

ONE VOICE = ONE FOLD AND ONE SHEPHERD

The denominations of Christianity that forbid or even discourage their members to study and compare the doctrines of their own faith to the religious views of others, certainly cannot hold a firm conviction of their beliefs and creeds. The Holy Scriptures are a bulwark for correction and reproof.

Since each individual's salvation is personally at stake, we should give close attention to the denomination of which we decide to follow or fellowship with. The individual at all times should never permit oneself to be deceived into the acceptance of unproven scriptural doctrine.

We cannot deny that God does have his children in just about every body of believers. It was said by Jesus on this matter in John 10:16: ***"And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: THEM ALSO I MUST BRING, AND THEY SHALL HEAR MY VOICE; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd."***

Many denominations misinterpret this verse to mean that God's sheep can BELONG TO ANY fold (ie. church) and not to one particular fold. But if these groups would look closer into this verse, they will discover it does not interpret into this meaning at all. Jesus says he has sheep in other folds, and those of his who hear his voice (ie. testimony), shall be brought out and they shall be of his flock with the shepherd being the Christ. It is clear that the sheep of Christ are the true believers who have listened to his voice (testimony), and have accepted the truth which is God's Word. John 10:27: ***"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."*** This means that the sheep (or followers) of Christ will not continue to follow those who are unfamiliar with the truth of Christ. His sheep will separate themselves from those religions not speaking God's Truth, and will join that fold where the fullness of God's Will can be heard. John 10:5: ***"And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers."*** Those who join that fold of Christ will be the children of God and will become new creatures, having become dead to the voice of corruption and sin, which occurs only when they are truly converted INTO Christ.

People of various denominations might say: "Is it not possible for a person to continue to fellowship with a specific denomination, even when he or she has discovered the doctrine to be false, just as long as that person adheres inwardly to the truth that has been revealed to them by the Spirit of God?" This type of reasoning does not follow the laws of logic. By remaining with a group that one knows is not teaching God's Truth in fullness is willingly subjecting one's mind to continuous, repetitious utterance of fallacies, that will eventually, in time, induce that person to reject or suppress any thought or consideration of legitimate doctrine. Thus, we not believe such justifications are sound. Let us not forget that Jesus spoke of his flock or assembly not as many groups of sheep, but as one. When a person refuses to depart from a denomination when they know that it teaches false doctrine, then they have not spiritually recognized his voice and are not ready to obey his commandments.

A truly spiritually-led person who has discovered they have been following false teachings by having recognized the voice of the one true Shepherd through the inspired scriptures, would immediately unite themselves to the Good Shepherd's flock. John 10:4: ***"And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep***

follow him: for they know his voice. "

There was a famous biblical commentator that made the suggestion that there are many folds of differing beliefs and that they all can belong to the one flock of Christ. This commentator had said: "There are many folds, but one flock". He further added: "Their unity is not that of any mere external organizations". By our appraisal, he had completely missed the whole interpretation of Jesus' parable found in John 10:16. The "other folds" represent the folds that have not heard or accepted the Word of God. But those sheep that do accept the guidance of the true Shepherd shall be one flock, assembled together in the unity of one voice of one faith and one spirit, and they shall enter into that one pasture of spiritual food.

Jesus did not say that he will bring other folds to him. What he said in John 10:16 was that there were ***"other sheep I have which are not of this fold"*** which he shall bring into that one united fold. John 18:37b: ***"...Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."*** As there are many sheep folds (ie. denominations) out in the world, so are there many shepherds of different voices (ie. teachings). But the sheep of those other folds that look for truth, shall, when they hear the voice of truth from the Good Shepherd (the Christ), will follow him.

A hireling shepherd provides his service for profit, therefore, he does not have the same care or love for his flock as the true Shepherd who performs his services to the flock not for gain, but out of the pure love of taking care for and protecting his flock, to the point that he will even lay down his life for them. The hireling would not be as concerned for the welfare of his flock as the true Shepherd.

It is worth asking oneself that during Jesus' time on earth, were the Pharisees, Herodians and the Sadducees as concerned for the salvation of the individual as they were for the observances of their Mosaic traditions? Unfortunately, the answer is no. But neither are many of the shepherds of today's folds concerned for their sheep. Jesus on the other hand, loves us and would never abandon us. John 10:11 to 14: ***"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine."***

Another suggested interpretation is that the other folds in John 10:16 refer to nations, one of them being the old nation of Judah. Though if this verse were in reference to the nation of Judah, then one would expect that all the Jews would be the sheep of the Anointed and would have been abiding to the voice or teachings of Jesus. We know that Judah largely rejected the Messiahship of Jesus. It is true that Jesus' sheep will come from all nations. Nevertheless, reference is being made to the fellowship of God's people (the church). Our Lord Jesus, being the shepherd (or head) of that flock (or church), who will go before the other sheepfolds and when those seeking truth hear his voice, Jesus will lead them out of those other folds and they shall follow him (John 10:3, 4). Sheep recognize their shepherd's voice.

A member of our church spoke in a telephone conversation with an elderly lady who said: "The reason why I attend a Sunday-keeping church is because I have so many dear

and old friends in the congregation, and besides it really does not matter if I attend church on Sunday, because a person should be worshipping the Lord on every day of the week. Furthermore, I still observe the holy seventh-day in my home and I refrain from all work on the Sabbath." This woman believed in the Sabbath for about 8 to 10 years prior to this conversation. She had even written a small booklet about the Sabbath. The member's mind recalled Jeremiah 10:2a where it states: ***"Thus saith the LORD, Learn NOT the way of the heathen..."*** When asked by the member why she did not fellowship with other Sabbath keepers, especially when she claimed herself to be a believer in observing the seventh-day Sabbath, she replied: "My health is too poor to travel to congregate." This woman by her own words was too frail to journey on the Lord's Sabbath to have fellowship with Christians keeping the fourth commandment, yet at the same time she does not find herself too weak to travel and have fellowship with others that observe the non-scriptural first day of the week. In accordance with our discussions regarding coming out of other denominations that do not adhere to the fullness of God's Word, let us remember II Cor. 6:14: ***"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?"*** Paul himself recognized that Christians need to leave those folds not teaching the truth and become one with those whose leader is the true Christ. The woman, maybe without realizing it, was paying homage to a rest day established by man and not by our God and Creator. What fold had she aligned herself with? Jesus said his sheep will be of that one flock (ie. one church) and one shepherd (one head of the church). Therefore, there can be only one true scriptural doctrine, in the Church of God of which Christ is the head. When the sheep which he has in other folds become spiritually enlightened, by listening to his voice, in a love of obedience for Christ's testimony, they will want to be one, with his flock.

There is definitely no teaching in John 10:16, of many different sheep folds uniting under the one true shepherd, and still believing in diversified creeds. The sheep that hear the one true testimonial voice of the Father through His Son will come out, unite, and follow the one flock with the one true Shepherd, Jesus the Messiah of God. John 10:16 ***"And other sheep I have, which are NOT of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be ONE flock and ONE shepherd."*** As Paul had said to the Corinthians, don't be yoked with unbelievers.