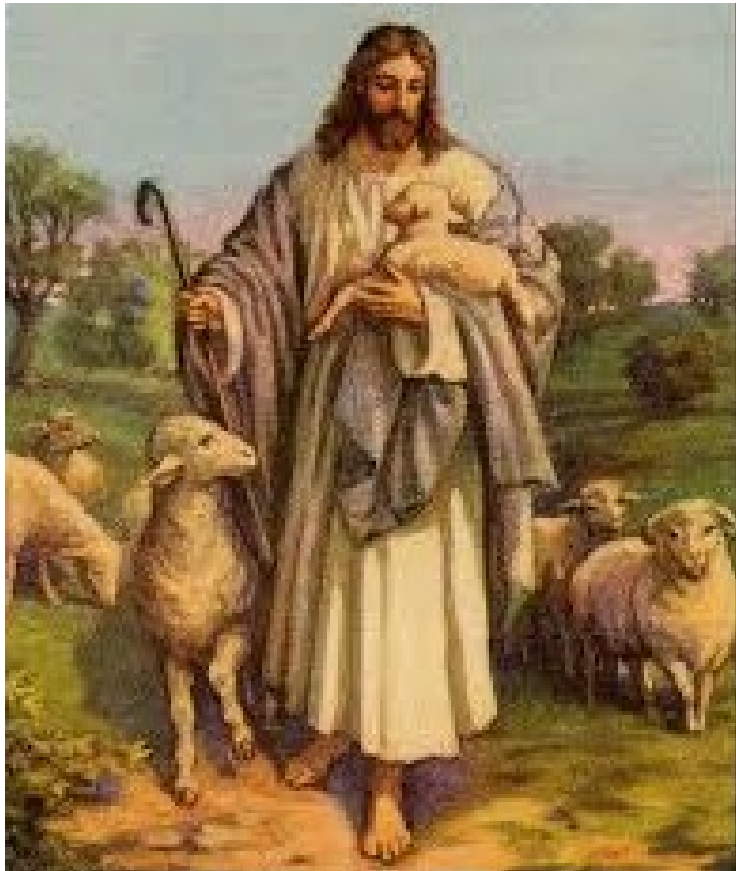


The Good Shepherd in Jn



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THE GOOD SHEPHERD IN JN THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD [Jn 10] ¹

Presentation:

[1] Across the centuries, there is no image of Jesus Christ that is more moving for the Christian world than that of the 'Good Shepherd.' It is quite clear from any reflection on the ancient iconography and prayer-life in the Church of the first centuries, this image emerges everywhere. The theme of the Shepherd is repeated with extraordinary frequency in the ancient art of the Church. The Roman Liturgy also reserved a special place in the Paschal Cycle for this commemoration, on the 4th Sunday of Easter. The fundamental idea expressed in this entire tradition is that Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, is the Savior of His Flock: Jesus leads His 'own', beyond the dark valley of death, toward the heavenly pasturage, in the House of His Heavenly Father.

[2] In general, the image has been taken over by the evangelists. The iconography seems to be bound above all with that theme of the **Lost Sheep** [Mt 18:12-14]. This image of the **Lost Sheep** has a varied presentation in Lk [15:3-7]. In some cases the representations are inspired more directly, though, from Jn's rendition [10:1-18] – as the orientation here is more clearly soteriological and Christological.

[3] The reflection here will be based on Jn's account. Certainly this brings up many historical, literary and doctrinal problems – however, recent study on this important theme has sublimely renewed the possibilities of its interpretation. These permit us to comprehend better this admirable page of Jn's writings. Furthermore, it needs to be pointed out that once the early views on this passage are known, the student realizes that this passage does indeed constitute an authentic and much contemplated synthesis of the work of Salvation.

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A. Analysis

1. The Back-ground of the Theme: in good part, the interpretation of this section depends a great deal on how one would explain the origin of the metaphors employed here. According to the greater part of the scholars, the Evangelist would have been directly inspired by the customs of the pastoral life in Palestine. In this case, the text of Jn would be a parable quite similar to that of the Synoptics. For

¹ Ignace de la Potterie, SJ, 'El buen Pastor', in: *La verdad de Jesus*. Madrid: BAC pp. 54-88, *passim*.

some, this might seem strange – for the simple reason that allusions to the customs of Palestinian shepherds, that would be very adequate for preaching in and around Galilee, they would not seem to have been able to have much of an impact in the Johannine account of Jesus. Here Jesus is more or less centered on the temple of Jerusalem, in the moment of the solemn conclusion for the Festival of Tabernacles.

A number of important scholars thin that the themes of the Good **Shepherd** and the **Gate** in Jn can be explained only on the basis of a form of Gnosticism. However, the associations that these scholars propose are not all that convincing for other interpreters. The principal affinities of the 4th Gospel and these early Gnostic writings seem to have to be interpreted more from the fact that Jn seems to influence the Gnostics, than to have been influenced by them.

The central source of the inspiration of this beautiful page in Jn is the OT and early Judaism. In this tradition, the theme of the Shepherd and the Sheep were already early on, literary themes with a sublime theological resonance. In this pairing of the Shepherd and the Flock, only exceptionally is God manifested as the Shepherd. However, in the early prayer of God's People, His redemptive action with regard to Israel is frequently described with images taken from the pastoral life: ... ***You have guided Your people, as a flock, through the hand of Moses and Aaron...*** [cf. Ps 77:21; 78: 52; 80:2; 100:3]. These images seem bound in a particular manner to the exodus cycle: The liberation from the land of slavery, the passing over the Red Sea, the journey across the desert, are all displacements of God's Flock. There are a few texts that could condense this entire theology of the Shepherd" Ps 23; Ezk 34. Ezechiel [34:13, 14, 22, 24; 37:24; 27, 30, 31] has many points of contact with Jn 10 3, 9, 14, 16]: He will lead His People out... anyone who enters through Me, will be safe ... ***I know My own and they know Me just as the Father knows Me and I know the Father – and there will be only one flock and one shepherd.***

Most scholars readily admit that the series of concordances is impressive. It is often pointed out that the citation of the **New David** [vv. 23-24] – the description of **His Reign** [vv. 25-51] and the allusion to the Covenant [v. 25] lend a messianic coloration to this description. This is true of much early Judaic literature: the history of Israel is presented allegorically as the departure from the land of slavery toward the coming of the Messiah. There should be pointed out above all else the suggestive association of the two themes that appear in Jn 9-10: the Man born blind and the Good Shepherd leading His Flock. Throughout the length of its history, Israel [the sheep] knew alternatively periods of clairvoyance and periods of real spiritual blindness. Thus, in the time of the Judges: sometimes that Gate was open for the flock and sometimes it was closed. With these texts in the back-ground, there is grasped much better how Jn was able to pass over, without transition, from the

theme of the Man born Blind – and the allegory of the Shepherd and His Flock. By means of distinct literary genre, there is continued in reality the development of the same theological theme of redemption, in going from one chapter to the next.

2. The Literary Genre of Jn 10

a. This problem is one of the most discussed among commentators of this passage. A great number of scholars believe that it is a matter of a simple Parable, similar in full to that of the Synoptics. However, this view seems to be rather insensitive to the allegorizing traits of the account, and thus these scholars hold that there must be sought here a single point, one single application to Jesus Christ. For early scholars, this one point would be the **solicitude** of the Shepherd for the Flock; others maintain rather it would be the legitimacy of Jesus' Mission, represented by the Shepherd who has the right to enter by the Gate.

For other scholars, though, these explanations would greatly impoverish the text, and markedly reduce its sublime theological and religious meaning. Various indications demonstrate that this exegesis, simply parabolic, is simply insufficient. It has been pointed out first of all that in the 4th Gospel, there does not exist any other example of a **Parable** in the strict sense. Furthermore, as has been noted, some images taken directly from the Pastoral life would not easily be adapted to the festival of tabernacles in the temple. However, before all else there needs to be pointed out that from the very beginning of this Chapter, i.e., from the supposed parabolic discourse, Jesus utilizes already a **vocabulary of great theological density** – one that will be repeated as the text unfolds. There are various themes and expressions such as the **Voice** of the Good Shepherd; the sheep who **follow** Him, and who come to **know** His Voice – all of these are, certainly, quite evocative in the 4th Gospel in order to treat simply of the descriptive traits in a parable.

For this reason, other exegetes interpret this account much more as an **allegory** – from the very beginning of the Chapter, in a display of interweaving themes; there are rather subtle references to the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. This explanation is already better than the previous one offered. However, even this view does not seem to take sufficient account that beginning with v. 7, Jesus applies this to Himself, metaphorically, the initial terms [the **Gate**, the **Shepherd**. This suggests that previously these images had been used with a different meaning. As a result, when one passes from vv. 1-6 to vv. 7-18, there is clearly noted a change, a certain progress.

b. Just having the alternative: parable or allegory, is, too limited a choice. In order to determine the literary genre of Jn 10:1-18, it is necessary to be guided by

the indications of Jn himself. In v. 6 [... *Jesus told them this parable ...*] and this hint will set the interpreter in a good direction.

Contrary to what many scholars have thought over the years, the Greek word used in v. 6 does not mean just parable: the fact that Jn uses exclusively the term chosen – where as the Synoptics make use of the specific Greek word for *parable*, the implication is that the two words are not exactly equivalent. It is true that both terms are used by the LXX to express the same Hebrew word [*masal*]. However, Jn's word seems to lay the accent on the idea of an **enigma**, a **secret**, **mystery**. [as in Si 39:3; 47:17]. This is quite clear also in Jn who repeats the term in 16:25, 29: [... *I have been telling you all this in metaphors ... - His disciples said: 'Now You are talking plainly and not in metaphors ...*]. In the text at hand, Jesus is speaking in a way that His Disciples did not comprehend Him. Eventually, the time would come for clarity in revelation which would come as **parrehsia**. So, Jn's choice of words does not only mean *parable*, it is also something quite **mysterious**, a **symbol**, that manner of revelation typical of the temporal Mission of Jesus Christ, and which would shed the full light of revelation clearly **after the resurrection** and **the Descent of the Holy Spirit**. As a result, scholars have described Jn 10:6 as: an enigmatic discourse interpreted by means of something else, the meaning of which is perfectly clear.

In this description, interpreters are able to distinguish two discourses: one, that is **mysterious** and **reserved**, and this is the term Jn uses; and this needs to be followed by a second discourse, which would not maintain the same enigmatic character, but which would serve as a clarifying commentary on the preceding. We hold clearly a plan of revelation on two levels, very frequent in Judaism, above all in the Apocalyptic literature, as in Daniel. In the first moment, there is granted a **mysterious revelation**, in the form of **dreams**, **visions**, **enigmatic words**, which the seer is not able to comprehend. Later, there comes the **clarifying revelation**, in a second moment, **the clear interpretation of the symbolic discourse**. This literary plan is found often in the 4th Gospel [e.g., Jn 3:3-8, to 'be born on high'].

We meet this style in Jn 10:1-18. In vv. 1-5, Jesus proposes His message – Jn adds that the Pharisees did not comprehend His meaning. Jesus then presents His revelation clearly, re-proposes the themes of His **enigmatic discourse**, but by referring them as being fulfilled by Himself. What this is, is an apocalyptic sketch of revelation, meted out over two times.

From this point on one can preview that the **enigmatic discourse** will stretch out **certain allegorizing traits** referring to Jesus. However, this style in itself does not constitute either a simple parable, or an allegory. Furthermore, the source of the immediate inspiration of this little *pericope* [10:1-5] is not so much the pastoral life as

known in Palestine, but rather, as may become clearer as this reflection goes on, the historical context of the presence of Jesus Christ in the temple. It makes little difference for that matter, what would the precise origin of the materials utilized. Since it is a matter of an *enigmatic discourse*, the essential is that these allusions to Jesus Christ in vv. 1-5 conserve nonetheless an enigmatic character and that these images are immediately then explained.

This interpretation in a clear language begins then in v. 7: **... So Jesus spoke to them again ...** He clearly has in mind the work of salvation to be brought to its culmination by Jesus Himself. The concrete allusions to the successes of the temple disappear progressively – the full attention is then directed toward Jesus. In vv. 17-18, the metaphorical language will be totally abandoned: **... The Father loves Me because I lay down My life it is in My power to take it up again...** Jesus will speak again only of the gift that He has over His own life and of the Father's love. There may be seen that with regard to the pre-Christian apocalyptic style, revelation in clear language [vv.17-18] presents here two new aspects that are typically Johannine: the theological **progression**, to the extent that this unfolds in the discourse – and the **Christological conception**.

3. Literary Unity and the Composition of Jn cc. 7-10b: at first sight, Jesus' discourse on the Good Shepherd seems to begin in a rather brusque manner and that it has little connection with what has preceded: the cure of the man born blind [9:1-41]. In the second part of Jn 10, however, there are found some allusions to this earlier miracle [cf. 10:19-21: **... could a devil open the eyes of a blind man...?**]. However, this, too, seems a little strange that these few lines would re-appear after the intervening discourse on the Good Shepherd – especially so that then, in vv. 25-30, there is a reference once more to the Good Shepherd theme: **... the Sheep that belong to Me, follow My Voice – I know them and they follow Me!** Naturally, some scholars have fallen into the temptation to 're-order' all this inter-change of themes, so that all the parts would fit together better than what appears in Jn's ordering of the verses as they have come down to us. There may be a hint that would support this exegetical effort from Jesus' own words later on: **... I have always taught in the synagogue and in the temple ...** [Jn 18:20]. However, not all students of Jn accept this manipulation of the verses – it is always preferable to treat and to strive to comprehend the text as it is presented.

In order to grasp better the meaning of this text it is necessary to see how it fits in the larger section to which it pertains, and this runs from Jn 7:1-10:42: [The Feast of Tabernacles, and **from His side will flow streams of salvation** - to the Good Shepherd discourse]. These four chapters constitute the center of Jesus' public life,

the culminating point of His revelation to the world in the Temple of Jerusalem. Furthermore, there are noted indications that these Chapters do constitute a unit:

- first of all, in behalf of this, there is **a unity of locality**: beginning with Jn 7:14 [... *My teaching is not from Myself* ...], everything unfolds **in Jerusalem, in the Temple, His Father's House** - or in its immediate surroundings [7:14, 28; 8:20, 59-9:1; 10:23]. The evangelist repeats insistently that Jesus taught there;
- secondly, there is **a unity of limited time**: up until Jn 10:21, there remains clearly the context of the **Feast of Tabernacles**. The entire action revolves around the concrete celebration of the Festival or the Octave following it. The **last day** of the festival runs from Jn 7:37-10:21, **bringing the pierced side and the Shepherd themes together**, with its promise of **Living Water**, the revelation of Jesus as the *Lumen Gentium*, the **cure of the Man born blind**, and finally the **Good Shepherd**. [The rest of Jn 10, i.e. vv. 22-42, there is another context, i.e., the Feast of the Dedication, held three months later].
- lastly, the relative brevity of this pericope inclines one to think that for Jn, these great themes are all the 'content' of the section on the Feast of Tabernacle: Jesus is found in the Temple in order to introduce Himself to the Jews in the context of a major Jewish liturgical and spiritual observance. The evangelist considers these two festivals [Tabernacles and Dedication] as something of a unit. The 20 verses [Jn 10:22-42] simply go back over what has been said, develop the themes a bit further already treated from Jn 9 on. Therefore, most would agree: Jn 7:1-10:42 constitute a great literary unit.

The thematic unity of this section seems more evident: Jesus shows Himself here to the world [7:4]. While remaining continuously in controversy with some of His contemporaries – so much so, that some scholars entitle this section as: 'The Revealer in Contrast with the World.' The grand theme of the Prologue reaches a certain culmination here of His public life: ***He came among His own and His own did not accept Him...!*** [1:11].

If the Introduction [Jn 1:1-13] is left aside for the moment, as well as the conclusion [10:40-42], in this great complexity scholars distinguish three stages:

- the midst of the Festival of Tabernacles [7:14-36];
- the last and greatest day of the Festival [7:37-10:21]: this is the heart of the interest in these reflections. Due to the 'content' of these verses, and their evident liturgical markings, three segments can also be distinguished here:

- Jesus reveals Himself openly in the **Temple** [7:37-8:59];
- Jesus reveals Himself by accomplishing the Works of God - the **cure of the Man born Blind** [9:1-41];
- Jesus reveals Himself in the enigmatic discourse as the Good Shepherd [10:1-21] - the celebration of the Feast of Dedication [10:23-39].

From this structure, there is immediately inferred that the third section on the Good Shepherd, is the normal continuation of the Healing of the Man born blind and is an integral part of the great revelation of the of the last and greatest day of the Festival. The context is similar and is quite suggestive. Beginning with the OT Exile, the Festival of Tabernacles assumed a **Messianic and Eschatological** Sense and Meaning. Very probably, then, the Discourse of the Good Shepherd is destined to lead His contemporaries to comprehend to some extent the Messianic work of Jesus, Who introduces Himself to His People as their Good Shepherd. The diverse metaphors of Jn 10 must be interpreted not as allusions to the Pastoral Life, but much more with a direct reference to what happened in Jerusalem, i.e., the **message, the content of Jesus' Revelation in the Temple on the occasion of the Festival of Tabernacles.**

B. Exegesis

1. The Enigmatic Discourse: before going directly to the exegesis of vv. 1-5, it is necessary to say a few words on the literary composition of this segment. There may be seen in them a type of structure that is very frequent in the Bible, that is often referred to as a 'con-centric structure' [**a b b' a'**] – a kind of development of Semitic parallelism for an over-all binding to one or two verses. Thus, Jn 10:1-5 might be looked upon as follows:

v. 1: a *I tell you solemnly, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold through the Gate ...*

v. 2: b *... The one enters through the Gate is the Shepherd...*

v. 3: b' *... The Gate-keeper lets him in, the sheep follow Him because they know His voice ...*

v. 4: *... When He has brought out His flock, He goes ahead of them ... the sheep follow because they know His voice ...*

v. 5: a' *... They never follow a stranger ... they do not recognize His Voice*

This simple diagram brings to the fore the contrasting parties: the Sheep and the Shepherd on the one hand – and then, on the other, the brigand and the stranger. In vv. 1-3, it is a question solely of the manner in which each one enters the sheep-fold. The second part describes more the contrary movement, the ‘going out’ of the Shepherd: once He has arrived, the Shepherd leads His sheep forward - He goes on ahead of them and the sheep trustingly follow after Him. The text does not say on his part, the ‘stranger’ also goes forth.¹ Nonetheless, this personality is clearly contrasted here with that which the Shepherd does, but it is clear that he is a ‘stranger’ to the flock. From v. 3 on, the whole attention is then riveted on the Shepherd – there appears here for the first time the **Christological concentration** noted earlier. The ‘stranger’ is mentioned only to contrast that which is said earlier regarding the Good Shepherd: the flock **does not follow** the ‘stranger’, they **do not recognize the voice** of the stranger.

All these details would be somewhat surprising perhaps if the description here was merely parabolic. Why would there have to be such [an evident] contrast drawn between the Good Shepherd and the bad thief? Why such insistence on the manner of entering the sheep-fold – does it not seem a little stretched? Why is there needed a two-fold mention of the Gate? The conduct of the Good Shepherd is also a little surprising – he is the only one who should enter into the sheep – fold to lead the flock out. The text then adds the evident detail that the sheep indeed to follow Him, because they recognize His voice. There is perfectly comprehended that the parabolic interpretation is somewhat forced when it has to explain the ‘culminating point’ of these verses, i.e., the principal element which should direct the explanation – what does it all mean?

However, the whole passage is clarified when it comes to mind that all this data has a **theological value** and that this all refers to **Jesus in the Temple** of Jerusalem, on the occasion of **the Festival of Tabernacles**. It needs to be recalled that these verses for the evangelist are an enigmatic discourse, they are full of veiled allusions, which come clear when **applied to Jesus Christ and His Mission**.

The essential point to be clarified is that which should be understood here by the **sheepfold of the flock**. Almost all commentators think spontaneously of a pen, the place where the sheep are customarily held. However, it has already been noted that the vocabulary of these verses is fundamentally **theological**. In this case, the Greek word for sheep-fold [*aule*]² is found 117 times – but, nowhere else is it used as a pen for sheep – there is a more specific word that is used [e.g., Nb 32:16, 36; Is 65:10]. In most cases [actually, 115 out of the total] it is translated the *vestibule* before the Tabernacle in the tem [le [Ex 27:9; 2 Ch 6:13; 11”16; Ap 11:12]. The term is also found one more time in Jn [18:15] where it designates the *patio* of the High

Priest. Because of this overwhelming liturgical use of the word, it would seem that Jn 10:12 might be understood in the context of the delivery of this discourse, i.e., the temple. It should be added also that in the OT, the term for *flock* is used very frequently in a metaphorical sense, in order to designate the **People of Israel** [Ex 34:31; Jr 23:1; Ps 95:7, etc.] – and this use continues in the NT [Mt 10:6; 23:32, etc.]. Of necessity, the words in the verse in question in Jn 10 call to mind a situation that is analogous to Ps 100:3-4: ***...Know that He, Yahweh, is God; He made us, we belong to Him, we are His People, the Flock that He pastures ...*** In Jn 10:1, the sheepfold of the flock designates metaphorically **the holy place of Israel**, the Temple of Jerusalem, or its vestibule – and this manifests and symbolizes the Theocratic Israel. The **Shepherd** of the Flock is the One Who enters through the main gate, i.e., **Jesus Christ, the New Good Shepherd of Israel**. In effect, He is presenting Himself here in this context as being **in the Temple of Jerusalem**, in order to reveal Himself to the worshipers during the **Festival of Tabernacles** [Jn 7:14].

In this interpretation it may be seen that the enigmatic discourse is not based on the pastoral life-style of the shepherds in an around Jerusalem, but rather on a very concrete historical situation in the life of Jesus: His visit to the Holy City. This holds true also for the other personality in the framework: the thief, and the brigand. There must be kept in mind that in that period, in deed, the term **brigand** served in the Jewish world frequently to designate those rebel country-folk, especially was it used regarding those members of the Pseudo-Messianic party of zealots, who strove to liberate themselves through violence from the Roman domination in order to set up a Jewish power, both political and religious, at one and the same time. Very probably this is the sense in which the word is used by the evangelists: Barabbas, for example, was a 'famous' prisoner in those times [Mt 27:16], and he had been incarcerated in a prison within the city [cf. Lk 23:19], Some recent scholars hold that Barabbas had played an important role in the rebellion of the zealots against the Romans.

In Jn 10:1, the terms thieves and brigands refer most probably to persons of this same type. The words: ***those who do not enter through the gate*** - but come in by some other way of entry, constitute their solemn entrance into the material of the whole discourse. These are understood perfectly as an allusion from Jesus on a recent attack of the zealots in their efforts to assume power within the sacred precincts of the Temple itself. This rebellion, therefore, refers to an historical fact. However, the sense of the text can be generalized and it is possible to see in this an allusion to the complexity of Pseudo-Messianic Movements of the period. It is upon this historical background that there may be placed, in sharp contrast, the Merciful Messianic Mission of Jesus of Peace.

The first part of the enigmatic discourse mixes historical allusions and figurative language [such as the sheep-fold for the flock = the temple vestibule for believers, the shepherd and the faithful] while the over-all and under-lying intention is clear: in opposition to the many false messiahs of this time [such as the zealots and others], Jesus has entered by the normal entrance way of the Temple, to preach on the Festive celebration of Tabernacles. He has presented himself legitimately to the Jewish people, in order to reveal Himself to them as their Good Shepherd, as the authentic Messiah, sent by God as His only Begotten, Most Beloved Son. It is necessary to keep in mind here the preceding broad development: the great revelation of Jesus in the temple and the Healing of the Man born blind since His birth – which terminates with the terrible sentence of Jesus on the **blindness of those rejecting Him, and the danger of them remaining in the state of sin** [9:39-41]. In Jn 10, Jesus adopts the figurative language, enigmatic expressions – but His over-all teaching throughout remains substantially the same: what Jn is presenting here is the unique, personal Messianic Mission of Mercy of Jesus Christ.

The second part of the enigmatic discourse [vv. 3-5] is, theologically, the most important. The Good Shepherd calls out to His Flock, and calls them one by one, by name, in a voice they recognize, to lead them out. All the sheep in the enclosed pen [i.e., all His contemporaries] have been made able to recognize the teachings of Jesus – however, only a relatively very few of these became His Flock. These are the ones who had been given to Him by His Father [v. 29; 6:37, 39; 17:2, 6, 7, 9, 24]. In virtue of this gift, Jesus could say that they were ‘in His hand’ [v. 28]. For this same reason, at the Last Supper, Jesus would be able to consider His Disciples as ‘His own’ [13:1], whom He would love ‘to the end’. To this pre-disposition of these ‘faithful’ on the part of His Heavenly Father, there corresponds the actual **call** on the part of Jesus. He calls them one by one, and they all recognize His Voice –nothing could come between them and the love of God, made visible in Jesus Christ [cf. Rm 8:38]. This is the first step in the constitution of a New Flock by the work of Jesus.

The Good Shepherd **leads His Flock out** of the enclosure. The verb used here by the evangelist is a technical term found in the book of Exodus: ***The Lord Himself led His People out of the land of captivity*** [Ex 3:10, f.; 6:27, etc.; Ac 7:36; 13:17; Heb 8:9]. In the same manner, much later, in this Second exodus, the Good Shepherd leads the New Flock forward, being in the midst of His People [Ezk 34:13]. The idea called to mind here by this term is clear: ***to lead out, to depart from*** – in this context means to be **liberated from slavery**. This is notable, and at the same time, tragic, in that this term, once used to designate the end of Israel’s captivity in the Exile, now finds itself being used against this same Israel. Indeed, some among the Jewish People in Jn’s Gospel are those who would not accept Jesus- their eyes were

blinded from the genuine light that was shed on the messianic times – so, Jesus ‘goes on ahead’ to lead His flock forward².

To grasp all the implications of this idea in the general economy of Jesus earthly sojourn, it would be necessary to broaden the scene here, connecting it with the preceding healing of the Man born Blind – as this leading forward is also in this context. The lack of faith is a certain ‘blindness.’ For this man of the people, Jesus, at the beginning, was no more than an unknown, [a *marginal Jew???*]. However, after the healing of the man born blind, throughout His controversy with the Jews, there is gradually discovered that He is a **Prophet** [v.17], One sent by God [v. 33], the Son of Man [vv.35-37], even coming to be a certain type to be imitated by every believer. The Jews, on the contrary, who previously considered themselves to be so clairvoyant in matters religious, have become totally blind in the presence of the Light of the World [vv. 39-41; cf. v. 5]. Now, noting the healing of the blind man by Jesus, they wanted to cast Him out [9:34]. In this moment there is fulfilled the *discrimination* of that which Jesus would speak at the conclusion of the controversy [9:39]. It is that *discrimination* that would prefigure and announce **the rupture between the Church and the Synagogue** [9:22].

It is very significant that in vv. 3-4, being pondered in this section, the Evangelist utilized two different terms in order to express the same idea. First of all, there is the Greek verb used to express the Exodus theme – then, the stronger verb repeated in 9:34 [... *they drove the cured blind man away...*]: in this sense, Jesus leads the Flock, His people forward, With this term there is repeated and sanctioned the comportment of the Jews, who had cast the blind man out of the synagogue after he had been healed by Jesus, and after he had been converted into one of Jesus’ faithful followers’. With this action, the call of the Good Shepherd inviting his sheep confined in the pen, that they be converted and take this first step of making a radical separation: in contrast with the confining sheep fold, they are being liberated, setting ‘out’ into the New People of God, His very ‘own’, His Flock, entrusted to Him by His heavenly Father – this will be called ‘**Church**’ to be called up out of the old People of God.

The relationship between the Good Shepherd and His Flock are described in these terms: ***He walked on ahead of them, and the sheep followed after Him***. Just as with the verb just noted above, the Evangelist once again made use of the vocabulary typical of exodus: ***Yahweh, your God, Who walks on at the head of His People, will battle in your behalf...*** [Dt 1:30; cf. Ps 68 (67):8; Mi 2:13]. In the 4th Gospel, the verb to ***walk ahead*** refers almost always to Jesus, with regard to His Personal Mission

² cf. St. Thomas Aquinas here: *Super Ev. Jn* 10:1, ff.

received from His Heavenly Father, which is a **New Exodus** [14:2m3m 12m 28; 16:7, 28]. The Good Shepherd, Who walks on ahead of His Flock, presents Himself in this as the New Head of the People of God The Flock **follows after Him** – there is a **docility essential to the Disciple towards the Master** [cf. the Disciple's Prayer, Ps 40; Jn 1:37, 38, 41, 43; 8:12; 12:16; 21:19, 22]. – and this is based on **their knowing His Voice**. These themes are repeated anew with greater insistence in the second part of the Discourse [vv. 14-16] and in the final of Jesus on the Festival of the Dedication [v. 27].

As a result, the *enigmatic discourse* interpreted in this way is inserted perfectly in the general unfolding of Jesus' revelation on the occasion of the solemn closure of the Festival of Tabernacles. The redactional verse which follows [v. 6] clearly expresses that what is going on here is a revelation from the lips of Jesus Christ which remained not comprehended. This is the enigmatic discourse pronounced by Jesus – His listeners heard His words but did not grasp His meaning. This is the theme of the **lack of comprehension**, so frequent in Jn. It is helpful to give some attention to the difference between the words utilized in order to refer to Jesus' discourse [*legein* (**told**) and *lalein* (**revealed**)] – this second verb is the one often used for revelation [4:26; 9:37]. The first part of the verse, where the word *legein* [**Jesus told them this parable...**] is used, expresses simply the fact that Jesus did indeed deliver this discourse. However, in speaking of the incapacity of the undisposed and unmoved listeners to comprehend the significance of His important words and images, the Evangelist uses expressions which in Greek convey the pregnant meaning: **they did not understand prior to His [later] revelation...**

2. *I am the Gate for the Sheep* [vv. 7-10]:

a. There begins here the second part of this section: the interpretation in clear language of the enigmatic discourse. Much like this mysterious revelation which has preceded its explanation here, it, too, opens with a solemn declaration: ... **I tell you most solemnly...** This then develops and illumines with new insights that which had been presented. In v. 7 there is furthermore read for the first time the very characteristic Johannine term: **I am!** [the Light of the World; the Way, Truth and Life; the Light of the World, etc.] – which is then repeated 4 times in this short section: ***I am the Gate of the sheepfold; I am the Gate; I am the Good Shepherd*** [vv. 7, 9, 11, 14]. This is a formula of revelation taken from the OT, in particular from II-Is. Used as it is here, with a predicate, it clearly maintains a Messianic meaning. However, it furthermore discovers the transcendent significance and the specifically divine implications of Jesus' declarations.

Twice in the enigmatic discourse mention of the **Gate** was made. However, the context was to speak of the **Temple Gate**. Here, with a kind of substitution, Jesus applies to Himself this term in a figurative sense. However, it must be kept in mind that the second revelation is something more than a simple material application of the enigmatic discourse [translated in the text, as we have seen, as *parable*]. It signals a progress and constitutes, in a certain manner, a new revelation.

b. This data permits the reader to take sides regarding the question which at first sight might seem merely philological, but the **theological importance** of which is considerable. The question is asked by some: should the expression ***the Gate of the Sheepfold*** be interpreted in the sense that Jesus is the Gate Who provides access along-side the flock – or, is He rather the Gate for the flock, allowing the sheep thus to enter or go out. The first of these two interpretations is based on vv. 1-2 in which effectively, the Gate allows the Flock to enter into the interior of the pen. Nevertheless, even in the enigmatic discourse the Shepherd had entered into the sheepfold only to lead the sheep out. Furthermore, from vv. 1-7 the thought unfolds: in the instant in which the action unfolds, the flock is outside. The whole attention is concentrated from then on, upon Christ's activity. The sheep-fold would have already completed its task. Therefore, it can be comprehended that the word *'aule'* [pen] is not mentioned further in this v. 7 and Jesus does not say here: *I am the Gate of the Sheep-fold* – at first sight, this would seem to be most obvious, but He is not mentioned in 10:1. The **Gate** here seems to have little to do with the pen, that the flock has already abandoned. The ultimate interpretation is: **Jesus serves as the Gate for the Flock**.

So it is, then, that the student should take the second interpretation offered above: **Jesus is the Gate for the Sheep**. Between Jesus and His 'own' there are new relationships developing. Once the Flock has come out from the sheep-fold, the sheep then are to 'enter' from then on through the Gate which is Jesus. There is movement here from the historical plan to the psychological and spiritual level. It is no longer a matter of the sheep-fold of Judaism. On entering through the Gate which is Jesus, the sheep enter into a *new* environment, of a completely different nature. This is what the three following verses will indicate.

The question naturally arises: what are the literary antecedents of this metaphor of the Gate? There is no indication here whatsoever to think that in this Gnostic theme of the Heavenly Door, which permits one to enter into the Reign of Light and of truth, because the text speaks of the Gate for the Sheep, and not of the Gate for the heavens. With good reason a number of scholars direct much more their attention on the OT texts which speak of the Gate of the Temple, as Ps 118:19-20:

Open for me the Gates of Justice; and I will enter and give thanks to Yahweh! This is the Gate of Yahweh; the just will enter through it...!

To maintain that the background for Jn 10 and its imagery would be this Psalm is much more likely, considering that this Psalm was often prayed for the Feast of Tabernacles. It might be good to keep in mind that the discourse on the Good Shepherd was pronounced according to Jn in the Temple environs, in those final moments of that great solemnity. The entire context, as a result, would favor this use of the metaphor of the Gate. However, the insistence with which Jesus applies this to Himself [***I am the Gate of the Sheep!***] demonstrates clearly that here there cannot be a matter of the Temple of the ancient economy. Jesus, taking inspiration on the realities which surround Him, seeks to speak of the **New Temple** which He Himself will inaugurate. In the enigmatic discourse, the Gate and the Sheep-fold, however, designated real, historical realities and the epoch of theocratic Judaism. However, from the moment in which these realities come to be referred metaphorically to Jesus, they are elevated to the **typological** level.

The use of the terminology in this verse in the Christian tradition prior to Jn is quite insightful. The Synoptics frequently speak of the Gate which provides access to the Reign [Mt 7:13, f.; 25:10-12; Lk 13:24, ff.]. It is a question of a metaphor of the eschatological vocabulary. The same might be said of the verb **to enter**, which has been knowingly used to designate entrance into the Reign of God [Mt 7:21; 18:3; Ac 14:22, etc.]. Jn assumes this usage [3:5]. However, all is concentrated on Jesus in this present context: it is through Him alone that one is able to enter and thus to be saved.

This brief analysis of the vocabulary of the text in question here sheds full light on the **theological implications** of Jesus' phrase: ***I am the Gate for the Sheep***. The first idea that it expresses is that of **mediation**, the possibility of access to salvation. It is said explicitly in the parallel verse: ***I am the Gate – only the one who enters through Me will be saved*** [v. 9]. On the other hand, Jesus is not only the Mediator. The Gate is not only the place of transition toward which one *enters*. He pertains already to the sheep-fold. In effect in the OT, the Gate of a city, or of the Temple, indicates frequently the city and its environs, all that it includes – or, the totality of the Temple [Ps 122:2; 87:1, f.; 118:21]. In reference to Jesus Christ, the image of the Gate does not signify, then only that **through Him** one arrives at salvation and life. It indicates further the ***New Sheep-fold, the New Temple***, in which His 'own' can obtain the messianic benefits. There is encountered here once more the theme of Jesus Himself, the **New Temple**, put forward by Jn from the very outset of his gospel [2:13-22].

However, if it is thus, the question might be asked then why this preference for the image of the Gate over that of the assembly place, or the Temple. Probably, the image of the Gate, with all its suggestive implications from its biblical background, has been better adapted in order to express simultaneously connecting ideas: on the one hand, that of **entrance, mediation** – then, on the other hand, its vital environment, implying **communion**. These are ideas which re-appear in the parallel text, that is quite suggestive of further implications: ***I am the way, the Truth and the Life***: Jesus is the **Pathway** toward the Father, the perfect **Mediator** Who has us seek out the very **Life** of the Heavenly Father. The reason for all this is that He is the Most Beloved, Only Begotten Son of God, ***the closest to the Father's heart [turned eternally toward the Father]*** [1:18].

The Patristic tradition has brought out more the **future aspect**, specifically **eschatological** in the theme of the **Gate**: through Jesus Christ we obtain access to **eternal life**, to the **Reign of Heaven**.³ However, here, as in other passages, Jn seems to anticipate the eschatological theme in the very person and work of Jesus Christ. It is **through** Him, and in conjunction, **in communion** with Him, believers all through the centuries can obtain the goods of salvation, the **divine life**.

c. In clear contrast with Jesus, the **gate** for the Flock has been all those who have before Him: Jesus classifies them as thieves and *brigands*. These are the same terms used in v. 1, in the enigmatic discourse. There is no motive to give them here a distinct meaning. There is no reason to see too much detail in them, as an allusion to the Pharisees, as some have come to think. Jesus establishes rather a **radical opposition** between His work of Salvation and all the various attempts at a false messianism, both in His time on earth and all the later types. St. John Chrysostom provided this explanation centuries ago – for whom the *thieves* and *brigands* were the followers of Theudas and of Judas the Galilean [cf. Ac 5:36, f.] – there have been many false *christs* across the ages who have arisen one after the other, and many fanatics.

Jesus' words: ***all others who have come [before Me]*** are not to be taken in a trivial chronological sense/ There is no dualism of opposition in Jesus Christ – He is the ultimate Eschatological Revelation, and all those, different from Himself, who have presented themselves with false messianic pretensions. Even those who came historically after Christ, from the **theological point of view** of the History of Salvation, pertain nevertheless to the world of darkness, **who preceded Him**.

³ Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Philad.* 9:1.

But the sheep took not notice of them [10:8]: confronted by false Messiahs, the comportment of the Flock of Jesus Christ is described only in a negative form. This is a further example of that characteristic tendency of the Flock of Christ in response to *brigands and thieves*, and it is simply contrary to what they do in response to Christ, Whose Voice they recognize: *they took no notice of them* while they **know the Voice of Christ and listen to it** [vv. 16, 27, 5:25, 28] – they **listen** to Him because they are of God [8:47], and they are of the **Truth** [18:37].

In v.10, there re-appears for the final time, the person of the *thief*. ***The thief comes only to kill and steal and destroy [to lose]***. Here also the description pretends to establish a contrast with the Mission of Jesus, which consists in **saving**. The principal among these three verbs describing the *thief* is evidently the third one: in the 4th Gospel, the word is used to indicate **to lose**, in sharp contrast with gaining eternal life [cf. 3:16; 6:27, 39-40; 10:10, 28; 12:25]. It serves to designate **eschatological perdition**. In this loss of eternal life, inevitably derives from the deed, all intent on a type of more gratifying salvation – which is not that offered by Jesus Christ.

d. v. 9 returns to the metaphor posited in v. 7, but here it is in a briefer form: ***I am the Gate*** [v. 7] – ***Anyone who enters through Me will be safe***. [v. 9]. The attention above is more intensely concentrated on His Person and on His work. Through this **Gate**, i.e., **through Jesus Christ Himself**, each human being is called to pass in order to obtain Salvation. There will be noted once more a significant silence in the text. Jesus does not say to which precise spot, or to which manner of access there is - as He is the unique Gate of access. The reason for this silence, as was noted above, is that the environs of the sheep-fold which the flock has to enter are so intimately bound to the very person of Jesus Christ. This *ambience* is nothing other than **an intimate, lived communion with Him**.

The promise that Jesus makes to any believer who would enter through Him, is expressed in vv. 9, f., with a variety of verbs that open up a perspective toward the future. The expression: ***Anyone who enters, will be safe ...*** - is, at first sight, a bit incoherent, since the text notes that Jesus is referring to those who have already entered through the Gate, which is Himself. However, the two-fold formula is a parallel to the simple formulation – ***to enter and go out assumes*** and explains the full implications of ***to enter, as finding pasture***, which is equivalent in meaning as **to be saved**. All know that *to go in and out* is a Semitic expression indicating **totality** by presenting the opposition of contrary terms [*binomes de totalite'*]. This serves to describe the complexity of the exterior activity of each and everyone, that total liberty of one's movements, of all one's steps. In the context here the significance of the formula is probably the following: anyone who **enters** through the Gate, which is

Jesus, ***will enter and will be saved***, will enjoy a union without restrictions with Jesus Christ.

Whoever enters through Me, will be saved! It is necessary to clarify the **Salvation** about which Jesus speaks here. It is surprising that so many reputable commentators limit themselves to interpret this word in a material sense: *to be saved* means to be now in a situation of safety from some danger, and that there is no longer anything to fear. Such considerations are indeed outside of the perspective of the author and are not usually what his habitual use of this verb would indicate. Jn, in presenting this word in reference to the work of Jesus Christ, is employed always with a religious, soteriological and eschatological significance. It is at times encountered in parallel with to ***maintain eternal life*** [3:15, 16, 36]. This same meaning is what would be most logical here. ***To be saved*** means to obtain that **life** which Jesus Christ has provided with such abundance for His flock [v. 10]. On the other hand, this meaning is confirmed with the parallel expression, ***they will find pasturage***. In the OT, above all among the Prophets, the metaphor of good pasturage designates most often that Salvation, and in particular the salvation of the Messianic times [Ho 13:5-6; Is 49: 4-10; Jr 23:1-8; Ezk 34:13; Ps 23:2].

The last of these expressions utilized by Jesus is the most explicit and the most rich in religious significance: ***I have come that they might have life, and have it in abundance ...*** With these words, Jesus describes the entire purpose of His coming, for His **Incarnation**. Here, as in the other cases in which he makes use of this expression: ***I have come ...!*** is in the aorist form, and it indicates the final significance of his work, that which He really wants to achieve at the end of His personal mission among men and women, in the moment of His **Hour**. This ultimate goal is to save the world bringing glory to His Father [12:47] – or to **give [a share in the Trinitarian] life forever** - to humanity, in abundance. The life that Jesus will give is the divine life. It is that which as the Only Begotten, Most Beloved son, He possesses in abundance, in Himself [Jn 5:11, f.].

The orientation of His thought toward the future, toward the moment of His **Hour**, directly prepares for the following section, in which Jesus will define Himself as the Good Shepherd, Who gives His own life for His flock.

3. ***I am the Good Shepherd!*** [vv.11-18]

a. **The Shepherd** [v. 11]: the entire revelation of vv. 7-18 unfolds and is structured around two titles Jesus gives to Himself: ***I am the Gate*** [for the Flock] – ***I am the Good Shepherd***. Both of these titles are found in the enigmatic discourse

[vv. 1-5] in which Jesus had spoken of the **Shepherd of the Flock Who enters by the Gate**.

As has been noted from the outset, the theme of the Shepherd comes from the OT. The title properly stated of the **Shepherd of Israel** appears reserved there for the **New David**. There is in this an element of eschatological hope. In effect, Ezk has the Lord Yahweh say: ***I will raise Him up in order to place Him at the head of them, a Shepherd Who will pasture them, My Servant David; He it is Who will feed the sheep and will be a Shepherd to them*** [34:23]. Undeniably the title of Shepherd holds, then, a messianic resonance. Its use by Jesus was perfectly legitimate in Jn 7-10, as Jesus reveals Himself in that to the Jewish People in the moment of Messianic Enthusiasm on the Festival of Tabernacles.

In Jn 10:11, 14, Jesus does not apply this title to Himself, as He had done earlier on with the image of the Gate. From that point on, the determining description: **of the Flock** - falls, and there is added the adjective ***kalos* [good]**, which is not easily translatable. Of course, the 4th evangelist has not intended by using this word to bring out something of the subjective qualities, such as the goodness of Jesus Christ. For many, this would seem to be a bit of a 'romantic' rendition of what is being implied here. Later on, in this same Chapter, Jesus applies this same adjective to the works of Jesus [v. 32; cf. v. 33]. In 2:10, in the account of the Nuptials of Cana, it was used twice to characterize the wine offered by Jesus. On the **symbolic** and **theological** level, it manifests the **good wine** of the Messianic Times. In Jn, this adjective refers uniquely to Jesus, or to His Mission – and characterizes Him from the point of view of one Who represents goodness objectively for humanity, from the point of view of the goods being offered to them.

In the case at hand, the specific insight by the term arises from the immediate context: Jesus is the **Good Shepherd, because He hands offer, offers up His life for the Flock** and establishes with each one **new relationships for their mutual knowledge**. The adjective ***good***, seeks to shed full light on the salvific work brought to its culmination by the Messianic Shepherd.

The Good Shepherd ***gives up His Life for the Flock***. This same formula is repeated 4 times in these few verses [vv. 15, 17, 18 b]. It serves to indicate the fundamental theme of the passage. It seems that the expression had been coined by Jn - it is unknown both in profane Greek as well as in the LXX, as well as in those NT writings prior to Jn. These other writings indeed use the verb ***to give*** in the reflexive form: to give of Himself, meaning to give His life. The most unusual term in the Johannine style is encountered in the Synoptics: ***He gave up His life as a ransom for***

the many [Mk 10:45, par. ; Ga 1:4; 1 Tm 2:6]. Jn latches on to this tradition – but uses his own Greek expressions [10:11, 15, 17; 13:37, 38; 15:13; 1 Jn 3:16].

The theologians wonder what specific type of death would be implied in the use of this verb. The **giving up** using Jn's expression is often used for the offering of inanimate objects, such as wine [2:10]; clothing [13:4], the notice Pilate filled out for the Cross [19:19]; a cadaver [11:34; 19:41, 42; 20:2, 13, 15]. ON the other hand, it is placed in some contrast with **to conserve, to protect** – it refers to being **handed over** [10:17, 18; 13:12]. The idea that Jn had sought to express in Jn 10 is that Jesus made an ultimate disposition of His own life in order freely to be able to recover it immediately [v. 18]. The same idea will be brought out forcefully in the Johan nine account of the Passion [18:4, 11]: Jesus goes to His death with full consciousness of that which is to be brought about by it and with full acceptance, both free and filial at the same time, of all that the Father asks of Him. A few scholars have thought that Jn had sought to suggest symbolically this same idea at the beginning of the account of the Last Supper, when it is stated that Jesus **handed over, put off**, His garments in order to recover them immediately [13:4, 12] in the washing of the Apostles' feet.

From the **theological** point of view, that is no less important, are the final words in v. 11: **for His sheep**. This is repeated in v. 15. The text of Mk 10:45[par.] mentioned a bit earlier used the construction implying **substitution**. It seems that it was precisely St. Paul who had introduced the use of the particular expression **uper**, to render the idea **for the many** to imply the **salvific effects** of Jesus' death. In his Epistles this is presented almost as a technical phraseology⁴. In Jn's writings, this is of current usage⁵. This preposition, **for**, followed by the genitive, does not yet express the idea of substitution – it indicates rather **in behalf of** someone undergoes a harshness: Jesus hands over His life **for the salvation of the Flock**. This salvific meaning of the expression is confirmed more clearly in some texts which **present Christ's death as a manifestation of the Father's love** – that of Jesus Himself: **thus we have recognized love – He has given up His life for us** [1 Jn 3:16; Jn 15:13; Ga 2:20; Ep 5:2]. This is what we have in Jn 10.

Thus, there may be seen the great **theological wealth** of v. 11: Jesus, the Good Shepherd, handing His life over freely for His Flock, accomplishes a Messianic act and at the same time, He manifests the Father's love for humanity. This death acquires a salvific sense, and thanks to it, humanity obtains life eternal [v. 10].

⁴ 1 Th 5:10; Rm 5:6-8; 8:32; 1 Co 1:13,; 11:24; 2 Co 5:15; Ga 1:4; 2:20; Ep 5:2, 25; 1 Tm 2:6; Tt 2:14.

⁵ JN 6:51; 10:11, 15; 11:50-52; 13:37, 38; 15:13; 18:14; 1 JN 3:16.

b. **The Hired Hand [vv. 12-13]:** for the final time there is presented here a personality who would serve in contrast to the **total oblation** offered by the Good Shepherd. This is the **mercenary**, the hired shepherd. His function in the account is distinct from the **thief** and the **brigand** noted above. In the description of these individuals the reader encounters a hostile personality, dangerous for the sheep. Here, the danger comes more from the wolf, not from the mercenary. The work of the hired hand is of the same type as that of the Good Shepherd, but in sharp contrast with him. For this reason he is referred to as *hired*, a *mercenary*. The text insists in that **he is not** the Good Shepherd. Likewise, those who depend on him serve uniquely to bring out the contrast with the qualities of the genuine Shepherd. There is not, then, any motive to seek here any precise allusion to this or that historical individual – some stretch all this and apply this to the Pharisees, the priests, the levites. But, main-line exegesis refer solely to an allegory here. The weak conduct of the mercenary is simply a conduct typical of one who serves in sharp contrast with the Good Shepherd – the good qualities of the latter are thus more emphasized.

There still remain vv. 12-13 to be analyzed, precisely from the point of view of this contrast. Different from the Good Shepherd, the mercenary is a shepherd to whom **the sheep do not belong** – perhaps a contrast like **Moses** and **Aaron** in Exodus. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, on the contrary, insists various times on the fact that the Flock are His very 'own' [vv. 3, 4, 16], and that between Him and the sheep there are very personal relations that have been established by mutual knowledge and recognition [vv. 14-15]. At the approach of the wolf, the mercenary abandons the sheep and saves his own skin, by removing himself from the danger [cf. Ac 20:29]. As a consequence of this shameful performance of the mercenary, the wolf attacks the flock and disperses the sheep. However, these circumstances, disastrous for the flock, are impossible when it is a question of the sheep pertaining to the Good shepherd, because no one will tear them from His guidance leading the Flock homeward, toward the Heavenly father – who entrusted them to Jesus [vv. 28-29]. Rather than bringing about a dispersion – which would have been the normal consequence - Jesus' death will tend precisely, with a paradoxical effect, to bring the endangered Flock closer together, to lead them once more to the unity as the dispersed Children of God [11:52; 12:32; 16:31], and thus to constitute a single Flock under a single Good Shepherd. The mercenary, since he is merely a hired mercenary, does not take much care of the Flock when any danger threatens himself [10:13]. The very opposite is true of the Good Shepherd, and by offering Himself, He shows the high regard in which the flock is held.

As a result, this entire description of the manner of acting on the part of the mercenary, serves solely to bring out the sharp contrast that is characteristic of the

action of the Good Shepherd. Like the other elements in this episode, thee, too, although indirectly, maintain a **Christological sense**.

c. **Mutual Knowledge [vv.14-15]: *I know My own, and My own know Me, just as the Father knows Me and I know the Father ...*** : these two verses return on themes that have already been noted in v. 11. Jesus indeed is the Good Shepherd and He hands His life over for His sheep. However, this time these are placed at the beginning and at the end of a long phrase, separated from one another by a totally new theme which fathoms more deeply the meaning of the elements that frame them: Jesus **knows** His 'own' and His 'own' **know** Him. This **reciprocal knowledge** is the image [the effect] of that personal **mutual Trinitarian knowledge** which exists between the Father and the Son [14b-15 b]. This is the first time in the discourse that the thought is oriented **toward Jesus' Heavenly Father**.

The verb **ginoskein** appears here four separate times. This is not to be interpreted merely as an intellectual and theoretical knowledge. In the biblical sense, **to know someone** means above all to maintain a **personal relationship** with the other, to live in some way, **in communion** with the other. Certainly, in the Semitic mentality **to know** fortifies the abstract knowledge and expresses an **existential, lived relationship**. **To know some reality**, means to have a **concrete experience** of it. **To know some one** means **to enter into personal relationship** with the other. The Greek Fathers of the Church **have** perfectly grasped this concept – Origen noted in his Commentary on Jn 8:19: when the Scriptures speak of those who live in close relationship and in perfection union with something this means that they have come to know this reality because they are **entirely in communion with it**.

In the light of these explanations of the verb **to know** the passage under discussion here takes on this deeper insight. It should be noted first of all that the metaphor, the Flock, has disappeared. The passage treats directly with the personal relationships between Jesus and His 'own', repeated twice. In the **enigmatic discourse** above, Jesus had already introduced His Flock [vv. 3, 4]. On the part of Jesus Christ, this 'possession' implies an **intimate knowledge**: the Lord **knows** His 'own' [2 Tm 2:19]. In the text under discussion [with its parallel in 10:27], it is the only one in the 4th gospel in which it is stated that Jesus **knows** His 'own'. His is a **knowledge of love**, in virtue of which the Good Shepherd invites His 'own' to **follow** Him, and this is further expressed in the gift that He gives them of **eternal life**. [10:27-28].

The disciples in their turn know Jesus Christ. Their **knowledge** of Jesus flows into **their living Faith in Him**. [14:7, 9; 17:3]. Given that this **knowledge** implies **communion** with Jesus Christ, and thanks to Him, also to His Heavenly Father, makes up then the very essence of **eternal life – a share in the life of God Himself**. [17:3].

In v.15, the **mutual knowledge** between Jesus and His 'own' appears in direct connection with the loving **relationship** of the Father and the Son. This **Trinitarian bond** is indicated by means of the Greek *just as* [*kathos*]. Very frequently in Jn this conjunction expresses not only analogy, but also its foundation, support, source. It is a matter of a relationship to which there is added a **hint of causality**. This is of great **theological importance**, because the relationship between the Good Shepherd and His Flock assume by this very fact, a transcendent dimension: the mutual knowledge between Jesus and His 'own' is not merely, nor is it principally a psychological experience – nor is it simply an intellectual knowledge, such as that between a teacher and his students.

The ultimate model for this mutual knowledge between Jesus and His 'own' finds its source in the mutual knowledge between Jesus Christ and His eternal Father. This is possible only if these two mutual bonds are fundamentally of the same order. In the final analysis, the former is simply a participation in the latter. The **communion** between the disciples and Jesus is a **participation** in the **Trinitarian communion** with Jesus in that which is more profound in Him. Believers are called to be in **loving communion** with the Son of God – which is meant to be **eternal**. In this same manner they enter into communion with that identical bond which unites the Father and the Son, and each person sharing in that **divine bond** are themselves converted into **Children of God**. This term: *just as* characterizes the **knowledge** that unites Jesus with His Flock as being of **the very same nature as that mysterious bond of love** uniting the only Begotten, Most Beloved Son of God with His Heavenly Father. It is as though the luminous radiance in that which the Sacred Heart of the Divine Son and the Loving Heart of the Heavenly Father are **mutually dilated** in order to extend out to that radiance of **Divine Mercy** flowing out from Jesus' Sacred Heart to the hearts and minds of His Faithful Flock.

d. One Flock and One Shepherd [v. 16]: a new theme is introduced. One 'read' of this passage is that with regard to Jesus' Flock, which come from the 'sheep-fold' of ancient Judaism, the Good Shepherd also has other sheep – from the gentiles, from the 'pagan', non-believing world. These two groups are being called to constitute a single Flock. Some have read here that Jn is promoting here a certain universality, unity of the Flock of Jesus Christ. Thus some interpreters – not paying sufficient attention to the immediate context, have concluded that the *other sheep* are a posterior addition. Indeed, it can be admitted that in comparison with the sheep-fold, this theme of the enlarged Flock including both the Judaic and the non-believing world, might indeed come from a more recent level of the Tradition. However, in this Johannine redaction, this verse is certainly authentic, as may be demonstrated by both the vocabulary utilized as the place of the phrase in the

structure of the discourse – by no means, does it seem ‘forced’, nor an interpolation to most interpreters.

There is a good and logical explanation for the introduction of this theme here in the text. At the end of the previous verse, Jesus had declared that He was to **hand over His life for His ‘own’ His Flock**. In Jn’s thought, one of the effects of Jesus’ death is precisely **the gathering of the dispersed, their assembly for worship in spirit and in truth [Jn 4], the communion for all eternity**. This is the **union, unity of believers** [11:51, f.]. On the other hand, given that the Chapter has as its principal theme the construction of the new messianic community in substitution for the People of the Old Covenant, it is only normal that in a text of such **ecclesiological importance**, Jn has sought to indicate clearly just who are Jesus ‘own’, His Flock, destined to **integrate, to make up the New People of God, the Flock of the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ**.

For the first time since the enigmatic discourse [10:1-5: called in the text a *parable*], the author returns to speak of the **Flock**. However, this time, he speaks in a negative manner concerning it: Jesus has other sheep that are not of this sheep-fold. These would include those that have been invited to enter into the sheep-fold without coming over from Judaism, i.e., believers coming from the gentile world. In an unmistakable manner, there is here one of those fundamental texts that demonstrate the universal opening out toward the entire world of the Johannine ideal for the Church. This same universalism will be met once again a little later in history in the account of the **Martyrdom of St. Polycarp** [19:2], a recorded disciple of John: *Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior of our souls, the Good Shepherd of the universal Church, spread over the entire world ...*

A careful comparison between the enigmatic discourse [10:1-5] and v. 16 clearly establishes the significant differences between the two groups of sheep. Different from those of the sheep-fold, Jesus will not have them *come out* toward His other sheep, since they are not all assembled together in and the same place, rather they are dispersed everywhere [11:52] – **they people the entire world**. A further characteristic in these vv. 4-5: the verbs are in the present tense. Because Jesus was speaking of His immediate service with respect to those who will become His ‘own’, passing over from Judaism. In v. 16, the verbs are all in the future tense, because the perspective opens up toward the future: **the entrance of the Gentiles into the Church** will solemnly be registered following the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

With regard to the two groups of sheep, the Good Shepherd exercises an identical function. What does the Lord do with those He has led forth from the sheep-fold? **He goes on ahead of them** [v. 4]. With regard to the other sheep which

are not of this sheep-fold, Jesus says in analogous form, that He has to **lead** them [v. 16]. Thus, in both situations, the text does not include just where Jesus will lead His sheep; It would be an error to seek to make anything more precise here, by saying, e.g., that He is leading them to eternal life. Some scholars take inspiration from 14:2, that Jesus specifically is **leading them toward the Father's House**. The entire weight of these remarks falls fundamentally on **the personal relationships between Jesus as the Good Shepherd and His 'own'**. If these relationships can indeed be achieved, then indeed will the **Flock be constructed, communion will exist, Jesus' goal will be achieved**.

The docility of the Flock toward the Good Shepherd is expressed here in this passage: **they recognize His Voice**. This expression has already been applied to the flock in the sheep-fold. However, in this context it is placed in the present tense and with a different meaning: at the approach of the Good Shepherd, the text relates, they **hear His Voice**. The Shepherd continues His call, His invitation, so that they will indeed come out from the sheep-fold as He continuously walks on before them **To hear/ listen to His Voice** does not express anything more than an initial attention. However, the sheep of the second group [from the non-believing world] the order is inversed: the same expression receives here a much more profound meaning – now it expresses a **future docility** of the flock toward the Good Shepherd Who will lead them. In brief, vv. 1-5 and v. 16 describe the distinct stages of Jesus' work: one of these is tied to a determined place, in the time of His earthy sojourn – the other, more limited, following His exaltation. During His Passion, Jesus will say that in order to hear His voice it is necessary to **be of the truth** [18:37]. The reason is obvious: the docility of the Flock toward the Good Shepherd is certainly a future of the faith. It is essentially **a reality of the Church**.

There now come to the fore the celebrated prophecy at the end of this verse, so often cited in this era of Ecumenism: **there will be one Fold and one Shepherd!** This will not be some fixed, institutional reality only, but will much more be **a living body, a communion**. All the sheep of the Good Shepherd – those pertaining to Him passing over from **Judaism** and those who belong to Him **from outside**, together these **are insistently called to form one sole Flock**. This theme of the unity of the Church has already been much developed by St. Paul, who presents **this unity depend formally from the sacrifice of the Cross** [Ep 2:14-18]. In the same manner, the phrase which treats of the unity of the Flock is framed in this context presented by Jn, in those verses which speak of the Death of Jesus Christ [vv.15, 17; 11:52]. In this same v. 16, nonetheless, the unity of the flock is presented even more clearly to the fact that there will be but one Shepherd, for the entire complexity of the New People of God, and that all will follow Him in docility. At the present moment, however, this is written in a more existential manner – it is the fruit of **faith**.

In some texts of Jn, salvation seems to depend on **the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ** [10:11, 15, 17] - whereas, in other texts [vv. 14, 15,16], salvation seems to flow from **the faith** of the followers of Christ, the believers' sharing in **knowing** the Good Shepherd, **listening to His Voice**. Christian unity flows essentially from both of these principles: **from the adherence of all the members to the one Jesus Christ**. In 17: 21, 23, a classical text regarding unity, Jesus will nonetheless be even more explicit, indicating as the principle of unity **communion with Him**. It flows **principally from His Passion, Death, Resurrection and Ascension** – and **the faithful response to this**. This communion will be simply a participation in that which exists between the Father and Himself: ***I will be in them and You in Me, so that they might be perfect*** [17:23].

Nothing that the verbs in v. 16 are in the future, it would seem clear that the unity of the Flock can only be realized after the death and resurrection of Jesus. However, even then it will be achieved only **gradually**, as is indicated in the dynamic verb that Jn employs here. The sheep have to be **converted progressively** into one sole Flock. This seems to be for many interpreters a clear indication that during **the entire unfolding of the eschatological times**, this unity is meant **continually** to increase and to become ever more profound, in direct proportion to **an ever more intense submission** to the Divine Good Shepherd.

Precisely for these reasons, Jesus Christ is the ultimate principle of unity. For this reason, the entire burden here on these words: **one sole Shepherd, situated** emphatically at the end of the verse. The expression seems to have come from the Prophet Ezekiel, who had long before announced for the future the coming of a **New David**, one sole Shepherd [Ezk 34:23 37:24]. This Promise is bound in the Prophet to the hope in the **restoration** of the unity of Israel – and the **re-grouping of the dispersed** into one sole people [Ezk 37: 17-22, 24]. In Jn, though, the perspective is not directly that of the unity of just the Jews and of the pagans of the time **into one single Church**, as is the case of St. Paul [Ep 2:11-12; 4:3-5]. The force falls on the fact that **all will tend to follow** after the One Shepherd. The **Church** as it is described here, is the **community of the vibrant faithful**, re-grouped around the One Shepherd, Jesus Christ, and in **living Communion** with Him. The vision of Jn through out is markedly **Christological**.

This promise of an **intensifying unity and communion** of the Church opens up clearly into an **eschatological perspective**. This has been understood also by those who eventually did not follow the Magisterium, such as a number of Modernist scholars: they insightfully noted that this is precisely the future development intended by the Lord, and as such, it might be termed *indefinite*. Nonetheless, this

composite Flock itself is called to a **progressive development** of its lived unity in the **Eternal Good Shepherd**. There is no surprise, therefore, that this theme might come back again in the Apocalypse, in a description of the Elect in Heaven: ***The Lamb, seated on His Throne, will be their Shepherd, and He will guide them to the fountains of life.*** [Rv 17:7].

e. **The Love of the Father and the Freedom of the Son [vv. 17-18]:** in these final two verses, the faithful believer reaches the culminating point of the entire discourse. As in so many other texts in Jn, there is constructed here a kind of *chiasm*:

- v. 17: a ***For this reason, My Father loves Me***
 b ***Because I lay down My life in order to take it up again.***
- v. 18: c ***No one takes it from Me.***
 c' ***Because I hand it over of My own accord***
 b' ***I have the power to hand it over and then power to take it up again***
 a' ***This is the order that I have received from My Father.***

According to the constant use of the evangelist, the words: ***For this reason*** - usually refer to the idea just previously expressed, in that he takes these up again and explains them in the subsequent proposition. Here the meaning is: as the Father loves the son, this is also evident in the great work that He is to accomplish as the Good Shepherd of His Sheep, handing over His life for them, and by re-uniting them into one sole flock [vv. 14-16]. So, Jn adds here a new reason: as the Father does love the Son, this is because He hands over his life in order to take it up again with the Resurrection, thus bringing to term the entire work of the salvation of the Flock. If the Mission of the Good Shepherd were destined to conclude solely with His death, the whole enterprise would be classified as a resounding failure. However, according to the profound and integral intention of the Divine Plan [v. 17], this Death of the Divine Son in His human nature is also intrinsically destined toward Life eternal: the Father has asked for this Death of His Son, but also His Resurrection. By taking life up again, the Divine Son can communicate, offer in human terms this **New Life** to everyone, which He has merited by His Death and Resurrection [cf. also Rm 4:25].

As a result, the entire undertaking of Salvation consummated by Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, is presented to all ultimately as **the most sublime revelation of the Father's love**. This is a fundamentally Johannine teaching: ***... In this the Father's love has been made manifest to us: God sent His only Son into this world so that we might live thanks to Him...*** [1 Jn 4:9] - ***God has so loved the world, that He gave up***

His only-begotten Son so that all who will believe in Him might not perish, but might have eternal life ... [Jn 3:16]. The integral Paschal Mystery provides the supreme sign of God's love for humanity. However, in the verse under study here, the Pasch in Christ is the supreme motive of the Father's Love for His son, in that in all the suffering and death, He leads this entire redemptive enterprise to a good end.

Along with the Father's love there is affirmed with like force, in the very heart of the text under discussion, the complete freedom of the Divine son in the carrying out of this entire enterprise. No human power could take His life from Him without His consent. It is not said as it has been in the Synoptics [e.g., Mt 17:22; 26:45] that Jesus ***was handed over*** into the hands of sinners. Jn prefers to bring out the fact that Jesus hands Himself over, by His own sovereign volition. The Son possesses a great power which permits Him to dispose freely of His own life: He has within Him the power to dispose freely of His own life: He has the power to hand it over and the power to take it up again. If He is to die and to resurrect, this is because of a full freedom choosing to do so by His own free will. This insistence on the sovereign decision of the Son in the act of salvation explains the repetition, abnormally, uncharacteristically frequent of the first person singular pronoun, ***'I'***. It should also be noted that on two occasions [vv. 11, 15] the expression ***I hand over My life*** but it is also emphasized the more by adding the pronoun: ***I***. This places in full light the free and voluntary character of His death. In these two verses of the conclusion, the **Christological concentration** of the discourse evidently brings out the more its supreme intensity.

Some bring up the question whether this complete independence of the Savior is extended likewise in His relationship with His Heavenly Father. The positive answer would do great violation to the over-all Johannine theology. Rather frequently in the 4th Gospel the author affirms Jesus' **perfect dependence** and **submission** with respect to His Heavenly Father; *He can do nothing of Himself, nothing that He does not see His Father doing* [5:19, cf. 8:28]. *He never seeks anything other than the Will of the One Who sent Him* [5:30]. Evidently, these reveals principles need to be brought out also with regard to the principal undertaking of Jesus, the work of the salvation of the human race.

At first sight, v. 18 seems somewhat to insist on the contrary. However, there are two distinct situations at work here: when Jesus, as He does here, affirms clearly that when speaking of **Himself**, He thinks of His **relationship with humanity** asked of Him by **His Merciful Father**, and seeks to exclude from this that anyone of them could ever impede His Will in this –not even the well-intentioned Peter. However, on the other hand, **He does nothing of Himself**. He is then speaking of His unique relationship with **His all-loving Heavenly Father**.

The absolute sovereignty, freedom of Jesus Christ with regard to humanity does not contradict in any manner His perfect submission to His Father. Both of these relationships harmonize themselves very well in the Father's Merciful Plan of the Redemption of Humanity. Both of these relationships come down to one and the same: the Merciful Love of God the Father. Both relationships are affirmed with equal force in this conclusion of the discourses. Jesus offers His life is **sovereign freedom**. He does this notwithstanding to **His most absolute obedience to the Personal Mission entrusted to Him within the Trinity**. He expresses this in the most clear manner possible: that which with regard to humanity, is **sovereign liberty**. Is **total submission** toward His Father. His mysterious power of acting freely which Jesus possesses, is at the same time, the Gift of His Loving Father: ***as the Father disposes of life, at the same time He has granted to His Son the power of disposing of it.*** [5:26].

Conclusion

[1] It can be stated with no hesitation that this page of Jn on the Good Shepherd constitutes **a genuine and proper synthesis of Johannine theology**. That which draws attention above all is that this theology is not exposed to any mere theoretic and abstract discourse, but rather it is inserted in an eminently concrete situation of Jesus' life. One can only admire the art with which the narrator strives to **elevate the faithful reader progressively and almost in an unnoticed manner, from the historical level to his theological message**. The historical situation is Jesus' revelation in the Temple of Jerusalem during the solemn celebration of the Festival of Tabernacles. This revelation then closes with the episode of the Man born Blind, which leads to a genuine and proper judgment regarding human beings before Jesus: on the one side, there may be placed those believers represented by the Blind Man who has been cured, and who becomes a disciple of Jesus. The, on the other side, those contemporaries of His who have rejected the Light of the World. There follows then the **enigmatic discourse** [vv.1-5] on the Good Shepherd in which Jesus is to be understood, in symbolic language, Who will lead His Flock from the sheep-fold of Judaism, in order to set up a new assembly place for them: the **Messianic Community**.

[2] Jesus, Who is also the **Gate** for the sheep, the **Door** Who provides access to salvation - He will be the Good Shepherd, **Who communicates His own life in abundance**. However, this life they will find only in Him: the **New Community** which will never again be a confining, nationalistic sheep-fold as of old. From Jesus on, it will be a **communion of life**, **open to those who choose to accept it**. It consists in the

mutual knowledge between the sheep and the Good Shepherd in their personal relationship with Him – and by means of Him, their relationship with the Merciful Father. It is abundantly clear, that **Jesus' Loving Father, is the most Merciful Father of the Flock** –He is at one and the same time, the origin and the terminus of the entire work of salvation.

[3] This is the **theological synthesis** of this remarkable biblical page. It can be thought of more precisely: this page presents a synthesis from a three-fold point of view: **Christology – Ecclesiology – Soteriology**:

- however, admitted all this, the core of the message is its **Christology** which provides unity to the entire passage. More than once there has been placed in evidence the very characteristic of the Christological concentration of the account.
- the **Ecclesiology** is orientated toward the Christology because the New Messianic Community is here described as essentially a communion of believers in Jesus Christ. The ecclesiastical reality, according to Jn, can be nothing more than Christological,

[4] There is verified in this whole passage in an eminent manner that which had been noted many times that unifies the entire 4th gospel: his consuming interest in the Person of Jesus Christ.

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EXCURSUS⁶
Shepherd – Gate – Lamb

Presentation:

[1] St. Thomas offers his own unique insights into these three words – and his reflections offer a deeper appreciation into the saving work of Jesus Christ.

[2] It is in our own time that the **Scriptural Commentaries** of the Angelic Doctor are being re-discovered. It is astounding how often these three terms appear – in this reflection, the **Summa** is also considered to be the Angelic Doctor's culminating composition.

A. *Pastor and Ostium*

I. Biblical Commentaries

[A] The Shepherd

1. ***In Matthew*** : there is given us the example of *scripture explaining scripture*.

a. **In 9:36** [*... And seeing the multitudes, He had compassion on them: because they were distressed, and lying like sheep that have no shepherd...*]. In his explanation of this, St. Thomas quotes Pr 11:14: *... Where there is no governor, the people shall fall; but there is safety where there is much counsel...* The Good Shepherd is presented as a governor. In Ezk 34: 5: *...And My sheep were scattered because there was no shepherd; and they became the prey of the beasts of the field, and were scattered..* Here, the Good Shepherd is a unifier. Then, in Zc 11:17: *O shepherd, and idol that foresakes the flock ...* the Good Shepherd remains faithful to the flock, by staying with them. St. Thomas shows the resultant disorder when there is no shepherd, or when he is unfaithful. Jesus will gather the flock – feels compassion for it, wandering without a shepherd. The Good Shepherd will always bring harmony and union.

b. **Mt 25: 32-33**: *... And all the nations shall be gathered together before Him, and He shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats ... And He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left...* Prior to this section, St. Thomas develops a discussion on the judiciary

⁶ J.C. Smith, 'Christ as *Pastor*, *Ostium* and *Lamb* in St. Thomas', in: **ANGELICUM** 56. 1979, pp. 93-118.

power of Christ – the necessity of His Passion for the Redemption.⁷ What is it that makes some good, some bad? St. Thomas offers this description of the ‘good’: innocence, obedience, patience and good uses. The Shepherd is the one to whom all activity is addressed. The Passion is the determining factor in Redemption – Jesus gives His life for His sheep.

c. **Mt 26:31:** ... *Then Jesus said to them: ‘All of you will be scandalized in Me this night. For it is written: ‘I will strike the shepherd and the flock will be dispersed. The citation is: Zc 13:7: ... **Awake, o sword, against My Shepherd, and against the man that cleaveth to Me, says the Lord of Hosts: strike the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered; and I will turn my hatred on the little ones... !*** Here there is specific reference to the Passion and the resulting offence. ‘The shepherd ‘being struck’, of course is the Passion of the Lord – the scattering is its effect. The faithful will be dispersed – but the Lord will unify them. In the long range of the Divine Plan, the ‘striking down’ has the effect of the lifting up of Christ, and the drawing of all to Himself – the Passion of the Lord will raise the scattered people into the faithful.

2. **Jeremiah 3:15:** ... [Pastores dabo vobis] *And I will give you shepherds according to My own heart; and they shall feed you with knowledge and doctrine...* the flock will be taught by the divinely instituted Magisterium, with the sure charism of truth [cf. DV 8], on faith and morals. It has been the sins of the leaders causing the blindness of the people: ... **Behold the shepherds have done foolishly, and have not sought the Lord; therefore have they not understood, and all their flock is scattered...** Throughout history, the sins of the leaders have indeed impacted the flock

3. **Thomistic Reflections:** as would be expected with the help of these meditations, in his *Summa*, St. Thomas ponders prayerfully the meaning and use of the **Good shepherd** theme. He uses the Hebrew scriptures to describe the ideals of the authentic shepherd – using Christ as the model Pastor, and Good Shepherd. Christ’s shepherding is for all the flock, the shepherds included.

a. St. Thomas also uses **Ep 4:2:** ... *walk worthy of the vocation in which you are called, with all humility and mildness, with patience, supporting one another in charity ...* ecclesiastic duties and roles are developed. As shepherds, they have the care of the Church, the **care** of the flock belonging to the Lord – as doctores, they are enabled to **instruct** in faith and morals. Thus, the shepherd is a **unifier, controller, teacher** and **caretaker** of the Body of Christ.

⁷ *Super Mt* 25:III, 2084 – 2086.

b. St. Thomas develops his views by citing the beautiful blessing of **Heb 13:20**: *...And may the God of Peace, Who brought you again from the dead, the Great Shepherd of the sheep, our lord Jesus Christ, in the blood of the ever-lasting covenant, fit you in all goodness, that you may do His will...!* All shepherds are joined to the Great Good Shepherd. In feeding the faithful, these men are not in charge of their own flock – but it belongs to the Great Shepherd. St Thomas makes a play on words here in Latin: ***pastor/pasco*** - the Pastor is one who ***feeds*** the flock, with the food necessary for eternal life. The role of the ***Magnus Pastor***, Jesus Christ - and the work of the Church: comes together here in guiding, teaching, unifying God's People.

b. ***Ps 23:1-2***: *... The Lord is my shepherd, I want for nothing . He set me in a place of pasture. He has brought me up on the water of refreshment ...* the nourishment imagery is found here – and is most applicable to the shepherd/ sheep imagery. God places one in the good 'Pasture' – the food is instruction, perhaps even the Eucharist - based on the refreshment that is initiated by the waters of Baptism. The effects of all this orientate, ordain the faithful interiorly toward God. A prime responsibility of the Good Shepherd is feeding, nourishing the flock: doctrinally, sacramentally.

c. The Church shepherds do not substitute for Jesus Christ – but work in and through Him, on the basis of priestly **character**, relationship. For St. Thomas, of course, as it is for the Church, it is truly Christ Himself who feeds the flock – nourishes it – by consoling, gathering the strays, healing the wounded, trimming the sleek – and satisfying the hungry and thirst who are 'blessed'. The Saint cites ***Is 40:11***: *... He shall feed His Flock like a Shepherd; he shall gather together the lambs with His arm, and shall take them up in His bosom, and He Himself shall carry them that are with young ...* The presence of Christ in the life, heart of the Priest is in itself the cause, principle, source and goal of the unity in the flock – and the Ultimate Supply of Nourishment. Christ comes as a shepherd – His pastorate transforms, transfigures, human existence – it is Christ Who guides us through the Church. His Pastorate is eternal.

[B] The Flock - Sheep

1. Here the quote is ***Jn 10:1-2***: *... Amen, Amen, I say unto you: he that enters not by the door, into the sheepfold, but climbs up another way, the same is a thief and robber. But he that enters in by the door, is the shepherd of the sheep ...* The sheep, of course, are the faithful of Christ – those in the grace of God – the flock, fold is the congregation of the Faithful.

2. The Gate requires several opinions:

- Chrysostom: claims the 'Gate' is Scripture – but, elsewhere, he says it is Jesus Himself;
- Augustine: believes the 'Gate, door' is Jesus Christ. This is a bit clumsy, as it would mean that Christ, in His humanity, would enter through Himself – but, Augustine has no difficulty with this. One needs to pass through the truth to reach Beatitude. Christ as God is Truth – and as man, He enters through Himself. We are all invited to enter as sons of light, through participation in the true and uncreated Light of the Nations.

[C] Reflections on the Gate

1. **The Gate, Door** is that through which one enters to reach the interior of a home. It is through Jesus Christ that we enter into the secret things, the depths, the mystery of the Trinity. This is how we are introduced to, brought into the Church. For entering, we are promised preservation, protection. By persevering in this sheepfold, flock, we are promised eternity – we will be save. We will eventually pass out and upward through Christ our Lord, into sharing the Holy of Holies for all eternity.
2. **The Truth is the Way** this **Door, Gate - within Whom Life** is found. St. Thomas emphasizes here not so much the work of Jesus – but, more the effect produced in us. We cannot enter prideful, but need to take our place in the militant Church and persevere. Jesus IS the Door, Gate – the **Way** was closed until the **Truth** was manifested, came to offer us **Life** eternal.
3. There is an intimate **relationship** between the Faithful and Jesus Christ – like sheep to their Shepherd – He knows us by name, we recognize His voice in and through His Church. We are His – He knows us through eternal predestination. He leads us away from danger. He goes before us by being subjected to death for us.
4. To **share** in Jesus Christ, does not just mean leadership, having authority, being the president of liturgies. We need to govern, protect and unite the flocks entrusted to us. By Christ's actions, words, teaching, by leading us – He opens the **way**, sheds light on the **truth**, lets us share in His **Life** through the shedding of His Precious Blood, the principle of New Life. It is not enough to speak about the **Truth** of Christ – we must follow His **way**, and live His **Life**. Through worthy Good Shepherds, Jesus continues to fulfill the office of Shepherd, and brings salvation to all.

5. The Bond between Shepherd and Flock is **charity**. This is the office of the Good Shepherd – this is why He gives His life. This is the ultimate test: **the disposition of laying down His life for the sheep**. As LG asks the believer to retain the disposition for **martyrdom** in response. The wayward flock need a shepherd Who is the basis of charity, unity and authority – without Him, the sheep stray, are scattered, become disunited.

6. The total relationship of Self-giving that Christ has with His Father's Flock, is a reflection, a share, in the **intra-Trinitarian mutual relationship** between the Persons of the Trinity [cf. Rm 8:32; Jn 3:16]. The 'sign' needed among the flock is this love for one another: ***By this will all know you are My Disciples ...*** - and the great 'sign' evident in the immolated Lamb at His eternal Nuptials with the Spouse, the Church, is the Sacred Stigmata. By the Passion and Stigmata of Christ, the sheep know the Father through the Son. Christ comes to establish unity in the flock – and to bring the faithful to the experience of God. Jesus is the Mediator, the **Gate**. He is the Gate: therefore, He knows the will of the Father and the **Way** to enter into the **Truth**, through the Gate, in order to share forever in the Divine **Life** of communion in the Bosom of the Trinity. Jesus' Union with the Father is shared through the shedding of His Precious Blood as New Life. This Life of Christ is life within the Trinity, and is the source of salvation.

II. Summa Theologica

1. Remarkably, the images of the *Pastor* and the *Ostium* are paralleled in this work of St. Thomas. These terms are employed by the Angelic Doctor to shed some light on the effects and qualities of the Good Shepherd. The word *Pastor* has a verbal root implying duties and responsibilities.

a. In II-II these duties are considered in different ways. The Good Shepherd needs to resist the *wolves* with spiritual and not material arms:

- q. 87, a. 3: the whole question about economic charity is the shepherd serves as a prelude for the more general question on Perfection.

- q. 184, a. 5: the question is whether prelates and religious are already in the state of perfection – both religious and prelates have duties with regard to perfection quoting: Jn 10:11: ***I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives his life for his sheep.***

- a.1: perfection consists in charity – so similar to Thomas' ideals for the pastoral office. First, the Shepherd is called to imitate the Chief Shepherd, in a life directed by

charity and obedience – and he is called to **sacrifice his entire life**, through perseverance. Perfection, then, is to follow the example of Jesus Christ.

- **a. 7**: the *episcopus* is connected with shepherd. Thomas holds that the love of neighbor, in which the bishop's mission consists, **results from the love of God**. This is why the Lord first asked Peter three times if he loved Him – and dependent on this answer, the Lord handed over to him the keys of serving the wandering flock. Love of the flock results from love of the Lord – and when one loves the flock, he also loves God. There is a relationship that emphasizes the acts of the shepherd and God. To reach God, each one needs to reach perfection through charity. Charity is the key quality and principle of the life of Christ, culminating most abundantly in the integral Paschal Mystery. The mission of the Shepherd, then, is to return the love for Christ to the neighbor. In the emphasis of handing on to others what one has first contemplated, Thomas notes that the good of the many is preferred over the good of one.

- **q. 185 a. 2 ad 1 um**: Thus the Angelic Doctor is inspired by the Doctor of Grace commenting on the risen Lord's examination of Peter: **Feed My Lambs.... My sheep...!** The office of love is to feed the flock:

Reply OBJ 1: Although simply and absolutely speaking the contemplative life is more excellent than the active, and the love of God better than the love of our neighbor, yet, on the other hand, **the good of the many should be preferred to the good of the individual**. Wherefore Augustine says in the passage quoted above: "**Nor prefer your own ease to the needs of the Church**," and all the more since it belongs to the love of God that a man undertake the pastoral care of Christ's sheep. Hence Augustine, commenting on John 21:17, "Feed My sheep," says (Tractatus 123 in Joannis): "Be it the task of love to feed the Lord's flock, even as it was the mark of fear to deny the Shepherd." Moreover prelates are not transferred to the active life, so as to forsake the contemplative; wherefore Augustine says (De Civitate Dei xix,19) that "if the burden of the pastoral office be imposed, **we must not abandon the delights of truth, which are derived from contemplation**."

- **q. 185, a. 4 c; 5 c**:

I answer that, The perfection of the episcopal state consists in this that for love of God a man binds himself to work for the salvation of his neighbor, wherefore he is bound to retain the pastoral cure so long as he is able to procure the spiritual welfare of the subjects entrusted to his care: a matter which he must not neglect - neither for the sake of the quiet of divine contemplation, since the

Apostle, on account of the needs of his subjects, suffered patiently to be delayed even from the contemplation of the life to come, according to Philippians 1:22-25, "What I shall choose I know not, but I am straitened between two, having a desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ, a thing by far better.

But to abide still in the flesh is needful for you. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide"; nor for the sake of avoiding any hardships or of acquiring any gain whatsoever, because as it is written (John 10:11), "the good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep." At times, however, it happens in several ways that a bishop is hindered from procuring the spiritual welfare of his subjects. Sometimes on account of his own defect, either of conscience (for instance if he be guilty of murder or simony), or of body (for example if he be old or infirm), or of irregularity arising, for instance, from bigamy.

Sometimes he is hindered through some defect in his subjects, whom he is unable to profit. Hence Gregory says (*Dialogorum* ii,3): "The wicked must be borne patiently, when there are some good who can be succored, but when there is no profit at all for the good, it is sometimes useless to labor for the wicked. Wherefore the perfect when they find that they labor in vain are often minded to go elsewhere in order to labor with fruit." Sometimes again this hindrance arises on the part of others, as when scandal results from a certain person being in authority: for the Apostle says (1 Corinthians 8:13): "If meat scandalize my brother, I will never eat flesh": provided, however, the scandal is not caused by the wickedness of persons desirous of subverting the faith or the righteousness of the Church; because the pastoral cure is not to be laid aside on account of scandal of this kind, according to Matthew 15:14, "Let them alone," those namely who were scandalized at the truth of Christ's teaching, "they are blind, and leaders of the blind."

Nevertheless just as a man takes upon himself the charge of authority at the appointment of a higher superior, so too it behooves him to be subject to the latter's authority in laying aside the accepted charge for the reasons given above. Hence Innocent III says (*Extra, de Renunt., cap. Nisi cum pridem*): "Though thou hast wings wherewith thou art anxious to fly away into solitude, they are so tied by the bonds of authority, that thou art not free to fly without our permission." For the Pope alone can dispense from the perpetual vow, by which a man binds himself to the care of his subjects, when he took upon himself the episcopal office. [a. 4 c].

I answer that, In any obligation the chief thing to be considered is the end of the obligation. Now bishops bind themselves to fulfill the pastoral office for the sake of the salvation of their subjects. Consequently when the salvation of his subjects demands the personal presence of the pastor, the pastor should not withdraw his personal presence from his flock, neither for the sake of some temporal advantage, nor even on account of some impending danger to his person, since the good shepherd is bound to lay down his life for his sheep.

On the other hand, if the salvation of his subjects can be sufficiently provided for by another person in the absence of the pastor, it is lawful for the pastor to withdraw his bodily presence from his flock, either for the sake of some advantage to the Church, or on account of some danger to his person. Hence Augustine says (Ep. 228 ad Honorat.): "Christ's servants may flee from one city to another, when one of them is specially sought out by persecutors: in order that the Church be not abandoned by others who are not so sought for.

When, however, the same danger threatens all, those who stand in need of others must not be abandoned by those whom they need." For "if it is dangerous for the helmsman to leave the ship when the sea is calm, how much more so when it is stormy," as Pope Nicholas I says (Decretal VII,Q1, canon Sciscitaris). [a. 5 c]

- q. 185, a. 3 ad 2 um:

Reply OBJ 2: This statement refers to the pursuits of the man who is placed in authority. For **he should aim at showing himself to be more excellent than others in both knowledge and holiness**. Wherefore Gregory says (Regulae Pastoralis ii,1) "the occupations of a prelate ought to excel those of the people, as much as the shepherd's life excels that of his flock." But he is not to be blamed and looked upon as worthless if he excelled not before being raised to the prelacy.

b. In III: the idea of spiritual pastors sharing through charity in the true Shepherd was noted first in the Commentary on Heb 13 – and developed by Thomas in his Commentary on John. The role of headship was not directly considered

- q. 8, a. 6 ad 3um:

Reply OBJ 3: As Augustine says (Tractatus 46 in Joannis): "If the rulers of the Church are Shepherds, how is there one Shepherd, except that all these are members of one Shepherd?" So likewise others may be called foundations and heads, **inasmuch as they are members of the one Head and Foundation**.

Nevertheless, as Augustine says (Tractatus 47 in Joannis), "He gave to His members to be shepherds; **yet none of us calleth himself the Door**. He kept this for Himself alone." And this **because by 'door' is implied the principal authority**, inasmuch as it is **by the door that all enter the house**; and it is Christ alone by "Whom also we have access . . . into this grace, wherein we stand" (Romans 5:2); but by the other names above-mentioned there may be implied not merely the principal but also the secondary authority.

- q. 8, a. 1 c:

I answer that, As the whole Church is termed **one mystic body** from its likeness to the natural body of a man, which in divers members has divers acts, as the Apostle teaches (Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12), so likewise **Christ is called the Head of the Church from a likeness with the human head, in which we may consider three things, viz. order, perfection, and power**:

Order, indeed; for the head is the first part of man, beginning from the higher part; and hence it is that every principle is usually called a head according to Ezekiel 16:25: "At every head of the way, thou hast set up a sign of thy prostitution" - Perfection, inasmuch as in the head dwell all the senses, both interior and exterior, whereas in the other members there is only touch, and hence it is said (Isaiah 9:15): "The aged and honorable, he is the head" -

Power, because the power and movement of the other members, together with the direction of them in their acts, is from the head, by reason of the sensitive and motive power there ruling; hence the ruler is called the head of a people, according to 1 Kings [1 Samuel] 15:17: "When thou wast a little one in thine own eyes, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel?"

Now **these three things belong spiritually to Christ**. First, on account of His **nearness to God** His grace is the highest and first, though not in time, since all have received grace on account of His grace, according to Romans 8:29: "For whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son; that He might be the first-born amongst many brethren." Secondly, He had **perfection as regards the fullness of all graces**, according to John 1:14, "We saw Him [Vulgate: His glory] . . . full of grace and truth," as was shown, Q7,A9. Thirdly, He has **the power of bestowing grace on all the members of the Church**, according to John 1:16: "Of His fullness we have all received." And thus it is plain that Christ is fittingly called the Head of the Church.

c. Christ as Head is compared in all times to bishops of particular places. The Heads are said to be ***in the place of Christ***. Thus the pastor is a kind of ***substitute*** - Christ is the Head as being the source of grace, power and authority

for other heads of the Church – connected to Him by sacramental **character, giving them the power of offering the oblation of life**. Others are called Heads, Shepherds, because they act in place of Jesus Christ. Jesus communicates a share in His Headship Shepherding – imparting spiritual motion to these men because His actions are salvific, continued in time through the sacrament of Holy Orders. These actions cause grace both through merit and efficiency: Christ merited because of His perfect life, His Passion and Death – He effects grace due to His nearness, conjunction in human nature to the eternal Word, as a single Divine Person, and as Head of the Church:

Reply OBJ 1: To give grace or the Holy Ghost belongs to Christ as He is God, authoritatively; but **instrumentally** it belongs also to Him as man, inasmuch as **His manhood is the instrument of His Godhead**. And hence by the power of the Godhead His actions were beneficial, i.e. by causing grace in us, both meritoriously and efficiently. But Augustine denies that Christ as man gives the Holy Ghost authoritatively. Even other saints are said to give the Holy Ghost instrumentally, or ministerially, according to Galatians 3:5: "He . . . who giveth to you the Spirit." [q. 8, a. 1 ad 1 um]

I answer that, It is necessary to **suppose habitual grace in Christ** for three reasons. First, on account of **the union of His soul with the Word of God**. For the nearer any recipient is to an inflowing cause, the more does it partake of its influence. Now the influx of grace is from God, according to Psalm 84:11: "The Lord will give grace and glory." And hence it was most fitting that His soul should receive the influx of Divine grace. Secondly, on account of **the dignity of this soul**, whose operations were to attain so closely to God by knowledge and love, to which it is necessary for human nature to be raised by grace. Thirdly, on account of the **relation of Christ to the human race**. For Christ, as man, is the "Mediator of God and men," as is written, 1 Timothy 2:5; and hence it behooved Him to have grace which would overflow upon others, according to John 1:16: "And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace." [q. 7, a. 1 c]

On the contrary, It is written (Romans 5:18): "As by the offense of one, unto all men to condemnation; so also by the justice of one, unto all men to justification of life." But Adam's demerits reached to the condemnation of others. Much more, therefore, does the merit of Christ reach others.

I answer that, As stated above (q. 8, aa.1,5), grace was in Christ not merely as in an individual, but also as in the Head of the whole Church, to Whom all are united, as members to a head, who constitute one mystical person. And hence it is that Christ's merit extends to others inasmuch as they are His members; even as in a man the action of the head reaches in a manner to all his members,

since it perceives not merely for itself alone, but for all the members. [q. 19, a. 4]

On the contrary, on the words of Philippians 2:9, "Therefore God exalted Him," etc., Augustine says (Tractatus 104 in Joannis): "The lowliness" of the Passion "merited glory; glory was the reward of lowliness." But He was glorified, not merely in Himself, but likewise in His faithful ones, as He says Himself (John 17:10). Therefore it appears that He merited the salvation of the faithful. I answer that, As stated above (Q7,AA1,9; Q8,AA1,5), grace was bestowed upon Christ, not only as an individual, but inasmuch as He is the Head of the Church, so that it might overflow into His members; and therefore Christ's works are referred to Himself and to His members in the same way as the works of any other man in a state of grace are referred to himself. But it is evident that whosoever suffers for justice's sake, provided that he be in a state of grace, merits his salvation thereby, according to Matthew 5:10: "Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice's sake." Consequently Christ by His Passion merited salvation, not only for Himself, but likewise for all His members. [q. 48, a. 1 c.]

d. *Ostium* appears prior to the III Pars without major significance – the longer treatment of words such as: *pastor, caput, lux, agnus* - provide qualities that both Jesus Christ and the Faithful can share in some way, in which the power of Christ overflows, is communicated and flows into the Faithful. Only Christ is called the ***ostium*** - the qualities envisaged in this image cannot be shared. Christ as the Head of the Church is unifier of the flock freeing all from slavery to sin and death. Christ becomes the Great Good Shepherd liberating His flock, transforming the human condition into one of peace and humanity.

e. III, q. 40 1 c: there are three reasons for the coming of Christ into this world: to manifest the truth, to seek the lost freeing them from sin, and serving as an access point with God:

I answer that, Christ's manner of life had to be in keeping with the end of His Incarnation, by reason of which He came into the world. Now He came into the world, first, **that He might publish the truth**. Thus He says Himself (John 18:37): "For this was I born, and for this came I into the world, that I should give testimony to the truth." Hence it was fitting not that He should hide Himself by leading a solitary life, but that He should appear openly and preach in public. Wherefore (Luke 4:42,43) He says to those who wished to stay Him: "To other cities also I must preach the kingdom of God: for therefore am I sent."

Secondly, **He came in order to free men from sin**; according to 1 Timothy 1:15: "Christ Jesus came into this world to save sinners." And hence, as Chrysostom says, "although Christ might, while staying in the same place, have drawn all men to Himself, to hear His preaching, yet He did not do so; thus giving us the example to go about and seek those who perish, like the shepherd in his search of the lost sheep, and the physician in his attendance on the sick."

Thirdly, He came **that by Him "we might have access to God,"** as it is written (Romans 5:2). And thus it was fitting that He should give men confidence in approaching Him by associating familiarly with them. Wherefore it is written (Matthew 9:10): "It came to pass as He was sitting . . . in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came, and sat down with Jesus and His disciples." On which Jerome comments as follows: "They had seen the publican who had been converted from a sinful to a better life: and consequently they did not despair of their own salvation."

f. The Shepherd's life of truth and charity is brought to fulfillment by his voluntary sacrifice which satisfies for the sins separating the flock from God. Christ as Good shepherd saves at every point of His life – not only as an example, Witness of the principles of charity, but also in the teaching of truth. The Good Shepherd restores the sheep to the fold.

B. LAMB

I. Biblical Commentaries

1. In the *Commentary on Jeremiah*, [Jr 11:18-19], the prophet being persecuted served as a figure for the Passion of Christ. The Lamb [v.19] is compared to both Jr and Jesus – the innocent **Prophet** is led to the slaughter house – in complete innocence, Christ is crucified.

2. In his *Commentary on Hebrews* [7:26-27: ... ***For it was fitting that we should have such a High Priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens: Who needs not daily [as the other priests] to offer sacrifices first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this He did once and for all, in offering Himself*** ...]. A central factor in the life of Jesus is constantly brought forward: ***He did not sin!*** Christ was most fittingly a **priest** – He chose not to sacrifice just as the OT priests did. In the New Law, Christ offers Himself – as the most precious oblation. One of the OT sacrifices, however, was that of the Paschal Lamb. Thomas comments here on v. 28: ... ***For the Law makes men priests, who have infirmity; but the Word of the oath, which was since the Law, the Son Who is perfected forever more*** ... According to Ex 12, the Lord ordered the Sons of Israel

before their journey to sacrifice a **lamb**, smear its blood on the doorpost, eat its flesh with unleavened bread. With tradition, Thomas sees Christ here He is the Immaculate Lamb, immolated – His Precious Blood is sprinkled on their understanding and affections, so they might **pass-over** from earthly things to the heavenly.

3. In his ***Commentary on 1 Co 5:7 : ... Purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new paste, as you are unleavened. For Christ our Pasch, is sacrificed...!*** - Christ was killed through the People – the People of God are liberated from the Evil One and the slavery to sin is loosened through Baptism, as passing through the red Sea. Thomas does not clarify how the Death of Christ frees believers from Evil, but shows that His victory through sacrifice constitutes a **cosmic triumph – over all the forces of evil**.

4. ***Commentarium in Is 16, 1; 53:7: [... Send forth, O Lord, the Lamb, the ruler of the earth, from Petra of the desert, to the Mount of the Daughter of Sion - ... He was offered because it was His own will, and He opened not His mouth: He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter-house, and shall be as dumb as a lamb before his shearer, and He shall not open His mouth ...]***. Two aspects of Christ as the **agnus** have been pointed out: the purity of His life; the universal effect of His expiation of sin. Jesus displayed a gentleness of one who is patient – a lamb suffering without complaint. Christ **willingly allows Himself** to be taken, suffers, crucified, put to death. As Son of God, He could have prevented it all. The Lamb, without any objection, willingly is laid on the altar. He is the Instrument of Mediation, bridges the gap, closes the breach, between God and man.

5. ***Commentarium in Jn 1:36 : behold! The Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world!*** Here the Angelic Doctor repeats these aspects of above – showing the power of the God. One added feature here is the consideration of the **continual offering of the Lamb, day and night, under the Old Law**. ***In Heb 10:11***, f. pointed out the **eternal implication of Jesus' continuing sacrifice**. The 'morning' figures the contemplation and enjoyment of thoughts of divine things through Christ – and 'evening' indicates how to use earthly things, without being polluted by them. The **Lamb** is the principal sacrifice.

There is a variety of interpretations of 'of God' - because that Jesus has a divine Nature, is a Divine Person? Or, was the Lamb offered by God, as a man would offer sacrifice? Or, is it because God does provide – as promised through Abraham to Isaac, the most beloved, only-begotten son, stretched out on the altar of immolation?
ALL OF THE ABOVE!:

- the first aspect: the power for universal sacrifice results from Christ as God;
- the second aspect stresses that Christ a pure and innocent victim, voluntarily offers Himself;
- the third aspect clarifies the importance of Christ's mission of salvation – the ultimate meaning of His coming into this world is to **give Himself** in harmony with the Father's salvific plan – out of love for humanity, and in loving obedience to His Father.

These correspond to the three reasons for the use of the **agnus** : purity, gentleness, and effect. Thomas adds the 4th, its **benefits**. Lamb's fur can be worn: **put on the Lord Jesus** [cf. RM 13:14] – Lamb's flesh may be eaten: **MY flesh is for the life of the world** . **Agnus** symbolizes the closeness with which one must come into contact with Jesus Christ. The Lamb is not only a participant in a cosmic ritual - but provides 'apparel', nourishment, for every day existence, survival. We were once naked and hungry – now, **clothed in truth, grace – fed with the flesh of the Lamb**. The **sacrificial** character is one with the **sacramental**.

Who takes away the sins of the world : expresses the infinite, universal capacity of Christ's holocaust in comparison with all others – He thus removes Sin itself.

Thus, there are four qualities, essential potentialities radiating from the **Agnus Dei**:

- Christ is the **principal** sacrifice – He sacrifices once and for all;
- Christ **fulfills all the requirements** for the **Victim** and the **Offerer** in the Old Law. Christ is the Priest, **offering Himself, a most worthy Victim, Gift, Immolation**. Through the purity of His Life; the gentleness of His submission to the Paschal Mystery out of love and obedience, the infinite effect of His oblation, and the universal benefits in the form of spiritual apparel and nourishment, both food and drink bread and wine, the flesh of the Lamb.
- Christ is the **Victor** over the devil – the Lamb is totally, innocent, sinless – and did not merit death. But Christ allows this Oblation, Immolation: making it is **Self-sacrifice**, with which He cooperates freely – so doing, He overwhelms evil and malice with His goodness and mercy.
- the Lamb provides the ideal, the exemplar of our own spiritual sacrifices – which we join to the one oblation of Jesus [cf. 1 P 2:2, ff.]

II. Summa Theologica

1. **I-II:** the many rules for the communicating in the Paschal Lamb have a deeper explanation:

- **q. 102, a. 5 ad 2um:**

Reply OBJ 2: The literal reason of the paschal banquet was to commemorate the blessing of being led by God out of Egypt. Hence by celebrating this banquet they declared that **they belonged to that people which God had taken to Himself** out of Egypt. For when they were delivered from Egypt, they were commanded to sprinkle the lamb's blood on the transoms of their house doors, as though declaring that they were averse to the rites of the Egyptians who worshipped the ram. Wherefore they were delivered by the sprinkling or rubbing of the blood of the lamb on the door-posts, from the danger of extermination which threatened the Egyptians.

Now two things are to be observed in their departure from Egypt: namely, their **haste** in going, for the Egyptians pressed them to go forth speedily, as related in Exodus 12:33; and there was **danger** that anyone who did not hasten to go with the crowd might be slain by the Egyptians.

Their **haste** was shown in two ways. First by what they ate. For they were commanded to eat unleavened bread, as a sign "that it could not be leavened, the Egyptians pressing them to depart"; and to eat roast meat, for this took less time to prepare; and that they should not break a bone thereof, because in their haste there was no time to break bones. Secondly, as to the manner of eating. For it is written: "You shall gird your reins, and you shall have shoes on your feet, holding staves in your hands, and you shall eat in haste": which clearly designates men at the point of starting on a journey.

To this also is to be referred the command: "In one house shall it be eaten, neither shall you carry forth of the flesh thereof out of the house": because, to wit, on account of their haste, they could not send any gifts of it. The stress they suffered while in Egypt was denoted by the wild lettuces. The figurative reason is evident, because **the sacrifice of the paschal lamb signified the sacrifice of Christ according to 1 Corinthians 5:7 "Christ our pasch is sacrificed."** The **blood** of the lamb, which ensured deliverance from the destroyer, by being sprinkled on the transoms, signified **faith in Christ's Passion**, in the hearts and on the lips of the faithful, by which same Passion we are delivered from sin and death, according to 1 Peter 1:18: "You were. . . redeemed. . . with the precious blood. . . of a lamb unspotted." The **partaking of its flesh** signified the **eating of Christ's body in the Sacrament**; and the flesh was roasted at the fire to signify **Christ's Passion or charity**. And it was eaten with unleavened bread to signify the blameless life of the faithful who partake

of Christ's body, according to 1 Corinthians 5:8: "Let us feast. . . with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." The wild lettuces were added to denote repentance for sins, which is required of those who receive the body of Christ.

Their loins were girt in sign of **chastity**: and the shoes of their feet are the examples of our dead ancestors. The staves they were to hold in their hands denoted pastoral authority: and it was commanded that the paschal lamb should be eaten in one house, i.e. in a catholic church, and not in the conventicles of heretics.

This reply stresses the sacramental aspect – the old ceremonies **pre-figure** the actual sacrifice of Jesus – and the ceremonies are those of the future Church. The **Lamb** is the Old temple, the New Church, and Christ. Thus His **sacrifice** has eternal implications. The **Lamb** has broad application – Thomas pondered this image often in the Summa, and uncovers the doctrinal and general theological implications for the contemporary Church and believer. In the biblical commentaries, he remains more within the biblical readings of this image. Christ substitutes Christ often for the lamb – connecting often the central notion of **expiation** with the Lamb.

- **Pars III**: Thomas often quotes Jn 1:20: ***Look, there is the Lamb of God!*** Christ's coming was more than sufficient to remove all kinds of sin – though he came principally to remove original sin and its effects. At each point, Christ emphasizes the proof of His Mission: **Divine Charity**. He comes out of loving obedience – the mode of the Sacrifice begins with the Incarnation.

- **q. 22**: concerns Christ's Priesthood and priestly work – this is related to Christ as Lamb – the Mediatorship of Christ is a service of His Mission including His role as **sacrificial lamb**. Christ not only offers the sacrifice, but He is the **Victim** which is offered. The effect of the Priest's work, the loving sacrifice itself, is more properly Jesus as Lamb. Through Christ's humanity, all the needs of sacrifice are included: He removes our sins, we receive saving grace, and we are fitted for heavenly glory – He is simultaneously the **Victim** for sin – a **peace-offering** – and a **holocaust**, uniting us to God: He is both **Priest** and **Victim**:

On the contrary, The Apostle says (Ephesians 5:2): "Christ hath loved us, and hath delivered Himself for us, an oblation and a victim [Douay: sacrifice] to God for an odor of sweetness."

I answer that, As Augustine says (De Civitate Dei x,5): "Every visible sacrifice is a sacrament, that is a sacred sign, of the invisible sacrifice." Now the invisible **sacrifice is that by which a man offers his spirit to God**, according to

Psalm 51:19: "A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit." Wherefore, whatever is offered to God in order to raise man's spirit to Him, may be called a sacrifice.

Now man is required to offer sacrifice for three reasons. First, for the remission of sin, by which he is turned away from God. Hence the Apostle says (Hebrews 5:1) that it appertains to the priest "to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins." Secondly, that man may be preserved in a state of grace, by ever adhering to God, wherein his peace and salvation consist. Wherefore under the Old Law the sacrifice of peace-offerings was offered up for the salvation of the offerers, as is prescribed in the third chapter of Leviticus. Thirdly, in order that the spirit of man be perfectly united to God: which will be most perfectly realized in glory.

Hence, under the Old Law, the holocaust was offered, so called because the victim was wholly burnt, as we read in the first chapter of Leviticus. Now these effects were conferred on us by the humanity of Christ. For, in the first place, our sins were blotted out, according to Romans 4:25: "Who was delivered up for our sins." Secondly, through Him we received the grace of salvation, according to Hebrews 5:9: "He became to all that obey Him the cause of eternal salvation." Thirdly, through Him we have acquired the perfection of glory, according to Hebrews 10:19: "We have [Vulgate: Having] a confidence in the entering into the Holies" (i.e. the heavenly glory) "through His Blood."

Therefore Christ Himself, as man, was not only priest, but also a perfect victim, being at the same time victim for sin, victim for a peace-offering, and a holocaust. [III, q. 22, a. 2 c]

The Sacraments benefit from all this:

Reply OBJ 3: Some of the sacraments of the New Law had corresponding figurative sacraments in the Old Law.

For Baptism, which is the sacrament of Faith, corresponds to circumcision. Hence it is written (Colossians 2:11,12): "You are circumcised. . . in the circumcision of" Our Lord Jesus "Christ: buried with Him in Baptism."

In the New Law the sacrament of the Eucharist corresponds to the banquet of the paschal lamb.

The sacrament of Penance in the New Law corresponds to all the purifications of the Old Law.

The sacrament of Orders corresponds to the consecration of the pontiff and of the priests.

To the sacrament of Confirmation, which is the sacrament of the fullness of grace, there would be no corresponding sacrament of the Old Law, because the time of fullness had not yet come, since "the Law brought no man [Vulgate: nothing] to perfection" (Hebrews 7:19).

The same applies to the sacrament of Extreme Unction, which is an immediate preparation for entrance into glory, to which the way was not yet opened out in the Old Law, since the price had not yet been paid.

Matrimony did indeed exist under the Old Law, as a function of nature, but not as the sacrament of the union of Christ with the Church, for that union was not as yet brought about. Hence under the Old Law it was allowable to give a bill of divorce, which is contrary to the nature of the sacrament. [I_{ii}, q. 102, a. 3 ad 2um.]

- **q. 46:** the Sacrifice continues as the theme – Christ offers His for the liberation of the human race. He offers three reasons:

On the contrary, It is written (John 3:14): "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting."

I answer that, As the Philosopher teaches (De Metaphysica v), there are several acceptations of the word "**necessary**."

In one way it means anything which **of its nature cannot be otherwise**; and in this way it is evident that it was not necessary either on the part of God or on the part of man for Christ to suffer.

In another sense a thing may be **necessary from some cause quite apart from itself**; and should this be either an efficient or a moving cause then it brings about the necessity of compulsion; as, for instance, when a man cannot get away owing to the violence of someone else holding him. But if the external factor which induces necessity be an end, then it will be said to be necessary from presupposing such end - namely, when some particular end cannot exist at all, or not conveniently, except such end be presupposed. It was not necessary, then, for Christ to suffer from necessity of compulsion, either on God's part, who ruled that Christ should suffer, or on Christ's own part, who suffered voluntarily.

Yet it was necessary **from necessity of the end proposed**; and this can be accepted in three ways. First of all, on our part, who have been delivered by His Passion, according to John (John 3:14): "The Son of man must be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting." Secondly, on Christ's part, who merited the glory of being exalted, through the lowliness of His Passion: and to this must be referred Luke 24:26: "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into His glory?" Thirdly, on God's part, whose determination regarding the Passion of Christ, foretold in the Scriptures and prefigured in the observances of the Old Testament, had to be fulfilled.

And this is what Saint Luke says (Luke 22:22): "The Son of man indeed goeth, according to that which is determined"; and (Luke 24:44, 46): "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was yet with you, that all things must needs be fulfilled which are written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning Me: for it is thus written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead." [q. 46, a. 1 c].

Christ's appearance as **Lamb-Sacrifice** is not an isolated condition or act, but the principle of that entire history in that he is the transforming Agent.

- q. 46, aa. 9, 10: ad 1 um:

Reply OBJ 1: Some hold that Christ did die on the fourteenth day of the moon, when the Jews sacrificed the Pasch: hence it is stated (John 18:28) that the Jews "went not into Pilate's hall" on the day of the Passion, "that they might not be defiled, but that they might eat the Pasch." Upon this Chrysostom observes (Hom. 82 in Joannis): "The Jews celebrated the Pasch then; but He celebrated the Pasch on the previous day, reserving His own slaying until the Friday, when the old Pasch was kept." And this appears to tally with the statement (John 13:1-5) that "before the festival day of the Pasch . . . when supper was done" . . . Christ washed "the feet of the disciples." But Matthew's account (Matthew 26:17) seems opposed to this; that "on the first day of the Azymes the disciples came to Jesus, saying: Where wilt Thou that we prepare for Thee to eat the Pasch?"

From which, as Jerome says, "since the fourteenth day of the first month is called the day of the Azymes, when the lamb was slain, and when it was full moon," it is quite clear that Christ kept the supper on the fourteenth and died on the fifteenth. And this comes out more clearly from Mark 14:12: "On the first day of the unleavened bread, when they sacrificed the Pasch," etc.; and from Luke 22:7: "The day of the unleavened bread came, on which it was necessary that the Pasch should be killed."

Consequently, then, others say that Christ ate the Pasch with His disciples on the proper day - that is, on the fourteenth day of the moon - "showing thereby that up to the last day He was not opposed to the law," as Chrysostom says (Hom. 81 in Matthaeum): but that the Jews, being busied in compassing Christ's death against the law, put off celebrating the Pasch until the following day. And on this account it is said of them that on the day of Christ's Passion they were unwilling to enter Pilate's hall, "that they might not be defiled, but that they might eat the Pasch."

But even this solution does not tally with Mark, who says: "On the first day of the unleavened bread, when they sacrificed the Pasch." Consequently Christ and the Jews celebrated the ancient Pasch at the one time. And as Bede says on

Luke 22:7,8: "Although Christ who is our Pasch was slain on the following day - that is, on the fifteenth day of the moon - nevertheless, on the night when the Lamb was sacrificed, delivering to the disciples to be celebrated, the mysteries of His body and blood, and being held and bound by the Jews, He hallowed the opening of His own immolation - that is, of His Passion." But the words (John 13:1) "Before the festival day of the Pasch" are to be understood to refer to the fourteenth day of the moon, which then fell upon the Thursday: for the fifteenth day of the moon was the most solemn day of the Pasch with the Jews: and so the same day which John calls "before the festival day of the Pasch," on account of the natural distinction of days, Matthew calls the first day of the unleavened bread, because, according to the rite of the Jewish festivity, the solemnity began from the evening of the preceding day.

When it is said, then, that they were going to eat the Pasch on the fifteenth day of the month, it is to be understood that the Pasch there is not called the Paschal lamb, which was sacrificed on the fourteenth day, but the Paschal food - that is, the unleavened bread - which had to be eaten by the clean. Hence Chrysostom in the same passage gives another explanation, that the Pasch can be taken as meaning the whole feast of the Jews, which lasted seven days. [a. 9, ad 1 um,].

Reply OBJ 1: Christ died most appropriately in Jerusalem.

First of all, because Jerusalem was God's chosen place for the offering of sacrifices to Himself: and these figurative sacrifices foreshadowed Christ's Passion, which is a true sacrifice, according to Ephesians 5:2: "He hath delivered Himself for us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God for an odor of sweetness." Hence Bede says in a Homily (Hom. 23): "When the Passion drew nigh, our Lord willed to draw nigh to the place of the Passion" - that is to say, to Jerusalem - whither He came five days before the Pasch; just as, according to the legal precept, the Paschal lamb was led to the place of immolation five days before the Pasch, which is the tenth day of the moon

Secondly, because the virtue of His Passion was to be spread over the whole world, He wished to suffer in the center of the habitable world - that is, in Jerusalem. Accordingly it is written (Psalm 74:12): "But God is our King before ages: He hath wrought salvation in the midst of the earth" - that is, in Jerusalem, which is called "the navel of the earth" (Jerome's Commentarium in Ezech. 5:5).

Thirdly, because it was specially in keeping with His humility: that, as He chose the most shameful manner of death, so likewise it was part of His humility that He did not refuse to suffer in so celebrated a place. Hence Pope Leo says (Sermone 1 in Epiph.): "He who had taken upon Himself the form of a servant chose Bethlehem for His nativity and Jerusalem for His Passion."

Fourthly, He willed to suffer in Jerusalem, where the chief priests dwelt, to show that the wickedness of His slayers arose from the chiefs of the Jewish people. Hence it is written (Acts 4:27): "There assembled together in this city against Thy holy child Jesus whom Thou hast anointed, Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel." [a. 10 ad 1 um]

- **q. 47:** considers the efficient cause of the Passion – a. 1, notes that Christ **allowed** Himself to be killed willingly.
- **a. 2:** brings out the central mystery of Christ dying out of loving obedience: Christ fulfills the precepts respectively by **perfect charity, self-sacrifice, satisfaction**:

On the contrary, It is written (Philippians 2:8): "He became obedient" to the Father "unto death."

I answer that, It was befitting that Christ should suffer out of obedience. First of all, because it was **in keeping with human justification**, that "as by the disobedience of one man, many were made sinners: so also by the obedience of one, many shall be made just," as is written Romans 5:19. Secondly, it was **suitable for reconciling man with God**: hence it is written (Romans 5:10): "We are reconciled to God by the death of His Son," in so far as Christ's death was a most acceptable sacrifice to God, according to Ephesians 5:2: "He delivered Himself for us an oblation and a sacrifice to God for an odor of sweetness." Now obedience is preferred to all sacrifices, according to 1 Kings [1 Samuel] 15:22: "Obedience is better than sacrifices." Therefore it was fitting that the sacrifice of Christ's Passion and death should proceed from obedience. Thirdly, it was **in keeping with His victory whereby He triumphed over death and its author**; because a soldier cannot conquer unless he obey his captain. And so the Man-Christ secured the victory through being obedient to God, according to Proverbs 21:28: "An obedient man shall speak of victory."

Reply OBJ 1: Christ received a command from the Father to suffer. For it is written (John 10:18): "I have power to lay down My life, and I have power to take it up again: (and) this commandment have I received of My Father" - namely, of laying down His life and of resuming it again. "From which," as Chrysostom says (Hom. 59 in Joannis), it is not to be understood "that at first He awaited the command, and that He had need to be told, but He showed the proceeding to be a voluntary one, and destroyed suspicion of opposition" to the Father. Yet because the Old Law was ended by Christ's death, according to His dying words, "It is consummated" (John 19:30), it may be understood that **by His suffering He fulfilled all the precepts of the Old Law**.

He fulfilled those of the **moral order** which are founded on the precepts of charity, inasmuch as He suffered both out of love of the Father, according to

John 14:31: "That the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father hath given Me commandment, so do I: arise, let us go hence" - namely, to the place of His Passion: and out of love of His neighbor, according to Galatians 2:20: "He loved me, and delivered Himself up for me."

Christ likewise by His Passion **fulfilled the ceremonial precepts of the Law**, which are chiefly ordained for sacrifices and oblations, in so far as all the ancient sacrifices were figures of that true sacrifice which the dying Christ offered for us. Hence it is written (Colossians 2:16,17): "Let no man judge you in meat or drink, or in respect of a festival day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the body is Christ's," for the reason that Christ is compared to them as a body is to a shadow.

Christ also by His Passion fulfilled **the judicial precepts of the Law**, which are chiefly ordained for making compensation to them who have suffered wrong, since, as is written Psalm 69:4: He "paid that which" He "took not away," suffering Himself to be fastened to a tree on account of the apple which man had plucked from the tree against God's command.

Reply OBJ 2: Although obedience implies necessity with regard to the thing commanded, nevertheless it implies **free-will** with regard to the fulfilling of the precept. And, indeed, such was Christ's obedience, for, although His Passion and death, considered in themselves, were repugnant to the natural will, yet Christ resolved to fulfill God's will with respect to the same, according to Psalm 40:8: "That I should do Thy will: O my God, I have desired it." Hence He said (Matthew 26:42): "If this chalice may not pass away, but I must drink it, Thy will be done."

Reply OBJ 3: For the same reason Christ suffered out of charity and out of obedience; because He fulfilled even the precepts of charity out of obedience only; and was obedient, out of love, to the Father's command.

Charity was a mark of Christ's ministry – **sacrifice** began at the Incarnation and continued through every stage of His life - **satisfaction** occurred not only at the Passion, but was being accomplished at every point. All three serve within Christ's obedience out of charity and obedience, but also is the supreme embodiment of them. The **Lamb** is the embodiment of them all.

- q. 48, a. 4; q. 49, a. 2: here St. Thomas discusses the **price** of our salvation, and the injustice due the **devil**!

On the contrary, It is written (1 Peter 1:18): "You were not redeemed with corruptible things as gold or silver from your vain conversation of the tradition

of your fathers: but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb unspotted and undefiled." And (Galatians 3:13): "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." Now He is said to be a curse for us inasmuch as He suffered upon the tree, as stated above (q. 46, a. 4). Therefore He did redeem us by His Passion.

I answer that, Man was held captive on account of sin in two ways: first of all, by **the bondage of sin**, because (John 8:34): "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin"; and (2 Peter 2:19): "By whom a man is overcome, of the same also he is the slave." Since, then, the devil had overcome man by inducing him to sin, man was subject to the devil's bondage. Secondly, as to **the debt of punishment**, to the payment of which man was held fast by God's justice: and this, too, is a kind of bondage, since it savors of bondage for a man to suffer what he does not wish, just as it is the free man's condition to apply himself to what he wills.

Since, then, Christ's Passion was a **sufficient and a superabundant atonement** for the sin and the debt of the human race, it was as a price at the cost of which we were freed from both obligations. For the atonement by which one satisfies for self or another is called the price, by which he ransoms himself or someone else from sin and its penalty, according to Daniel 4:24: "Redeem thou thy sins with alms." Now Christ made satisfaction, not by giving money or anything of the sort, but by bestowing what was of greatest price - Himself - for us. And therefore Christ's Passion is called our redemption. [q. 48, a. 4]

On the contrary, our Lord said (John 12:31), when His Passion was drawing nigh: "Now shall the prince of this world be cast out; and I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to Myself." Now He was lifted up from the earth by His Passion on the cross. Therefore by His Passion the devil was deprived of his power over man.

I answer that, There are three things to be considered regarding the power which the devil exercised over men previous to Christ's Passion. The first is on **man's own part**, who by his sin deserved to be delivered over to the devil's power, and was overcome by his tempting. Another point is **on God's part**, whom man had offended by sinning, and who with justice left man under the devil's power. The third is on **the devil's part**, who out of his most wicked will hindered man from securing his salvation.

As to the first point, by Christ's Passion man was delivered from the devil's power, in so far as the Passion is the cause of the forgiveness of sins, as stated above (A1).

As to the second, it must be said that Christ's Passion freed us from the devil's power, inasmuch as it reconciled us with God, as shall be shown later (A4).

But as to the third, Christ's Passion delivered us from the devil, inasmuch as in Christ's Passion he exceeded the limit of power assigned him by God, by conspiring to bring about Christ's death, Who, being sinless, did not deserve to die. Hence Augustine says (De Trinitate xiii,14): "The devil was vanquished by Christ's justice: because, while discovering in Him nothing deserving of death, nevertheless he slew Him. And it is certainly just that the debtors whom he held captive should be set at liberty since they believed in Him whom the devil slew, though He was no debtor." [q. 49, a. 2].

The 'price' of our deliverance was: perfect charity, innocence, and obedience. So much of **Pars III** of St. Thomas are based on his biblical studies. Two of the more important facts which the *summa* has intensified are the effect, and the precise differentiatio between the **act of offering** and the condition in **being a sacrifice**, the slain Lamb of God.

Conclusion

[1] **The Incorporation of *pastor, ostium, agnus*** : St Thomas has provided more teaching on the **Paschal Lamb** in his *Summa* than in his *Commentaries* on Scripture. His effort seems to have been to define more precisely how the doctrines of faith are solidly based in Scripture. He brings out, for example, the relation between Christ's Nativity and His Mission, and the special role of **loving obedience** in the nature of the Lamb.

As for his *Commentaries*, in his effort to present the literal sense, the Angelic Doctor carefully analyzes the words of the human author. In the *Summa*, the style is more theological and even philosophical in its terminology to clarify questions that arise through the Scriptures.

[2] **The relation between Christ and the word describing His Mission**: the Shepherd as unifier influences the Saint's views on the Nativity – the Shepherd is used to consider the role of charity and how Christ fulfilled His Mission of laying down His life as a total Immolation, out of loving obedience. The teaching clarifies the five categories of the Lamb:

- sacrifice: solidly based in God's Word;

- purity, innocence: overcome the Evil One;
- gentleness: leads to discussions on Christ's willingness, obedience to the Father's will;
- use: for apparel, defense against the elements- and for nourishment for the journey of life;
- consummate quality, effect: all wrapped up in the notion of sacrifice and universal redemption..

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