

THE SHEPHERD'S QUESTION

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The Shepherd's Question by Burth Estes Howard

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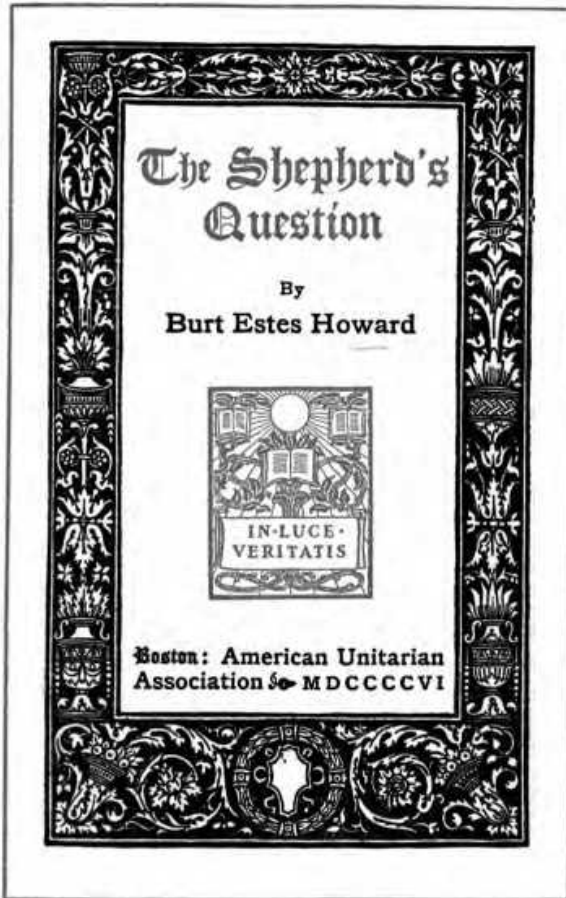
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BURTH ESTES HOWARD

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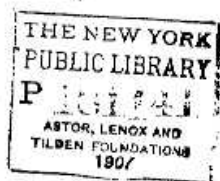
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The Shepherd's Question

**When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy
fingers,**

**The moon and the stars which thou hast or-
dained ;**

What is man that thou art mindful of him ?

And the son of man that thou visitest him ?

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LYING out under
the Syrian skies,
where the great
watch-stars burn-
ed like night-lamps
which Jehovah
had lighted and
swung there in the dusky dome, that
his children might not be fearful in the
dark; looking with wistful eyes into the
somber deeps, where, as the sun went
down, the Spirit of Vastness seemed to
bend over the earth and fold all men
and things in its shadowy bosom, the
Shepherd-poet, with the infinite faith
of a little child, "prattles of his tiny life

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to the Creator of the ends of the earth,"
and sings into speech the music that
croons in his soul.

Not in the garish day, when the light reveals the myriad bars of our prison-house and the fettering meshes of life's multitudinous business; but in the night when the sound of the conflict has ceased and the hearts of men are still; when the eyes are no longer filled with the dust of strife nor the ears with the rumble of traffic in the streets; in the night, when the souls of men are freed for a season and the gates are open in the Garden of Dreams; the thoughts of men grow large and holy, the skies melt into the shadow-veiled face of the Infinite, the Mysteries of Life take shape and God walketh on the wings of the wind. It is the time when we grow honest with ourselves, and the unfaith with-

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in us dies. It is the time when we grow greater than ourselves, and "Life, like the hand of God, sweeps across the spirit we call our own, and strokes from the strings the strange, unwilling songs that sleep within."

It is in the day that faith wanes, — in the day, when the things of sense obtrude themselves and life is hidden by the chaff and the husks of the material. We build our atheisms out of the things we see. But when night is come, and life's littleness sinks into the vastness of the overshadowing quiet; and the earth, lifted into the hush of infinite peace, is no longer a prodigal planet, drunken with the riot of sense and mad with the greed of the market; when the glamour of day has faded and the darkness has hidden the signs of our mortality, then does the soul come to itself