy Gospels, by acts of contemplation, by direct approach to Him in prayer, by ineffable Communion in the holy Eucharist, by His particular
and detailed guidance, by His providential
discipline from childhood all along the path
of life. It is the knowledge of heart with heart,
soul with soul, spirit with spirit; a sense
of presence and companionship; so that when
most alone we are perceptibly least alone; when
most solitary, we are least forsaken. It is a
consciousness of guidance, help, and protection,
so that all we do or say, and all that befals
us is shared with Him. It fills us with a
certainty that in every part of our lot, in all
its details, there is some purpose, some indica-
tion of His design and will, some discipline
and or medicine for us; some hid treasure, if
we will purchase it; some secret of peace, if we
will only make it our own.
Now if this be the knowledge which His sheep
have of Him, it is plain that a great part of
baptized men do not so know Christ. The
multitude of the visible Church live in the world
forgetful both of Fold and Shepherd; remembering them only in direct acts of religion, which are short and few in the midst of a busy earthly life of buying and selling, marrying and giving in marriage, trading and toiling late and early. With the very best among us, how sadly true is this. Who is not backward in this one science which only it is needful for us to know? It is much to be feared that some persons of seeming devotion, live on very strange to Him, and far off, knowing Him rather in the understanding and imagination, rather picturing Him upon their fancy in the garb and parable of the Good Shepherd than realising with any true and vivid spiritual consciousness the truth and blessedness of His pastoral love and care. Let us, then, consider in what way we may attain this knowledge, which is not of the understanding, but of the heart; not of the mere intellect, but in the consciousness of the soul.
I. First, it must be by following Him. “My sheep hear My voice, and they follow Me.” By living such a life as He lived. Likeness to Him is the power of knowing Him. Nay, rather it is knowledge itself: there is no other. It cannot be by the knowledge of the eye, or ear, nor by the knowledge of imagination or thoughts, but by the knowledge of the will, and of the spiritual reason instructed by the experience of faith. It is by likeness that we know, and by sympathy that we learn. Hereby “And by this we know that we have known Him, if we keep His Commandments.

He that saith, I know that he knoweth Him, and keepeth not His Commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

But whose he that keepeth His word, in Him verily is in very deed the love-charity of God is perfected: hereby and by this we know we that we are in Him. He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk even as He walked.” “If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and
do not the truth.” I What fellowship can an impure soul have with One Who knew no sin: or the self-indulgent with the Crucified: or the vain with Him that “made Himself of no reputation:” or a ???? that is ???? about by this world, and content to move within its narrow sphere, in an aimless life of levities and follies, with Him who came into this world for our end alone, “that He might bring us unto God?” Such as these can have no fellowship with Christ; and if no fellowship, then no knowledge, which comes by sympathy, by partaking of His Spirit and of His life. We may read; study, toil, write, talk, preach and make discourses which will illuminate, and move others to tears, while we ourselves are cold and dark. So too, we may profess and pray, with our lips; be strict and regular in the ordinary works and offices of religion: and all in vain, so long as our hearts and spiritual life are out of sympathy with His. How strange and perverse we are. That which is

1 St. John II.3.b; I.b
plainest to learn, we put off to the last; that which needs most grace to know, we take for our alphabet. How long shall we go on professing to judge of His doctrine, before we have begun to learn the imitation of His life? Surely the plainest and first lesson is to follow His steps. This is the first work of our probation, the first condition of His guidance. If we would only take the Sermon on the Mount, and read it, not as the world has paraphrased it, but as He spoke it; if we would only fulfil it, not as men dispense with it, but as He lived it upon Earth; we should begin to know somewhat of those deeper perceptions of His love, tenderness, and compassion, which are the peace of His elect. Such obedience has a searching and powerful virtue to quicken and make keen the faculties of our Conscience. And it would change our whole view of the Christian life, from a solitary observance of an abstract rule of duty,
into an abiding relation towards a personal and living Master. It would make men to feel that not only the general and confused ????? of life shall, in the end of time, be brought into judgment, but that every deed and thought, every ????? of the heart and inclination of the will are full of pregnant meaning; of obedience or of disobedience, of loyalty or betrayal, to the person of our Lord, that our every-day life is either in the track of His footsteps or gone astray from the one only path that leadeth unto life. This is the first step to a true knowledge of Christ.

2. And, further than this, there are peculiar faculties of the heart which must be awakened, if we would know Him as He knows us. There can be no true obedience without the discipline of habitual devotion, by this is signified something far deeper than the habits of prayer which we commonly maintain. As obedience to Christ impresses us with a sense of His personality, so devotion awakens a perception of His presence. And how
easy it is to pray for years with little or no
sense of His nearness --- with a ???? , cold syl-
logism of the necessary presence of One that
must be here, because He is God, for God is
everywhere --- we all unhappily know. Half
our difficulties in prayer, half the irksomeness
of the act, the wearisomeness of the posture, the
wandering of our hearts, the distraction of our
thoughts, may be traced to this: our great lack,
the lack of a deep consciousness of His personal
presence. And therefore it is our prayers gain
for us so little light, so faint an insight into
His mind and perfection, so clouded a knowledge
of His love and will towards us. If we truly
knew Him, we should delight to speak with
Him, to linger and dwell in His presence. We
should go from our prayers with the slow hearts
we now bring to them. How should we lay
up all day long our thoughts, cares, forebodings,
to lighten our hearts at night by pouring them
out before Him. We should then somewhat understand the words, “Casting all your care upon Him, for He hath careth of for you.” And this would open to us the words of Holy Scripture, which to most are so remote, and perplexing. Perhaps there is no book that is so much read, and so little really understood, because so little dwell upon. And why, but because meditation implies the intensity and affection of a devout mind? Prayer and meditation are so nearly one that we may pass and repass from the one to the other, almost without perceptible transition. Not that they are indeed one and the same; but meditation is the food of prayer, and prayer is the life of meditation, and they are therefore inseparable. It is for want of these deeper and more stedfast thoughts that we go on through life reading Holy Scripture without piercing beneath the letter. And this cursory and superficial habit of mind keeps up our insensibility of the presence of Christ.
Moreover, it is the same unimpressed and unawakened temper of heart that leads men to live on in habitual neglect of the Holy Sacrament of His Body and Blood. They have no sense of hunger and thirst, no consciousness of any inward craving, no need felt of sustenance, no perception of the constraining love of Him who, in the night of His betrayal, left that command to prove the faith and love of His Church for ever. Now a Christian in this torpid unawakened state, cannot know Him with the knowledge of His true Sheep. There is something which deadens and stifles the spiritual affections. Cold devotions will make a man’s heart dark. Let him profess what he will, let him in the intellect know what he may, into the true knowledge which comes by love and likeness to Christ he cannot enter. A life of devotion that is of frequent and fervent worship of our Divine Lord so awakens and kindles the whole
inward heart that there is nothing more real and blissful to a Christian than to escape from all the world into the presence of the only and true Shepherd. And this is tested above all in the mystery of the Holy Communion. The eyes of many are, by their own want of insight, long ????, so as not to know Him, until He makes Himself known in the breaking of bread. Even though all along their intellect have been opened to understand the Scriptures, there is a knowledge still higher still more personal and intimate, which they cannot have till He manifests Himself in that blessed Sacrament. There is a marked and visible distinction between those who know Him by the intellect, and those who know Him by the heart, those who have sought to know Him by more (mere?) reading, and those who have sought to know Him by Communion. The Holy Eucharist is the very life-bread of His true Servants. It is their very Gospel, not written with pen and ink.
but by a pierced hand, and in the blood of the Good Shepherd. There even the unlettered Christian, the weakest of His flock, learns what doctors in the temple neither teach nor know. A life of devout and frequent communion is the true and infallible way to a personal knowledge and experience of His love. What things He may make known to us in that holy mystery, each will understand. They are not to be spoken or known by hearsay. But He has promised an ineffable fellowship to them that devoutly open their hearts to receive His visitation. “Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man shall hear my voice, and open to me the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.”

3. And lastly, this true knowledge of Him is not a transitory state of feeling. Out of obedience and devotion arises an habitual faith, which makes Him, though unseen, yet perceptibly a part of all our life. Without this we shall but run great risks

¹ Rev. III. 20.
of deceiving ourselves. This strong and sustained consciousness of His presence makes all things within the veil more real than those we see. The Unseen Head of the Church living and glorified; the mystical body in one by the Holy Ghost; the Good Shepherd tending His one fold on the everlasting hills; the familiar image of His loving countenance; --- all these, all day long, in the midst of work and in their hour of rest, at home and abroad, among men or in solitude, are spread before the sight of hearts that know Him by love.

Let us then seek, in this way, so to know Him. He will guide us in a sure path, though it be a rough one; though shadows hang upon it, yet He will be with us. If we be His true flock, we shall lack nothing. He will bring us home at last. Through much trial it may be, and weariness, in much fear and fainting of heart, in much sadness and loneliness, in griefs that
the world never knows, and under burdens that
the nearest never suspect. Yet He will suffice
for all. By His eye or by His voice He will
guide us, if we be docile and gentle; by His
staff and by His rod, if we wander or are
wilful; any how, and by all means, He
will bring us to His rest. Not one shall perish,
except we be stedfastly bent upon our own perdition.
Blessed are they who so know Him. They alone
are truly happy; they alone have that which
will fill all hearts, stay all desires, and
make even the broken spirit to be glad. He
is enough: even, “a strength to the poor, a
strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge
from the storm whirlwind, a shadow from the heat. When
For the blast of the terrible mighty is as a storm
like a whirlwind beating against
the wall.”
He is as hiding place “when one is hid from the
storm, and a covert from the tempest hideth himself from the storm; as rivers
of water in a dry place drought, as the shadow of a
great rock out in a weary desert land”. ¹ Who is parched

¹ Isaiah XXV.4; XXXII.2.
and wearied by the glare and drought of this
dazzling and dangerous world? “Come unto Me,
all you that are weary and heavy laden labour and are burdened, and I
will refresh you.” Say: Even so, Lord, make
me to know Thee. It is the unreasonableness, the
wilfulness, the self love of my heart, that will
not know Thee. Take away all these which hide
Thee from me. The veil is not upon Thy Face,
but upon my heart. “Lord that I may receive
my sight.” “For Whoso have I in heaven but
Thee? And there is none upon earth that I
desire beside Thee.” what have I in heaven
but Thee; and beside Thee what do I
desire upon earth?”

[Transcription developed by Leslie Dees]