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Abstract: The Gospel of John is traditionally regarded as very theological and spiritual because of the mystical and theological language used by the author. Since the middle of this century, however, we see a new trend emerging in Johannine studies which accepts a historical tradition underlying the Fourth Gospel. The Gospel of John is frequently interpreted by scholars as a response to Hellenistic Culture, to Gnosticism, and to the expulsion of the Jewish Christians from the synagogues. However, very recently, some have started to read the . Gospel of John from a new perspective, viz., as responding to the Christians who, because of their faith in Jesus, faced significant political challenges from the Romans. Hence, to present Jesus as "politically unconcerned" in the context of the Johannine community, is to present his teaching as "abstract and historically ineffective." In the words of Cassidy, "in depicting Jesus' identity and mission within his Gospel, the evangelist John was concerned to present elements and themes that were especially significant for Christian readers facing Roman imperial claims and for any who faced Ro- man persecution." The author places these words at the outset of this study as an orientation for the analysis is necessary.

Keywords: Johannine community, Johannine studies, Parable of the Good Shepherd

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The Good Shepherd (Jn 10)
A Political Perspective

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The Gospel of John is traditionally regarded as very theological and spiritual because of the mystical and theological language used by the author. Since the middle of this century, however, we see a new trend emerging in Johannine studies which accepts a historical tradition underlying the Fourth Gospel.[1] The Gospel of John is frequently interpreted by scholars as a response to Hellenistic Culture, to Gnosticism, and to the expulsion of the Jewish Christians from the synagogues.[2] However, very recently, some have started to read the Gospel of John from a new perspective, viz., as responding to the Christians who, because of their faith in Jesus, faced significant political challenges from the Romans. Hence, to present Jesus as "politically unconcerned" in the context of the Johannine community, is to present his teaching as "abstract and historically ineffective."[3] In the words of Cassidy, "in depicting Jesus' identity and mission within his Gospel, the evangelist John was concerned to present elements and themes that were especially significant for Christian readers facing Roman imperial claims and for any who faced Roman persecution."[4] I place these words at the outset of this study as an orientation for the analysis that follows.

The pericope on the Good Shepherd (Jn 10) is bound up with many difficulties of interpretation. There are differing views concerning the literary context, literary type, structure, unity and authenticity of this pericope.[5] What is the theological focus of the discourse on the Good Shepherd? There are different opinions amoung scholars. The pericope raises the question of true and false claims of messiahship.[6] Jn 10 focuses on Jesus' eschatological power over his own death and that of his disciples.[7] Some interpret the passage in an ecclesial sense with Jesus the Shepherd creating a new community over against the Jewish Community.[8] Jesus' actions and words bring the Tabernacle themes — water, light, and worship of one God — to a climax in our pericope when Jesus solemnly proclaims himself as the Good Shepherd, the one true God.[9] We begin our analysis by asking the following questions concerning the 'world' behind the text, the 'world' in the text and the 'world' in front of the text:[10]

1. What is the political background of the Johannine Community? How does the text respond to this situation?

2. What is the immediate literary context within which the evangelist narrates this discourse? How does this

particular context reveal its profound meaning?

3. What is our Indian context within which we read this passage? What are its challenges for us today?

1. The Johannine Community: Its Political Background

Before going into the political background which is presupposed by the Gospel of John, we should know the date and the place of composition of this text. Firstly, where was it written? Even if there are disagreements concerning the place (Syria, Judea, or Egypt),[11] it cannot be anywhere outside the territories of the Roman empire.[12] This would imply that John represents a community within the geographical and political context of Roman colonialism. The community of John was affected by the policies and actions of the Roman emperors. Secondly, when was it written? I accept the traditional view that the Gospel was written after 70 CE and before 110 CE.[13] This would suggest that at least some of the last editions of the Gospel were written during the reigns of the Roman emperors Domitian (81-96 CE) and Trajan (98-117 CE). It is reasonable to conclude that both John and his community (the first readers of the Gospel) had a common experience of Roman imperialism and religious persecution.[14]

Roman colonialism meant not only economic exploitation,[15] but also political oppression of the people who believed in the reign of God proclaimed by Jesus Christ. After the destruction of the city of Jerusalem and of the Temple, the Jewish Community struggled to maintain its traditions without the Temple. How did Judaism respond to this religious and political problem? It held on to the Law. By way of illustration let us take the Second Book of Baruch. The author takes the symbols of the feast of Tabernacles and describes the problems faced by the Jewish community because of the loss of the Holy City and of the Temple in the form of a dialogue in the following words:

> *The problem*: "For the shepherds of Israel have perished, and the lamps which gave light are extinguished, and the fountains from which we used to drink have withheld their streams. Now we have been left in the darkness and in the thick forest and in the aridness of the desert." *The response given by Baruch:* "Shepherds and lanterns and fountains came from the Law, and when we go away, the Law will abide. If you, therefore, look upon the Law and are intent upon wisdom, then the lamp will not be wanting and the shepherds will not give way and the fountain will not dry up." (2 Baruch 77,11.13-16).[16]

How does John respond to the same problem? While the Jews looked at the Law, the Johannine Community looks at Jesus as the living water for any one who thirsts (7,37), as the light of the world (8,12; 9,5), and as the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep (10,14-15). Now we shall take a closer look at the text to make this point more intelligible.

2. The Good Shepherd: Jesus' Claim and Its Significance

The Good Shepherd Passage is placed in the literary context of the Jew-

ish feasts. Jn 5,1 introduces the common theme for chapters 5-10, "the feasts of the Jews." The evangelist takes the four major feasts of the Jews: the Sabbath (Jn 5,9), the Passover (Jn 6,4), the Tabernacles (Jn 7,2) and the Dedication (Jn 10,22) and, situating the ministry of Jesus within the setting of these feasts, the author develops a new Christology for the Community. The presence of the living God, once celebrated in these feasts, now comes to its fullness in the Person of Jesus Christ.[17]

What is the immediate literary context within which the evangelist narrates the discourse on the Good Shepherd? Jn 10, 1-21 is situated in the temporal setting of the feast of the Tabernacles, which is mentioned in Jn 7,2.[18] There is no indication of a change in time until Jn 10,22. However, there are many who would take the feast of Dedication as the literary context of Jn 10,1-21.[19] I am of the opinion that the discourse on the Good Shepherd looks both backward and forward since it is the last pericope in this section. I would therefore agree with Brown when he says that this passage on the Good Shepherd "does terminate the discourses at the feast of the Tabernacles and introduce the discourse at Dedication."[20]

The literary context of the feast of the Tabernacles does reveal the profound meaning of the discourse on the Good Shepherd. Josephus informs us that this feast was "by far the greatest and most sacred for the Hebrews."[21] The evangelist, then, places this discourse at an auspicious moment in the life of the people. We need to have some knowledge of the celebration of the Tabernacles in order to understand the meaning of this discourse and its significance for its first listeners.[22] The celebration of the feast of the Tabernacles lasted for a week and it consisted mainly of three rituals: i. the water libation ceremony, ii. the mounting of the light, and iii. the confession of faith in Yahweh as the true God.[23]

The words of Jesus have a special meaning in the context of these three rituals:

The water libation ceremony was characterized by a solemn procession every day to the pool of Siloam.[24] People collected water from the pool and brought it to the temple through the water-gate. This water was used for the ritual washings. This ceremony was associated with the eschatological hope that the Messiah would come and perfect the Mosaic mediation of the water which is the Torah. It is in this context of the water ceremony that we have the solemn proclamation of Jesus that he is himself the source of living water in Jn 7,37: "On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and proclaimed, 'If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink.'"[25]

The light ceremony consists in the illumination of the women's court in the Temple. Thus the Temple becomes the light of all Jerusalem. It is also associated with the eschatological hope of the return of the pillar of fire which guided the people of Israel in the Exodus.[26] It is at this solemn moment that Jesus reveals himself as the light of the world in 8,12: "Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'I am the light of the world; the one who follows me will not walk in

darkness, but will have the light of life.'"

The recognition of Yahweh as the true God is the third aspect of the celebration of the feast of the Tabernacles. The priests recall the apostasy of former generations, which is symbolized by their action of moving toward the rising sun in the east; and then, turning away from it, they look back to the Holy of Holies and profess their faith in the *one* true God, Yahweh.[27] This emphatic denial of sun-worship is clearly expressed in the *Mishnah*, *Sukkah*, v. 4: "Our fathers when they were in this place turned with their backs towards the temple of the Lord and their faces towards the east, and they worshipped the sun towards the east; but as for us, our eyes are turned towards the Lord."[28] In this context, Jesus reveals himself as the one true God, the messianic Good Shepherd, who freely lays down his life for his sheep (Jn 10, 14-15).

Here I limit my attention to Jesus' proclamation of himself as the Good Shepherd. My attempt is to demonstrate that, in doing so, Jesus responded not only to the traditions and beliefs of the religious leaders of Jerusalem but also to the policies and practices of the political leaders of his time, namely, the Romans. Hence the proclamation of Jesus as the Good Shepherd is both a religious blasphemy for the Jews *and* a political threat to the Romans.

2.1. Jesus Is the Good Shepherd: A Religious Blasphemy

After the proclamation of Jesus as the Good Shepherd (Jn 10,1-16), the evangelist describes the confusion of the crowd in vv. 19-20: "There was again a division among the Jews because of these words. Many of them said, 'He has a demon, and he is mad; why listen to him?'" In the narrative that follows, the Jews put a formal question to Jesus in v. 24: "So the Jews gathered round him and said to him, 'How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.'" The dispute concerning the identity of Jesus in the light of the Tabernacle themes reveals that the declarations of Jesus led the Jews to the right conclusion, namely, that Jesus in some way claimed "equality with God." This claim is interpreted by the Jews as a religious blasphemy in v. 33: "The Jews answered him, 'it is not for a good work that we stone you but for blasphemy; because you, being a man, make yourself God.'"

Neyrey has seen a "forensic proceeding" in the accusation of the Jews and the defence of Jesus in Jn 10.[29] In Jesus' apology, he makes use of Ps 82 to defend himself (vv. 34-35). What is the meaning and function of Ps 82 in relation to the accusation made by the Jews? Or how does Ps 82 defend Jesus' claim to be the Good Shepherd and thus be equal to God?

When we read Ps 82 the questions that are pertinent at this moment are the following: i. Who are the 'gods' referred to, and judged, in the Psalm? ii. What is its significance, in our context, in Jn 10? With regard to the first question, there are differing views about the gods being divine or human. We have very ancient traditions interpreting the gods as *human* judges and rulers based on the references in Exodus 21, 6; 22,8 and 1

Sam 2,25.[30] The *Targum Onqelos* also translates gods *(ʾĕlohîm)* as judges *(dînāyē')* in the above mentioned texts.[31] According to the traditions of ancient West Asia (Near East), there are gods who are patrons of nations and are responsible for the kings, judges and officials of their respective nations. They are also called the angels of the nations. Thus a kind of national guardian angels may be suggested by this reference to the gods.[32] The *Peshitta* translates both 'the divine council' and 'in the midst of the gods' (in v. 1) as 'the assembly of angels' and 'in the midst of the angels,' respectively.[33] The human rulers are expected to fulfill the will of their gods or guardian angels. Therefore God's judgment on unjust gods/ angels has its parallel in His judgment on unjust human leaders.[34]

What does Jesus refer to when he cites v. 6 of Ps 82 in Jn 10, 34-38?

> Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your law, 'I said, you are gods'? If he called them gods to whom the word of God came (and Scripture cannot be broken), do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'? If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father."

From the text, it is clear that for Jesus the "gods" are those who receive the word of God (v. 35). They are the Patriarchs of Israel who received the theophanies, the leaders like Moses (Ex 3), the judges (Josh 1; Judg 1), the kings (1 Sam 16) and the prophets (Jer 1,2) of the people of Israel.[35] Hence the leaders of the people of Israel, to whom the word of God came, are called gods or sons of God. They have been chosen and anointed by God. This is accepted in the Jewish tradition. Thus the three aspects of the accusation against Jesus, namely, i. Can Jesus be called god or the son of God?[36]; ii. Does Jesus make himself equal to God? [37]; and iii. In what sense is Jesus a son of God? are all answered by the citation of Ps 82. Neyrey rightly points this out when he affirms, "if Scripture was not in error calling mortals 'gods' (Ps 82,6), then neither is there any error in calling the one whom God consecrated and sent into the world 'the Son of God' (10, 35-36)."[38] Jesus continues his argument by saying that he has been *consecrated* and *sent* by the Father, viz., God (v. 36). The divine consecration of Jesus would imply that he is totally set apart for the *works* of God. Here we have in the text an example of a typical Johannine irony.[39] When Jesus uses the term *gods* two layers of meaning are implied. On the first level, Jesus is the son of God like the other leaders of the people of Israel. Jesus however claims something more than what is meant at the first level. The intimate union between the Father and Jesus makes him unique: the "Father is in me and I am in the Father" (10,38). Thus, on the second level, Jesus is the Son of God, the unique revelation of the pre-existent Logos. Therefore in the manner of the forensic proceeding, Jesus uses this psalm as an "apologetic response" to defend himself as the Son of God.[40]

The use of Ps 82 gives us a further clue to understand the meaning and implication of the text.[41] Ps 82 is addressed mainly to the judges or rulers. The gods are in the place of God who leads the people. The Jewish state being theocratic, the *rulers* of the people of Israel are in the place of Yahweh who favours the poor and the oppressed, and they are expected to do the same. There are many who consider Psalm 82 as a social critique of the rulers in the 8th century BCE.[42] In Ps 82 the rulers (gods) are judged by Almighty God for their oppression of the weak and the orphans and for their indifference towards human suffering (vv. 3-4). The gods are accused of walking in darkness (v. 5). The maltreatment of the poor and the downtrodden, the lowly and the powerless, is a matter of life and death to the gods. In other words the gods are judged because they are not doing the will of God. Injustice shakes the very foundations of the earth (v. 5) and the "world threatens to fall apart into chaos once more."[43] God's radical and universal concern for *justice* is very conspicuous in this psalm, which articulates God's will. In contrast to the rulers or the gods who are judged by God in Ps 82, Jesus, throughout the Gospel, goes on affirming that he does the will of his Father,[44] and thus reveals his identity as the true Son of God.

Is the claim of Jesus in chapters 7-10, culminating in the Good Shepherd discourse merely religious blasphemy? The discourse is preceded by the major sign of healing the blind man (9,1-41) and is followed by the unsurpassed sign of bringing Lazarus back to life (11, 1-44). In Jn 11 Jesus proves and confirms his claim by giving life to the dead man, an activity of God. Power over death is something that pertains only to the realm of the divine. As a consequence of Jesus' action and words many believed in him (11,45). This challenges the Romans, and so the Jews are afraid of being destroyed by them. We have the internal evidence for this in Jn 11, 47-48: "So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council, and said, 'What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. If we let him go on thus, every one will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation.'" Grundmann thinks that v. 48 expresses this "political anxiety" and it reaches its climax in the decisive suggestion made by Caiaphas the high priest in v. 50: "You do not understand that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish."[45] According to Jn 11, 47-53, one of the reasons which hastens their decision to kill Jesus is the fear of the intervention of the Romans. Why do the Jews fear this destructive intervention of the Romans? At least in this passage, the Jews consider Jesus as a revolutionary who could provoke the Romans. "In his own mind Caiaphas was giving voice to a common-sense maxim of political expediency. He was anxious to get rid of Jesus lest, as one more in a series of revolutionaries, this troublemaker provoke the Romans to action against the Jews."[46]

2.2. Jesus Is the Good Shepherd: A Political Threat

The image of 'shepherd' was a figure of speech common in ancient West

Asia. It was used to designate both the gods and the kings. In the Babylonian creation epic, Marduk was referred to as a faithful shepherd.[47] Also in the biblical tradition, both God and the national leaders are called shepherds. This image is used in the Exodus event to depict God as the loyal shepherd leading the people to safe pastures (Ex 15, 13.17). At the time of the Prophets, it is a "well-established and regular portrait for the ruling nobility."[48] In the book of Jeremiah, the prophet uses the same figure of speech to refer to both the religious and the political leaders.[49] Jer 6,3 says, "Shepherds with their flocks shall come against her; they shall pitch their tents around her, they shall pasture, each in his place." Here shepherds are the commanders of the enemy from the north, and the flocks are their armies.[50] In Jer 23, 1-8, the 'false shepherds' refer not only to the kings but also to the civil and spiritual leaders.[51] The Persian king Cyrus is anointed as God's servant and chosen as his shepherd to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple (Isa 44,28). In Ezk 34 the author talks about the true and false shepherds. Ezekiel uses the wicked shepherd theme to illustrate selfish and irresponsible leadership (vv. 2-4), and he criticizes leadership based on domination and oppression (v. 4). Therefore the image of the 'shepherd' can depict God, the kings, and the political and the spiritual leaders. In other words, 'shepherd' was a common epithet for royalty and divinity.[52]

Other titles attributed to Jesus in the Gospel, namely, 'saviour of the world,' 'Lord' and 'Lord and God' are also titles associated with the imperial cults.[53] Julius Caesar was the first Roman emperor to be acclaimed as 'saviour'. But later on this title was arrogated by other emperors like Tiberius, Claudius, Nero, Vespasian, Titus, Trajan and Hadrian.[54] Emperor Nero was heralded as 'saviour of the world' in the Eastern Provinces.[55] Since Nero's reign, a supra-human status as 'lord' was attributed to the emperors. We have pottery fragments which testify to the use of the title, 'lord' for Vespasian and Domitian.[56] Concerning the third title, 'Lord and God,' Domitian was the only emperor who demanded and received this supra-human status. The historian Suetonius in his work, *Lives of the Caesars*, writes that Domitian himself arrogated the title 'lord and god' (*Dominus et Deus*) to himself in a formal decree.[57] Therefore divine status or supra-human status was given, and sacrifices were offered, to the living emperors.[58] The emperor Trajan, even while living, was already numbered among the gods.[59]

Roman imperialism exercised its authority through the religious leaders in Judea. Hence in the words of S. Rayan, "to raise a radical religious question was to raise a radical political question; to challenge the Jewish church-state and set it aside amounted to challenging Rome and setting it aside."[60] Jesus making himself equal to God would imply that he is placing himself in opposition to the Roman emperors who arrogated such divine status to themselves. In fact Christians were asked to deny the divinity of Jesus and to worship Roman gods and to offer wine and incense to the emperor's statue. They were accused of chanting

verses "in honour of Christ as if to a god" (*Pliny's Letter to Trajan*, X. 96).[61]

The proclamation of Jesus as the Good Shepherd is preceded by the healing of the man born blind (Jn 9). As we read on, we realize that the man who is healed is excommunicated from the Jewish religious community because of his faith in Jesus (Jn 9,34). But Jesus calls him to be a member of his new community (v. 35). According to Marsh, this action of Jesus answers the following questions of the readers of the Gospel: "Who is the true leader and ruler of the true people of God? Who has the proper authority to include or exclude a man from the society of God's chosen people?"[62] The discourse on the Good Shepherd confirms this interpretation, viz., the true shepherd of the Johannine community is not the Roman emperor, but Jesus.

In Jn 10,1 the evangelist starts with the description of the false shepherd whom Jesus calls a 'thief' (*kleptēs*)[63] and a 'robber' (*lēistēs*).[64] Who are the 'thieves' and the 'robbers' referred to in the discourse? There are different views on the targets of Jesus' remarks. Brown holds the view that the 'thief' and the 'robber' refer to the Pharisees and the Sadducees.[65] According to Barrett, they are the messianic pretenders.[66] Bultmann is of the opinion that they refer to the Jewish authorities, to the false teachers who are mentioned in the First Letter of John, and to the Pseudo-Saviours of the Hellenistic world.[67] In my opinion, the 'thief' and the 'robber' are distinguished from Jesus the Good Shepherd in terms of their means of entry: entrance through the door versus climbing over the fence (v. 1); in terms of their orientation or purpose: to give life in abundance versus to steal, kill and destroy (v. 10); in terms of their actions: laying down one's life versus leaving the sheep and fleeing (vv. 11-12); and in terms of their relationship: knowing the sheep versus being strangers (v. 14). In short, the Good Shepherd exercises his authority for the welfare of the sheep, while the 'thieves' and 'robbers' think of their own profit and security.

The Romans controlled the social practices and the life-style of the people by their military power and political strength. Now let us view them in the light of the above criteria: i. The entrance: the Romans had not entered through the door, but had invaded these provinces by force and military power. Exploitation and violence were central to Roman imperialism. Roman rule was very cruel as it kept the people in fear and submission by indulging in large-scale massacres.[68] ii. The purpose: the Roman rulers were actively involved in destroying the people, their culture, religion and way of life, rather than in promoting their life and welfare. iii. The action: they were not laying down their life for the people, but exploiting them economically, oppressing them politically, and alienating them religiously.[69] Thus the teaching and action of the Good Shepherd contradicted their usual practice of self-enrichment at the cost of the people who were in their colonies. iv. The relationship: they did not know the people, but were strangers. The quintessential principle of the Roman empire can be summarized in the following statements: a. "people were

to be subjugated and controlled by force," even by using violence; b. "the strong and the powerful should use their resources to further enrich themselves."[70] This Roman policy was radically questioned by Jesus in the discourse on the Good Shepherd. This religious and political dimension of the discourse was perceived by the Jews as a challenge to the Romans and thus to their own existence (Jn 11,48). Hence it is reasonable to conclude that Jesus' proclamation of himself as the Good Shepherd was a political threat to Roman imperialism.

3. Jesus, the Good Shepherd: Implications for India

Jesus made this proclamation: "I am the Good Shepherd... I lay down my life for the sheep" (Jn 10,14-15), in a particular context and to a particular group. John has presented this with a specific reference to the feast of the Tabernacles, in response to the concrete problems of the Johannine Community facing religious alienation from Judaism and political domination by the Roman rulers. However, its application and relevance are not limited to that particular context in history.

Marsh is right when he says that the symbol of Jesus as the Good Shepherd "originally meant far more than the usual stained-glass picture of a shepherd with a sheep in his arms."[71] The deep concern for justice in human society is an integral character of the messianic shepherd as it is presented in Isa 43,11-16. Unfortunately, modern readers have not perceived the connection of the shepherd with the office of royal power and political authority. I do not favour the idea of Jesus as a political revolutionary, viz., that the revolution brought by Jesus through the image of the Good Shepherd is primarily a political one. What I wish to point out is that the discourse on the Good Shepherd has significant political implications.

What does the discourse on the Good Shepherd convey to us, the people of India, who have just celebrated the Golden Jubilee of our Independence from British Colonialism? What are its challenges and implications for us? During the last 50 years of Independence, most of our 'shepherds' have shown the narrowness of their vision, manifested their selfishness in actions, confirmed their greed for power, and proved their incompetence in management. Our hearts have been hardened by the shocking news of corruption and of various kinds of scams from top to bottom.[72] The political stance of Jesus revealed in the discourse on the Good Shepherd radically challenges this corrupt political structure. We, Indians, can read the discourse on the Good Shepherd as a political critique of the leaders of 'free' India. According to J. Desrochers politics in India has become the "most fertile ground for money-grabbing, corruption, exploitation, and even criminal activities."[73] After a lengthy analysis, A. Kohli concludes that "the roots of India's growing problems of governability are more political than socio-economic; that is, they are located mainly in India's political structure."[74] Against this political background, the discourse on the Good Shepherd raises the following questions: How do our leaders gain politi-

cal power? What are their means of entry into the political field? Do they *enter through the door* or *climb in by* other means? The absence of a Good Shepherd in our country is proved by the political instability and the increasing use of force and violence in the political system. The legitimate demands of the poor have been mostly rejected by the government in order to cater to the interests of the rich and powerful. Our political system is often manipulated by the ruling party and their supporters for their own benefit.[75] Do our leaders know our people? Unless they make their own the griefs and the anxieties of our suffering people, they will remain strangers to the majority of our people. Unfortunately, we are constrained by a system which values profit more than people. Most of our leaders think of the people in terms of what profit they can make for themselves. Are they not identifying with the 'thieves' and 'robbers' against whom Jesus raised his voice?

Jesus' discourse on the Good Shepherd empowered the Johannine community to make the right option for Jesus at the time of the persecution by the Romans. Today we have no foreign rulers to exploit us. In our context the 'thieves' and 'robbers' represent our corrupt political leaders. Unlike the Good Shepherd who protects and keeps the flock together, they drive the people helter-skelter and mislead them into the wrong and perilous paths of casteism, religious fanaticism and linguistic communalism. Jesus challenges us to recognize and to promote committed and competent political leaders who stand by principles. The discourse on the Good Shepherd inspires us to cleanse the Indian politics of corruption and invites us to work towards a true political democracy. This discourse also points to a radical and universal concern for life, freedom and justice. This would imply that we are called, in our context, to defend the earth from destruction; to protect children and the unborn; to respect women as life-giving partners; and to empower the poor and the downtrodden to shape their lives freely. In other words, the life-giving and self-sacrificing attitude of the Good Shepherd demands from us a permanent and ongoing revolution from within, which will enable us to foster the growth and well-being of all living beings.

Notes

1. The historical tradition underlying the Fourth Gospel is similar to that of the Synoptic Gospels. See R. E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John, 2 vols.*, New York: Doubleday, 1966, vol. 1, pp. xxi-xxiii.; M. J. Robinson, "Recent Research in the Fourth Gospel," *JBL* 78 (1959), pp. 242-252; and A. M. Hunter, "Recent Trends in Johannine Studies," *ET* 71 (1959-60), pp. 164-167 and 219-222.
2. See the classical commentaries like Brown, *John*; R. Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971; C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953; and F. J. Moloney, *Belief in the Word*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993.
3. S. Rayan makes this comment about Jesus' attitude and action in general. See "Jesus and Imperialism," in S. Kappen, ed., *Jesus Today*, Trivandrum: Ecumenical Press, 1985, p. 112.

4. R. J. Cassidy. *John's Gospel in New Perspective*, New York: Orbis Books, 1992, p.1
5. The full treatment of these difficulties lies beyond the scope of this paper. For a detailed exposition of the problems, see J. Quasten, "The Parable of the Good Shepherd: John 10,1-21," *CBQ* 10 (1948), pp. 1-12 and 151-169.
6. P. W. Meyer, "A Note on John 10, 1-18," *JBL* 75 (1956), pp. 232-235.
7. J. H. Neyrey, *An Ideology of Revolt: John's Christology in Social-Science Perspective*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988, pp. 59-80.
8. I. de la Potterie, "Le Bon Pasteur," in *Populus Dei: Studi in Onore del Cardinale Alfredo Ottaviani per il Cinquantesimo del Sacerdozio, 19 Marzo, 1966, 2 vols.*, Rome: LAS, 1969, vol. 2, pp. 936-43.
9. F. J. Moloney, *Reading John: Introducing the Johannine Gospel and Letters*, Melbourne: Dove, Harper Collins Publishers, 1995, pp. 33-35.
10. For the method adopted here, see S. Schneiders, *Revelatory Text*, New York: Harper San Francisco, 1991, and G. Soares-Prabhu, "Interpreting the Bible in India Today," *The Way, Supplement* 72 (1991), pp. 70-80.
11. See Brown, *John*, pp. ciii-civ.
12. Cassidy, *John's Gospel in New Perspective*, pp. 3-5.
13. For the reasons, see Brown, *John*, pp. lxxx-lxxxvi.
14. Cassidy, *John's Gospel in New Perspective*, p. 4.
15. For the economic situation of the people in Palestine at the time of Jesus, see S. Safrai and M. Stern, *The Jewish People in the First Century, 2 vols.*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974-76, and F. C. Grant, *The Economic Background of the Gospels*, London: Oxford University Press, 1926.
16. For the text, see the translation by A. J. F. Klijn, "2 Baruch," in J. H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, 2 vols.*, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1983, vol. 1, p. 647.
17. For a more detailed analysis of these chapters from this point of view, see F. J. Moloney, *Signs and Shadows: Reading John 5-12*, Minneapolis: Fortress press, 1995.
18. For those who look at this passage in this light, see Moloney, *Reading John: Introducing the Johannine Gospel and Letters*, pp. 29-37, and R. H. Lightfoot, *St John's Gospel: A Commentary*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956, pp. 199-201.
19. For those who consider Jn 10 and Jn 11 as one integral unit set temporally at or near the feast of Dedication, see C. H. Talbert, *Reading John: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Fourth Gospel and the Johannine Epistles*, New York: Crossroad, 1992, pp. 164-65, and R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John, 2 vols.*, New York: Crossroad, 1968, vol. 2, p. 238.
20. Brown, *John*, p. 388.
21. My translation of Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, 8.4.1. #100.
22. For a detailed description and explanation of the feast of the Tabernacles and its ceremonies, see A. Guilding, *The Fourth Gospel and Jewish Worship*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960, pp. 92-98 and G. W. MacRae, "The Meaning and Evolution of the Feast of Tabernacles," *CBQ* 22 (1960), pp. 251-276.
23. Moloney, *Reading John: Introducing the Johannine Gospel and Letters*, p. 33.
24. See Brown, *John*, pp. 326-327.
25. In all the biblical references, we follow mainly the RSV translation.
26. Moloney, *Reading John: Introducing the Johannine Gospel and Letters*, p. 33.

27. *Ibid.*
28. Quoted in A. Guilding, *The Fourth Gospel and Jewish Worship*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960, p. 93 n.1.
29. J. H. Neyrey, "'I said: You are gods': Psalm 82:6 and John 10," *JBL* 108:4 (1989), pp. 649-53.
30. For this understanding of the gods, see C. H. Gordon, "'*Elohîm*' in Its Reputed Meaning of Rulers, Judges," *JBL* 54 (1935), pp. 139-44.
31. *The Targum Onqelos to Exodus*, tr. by B. Grossfeld, Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1988.
32. W. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament, 2 vols.* tr. by J. A. Baker, London: SCM Press, 1967, vol. 2, pp. 194 and 199.
33. *The Syriac Bible*, United Bible Societies, 1979.
34. For a detailed analysis of this psalm, see M. E. Tate, *Psalms 51-100, Word Biblical Commentary Series*, Dallas: Word Books, 1990, pp. 328-342.
35. B. F. Westcott, *Gospel of John*, p. 70 and A. T. Hanson, "John's Citation of Psalm LXXXII: John X. 33-36," *NTS* 11 (1965-66), 158-62.
36. In Ps 82, these two terms refer to the same people, see v. 6.
37. This accusation is made against Jesus elsewhere in the Gospel of John, for example, in 5,18; 10,33; 19,7 and 19,12. It is more systematically refuted by Jesus in Jn 5,19-29.
38. Neyrey, "'I said: You are Gods': Psalm 82,6 and John 10," p. 653.
39. For Johannine irony, see P. Duke, *Irony in the Fourth Gospel*, Atlanta: John Knox, 1985.
40. Neyrey, "'I said: You are Gods': Psalm 82,6 and John 10," p. 653. However, some hold a different view, for example, A. Loisy considers the use of Ps 82 as 'a play on words,' see *Le quatrième Évangile*, Paris: Emil Nourny, 1921, p. 335; similarly Bultmann also denies that Ps 82 in any way responds to the charges (*John*, p. 389).
41. For a short survey of the research done on the interpretation of Ps 82, 6-7 in relation to Jn 10, 34-36, see A. T: Hanson, "John's Citation of Psalm LXXXII Reconsidered," *NTS* 13 (1966-67), pp. 363-367.
42. For this interpretation, see H. Niehr, "Götter oder Menschen – eine falsche Alternative: Bemerkungen zu Ps 82," *ZAW* 99 (1987), pp. 94-98.
43. P. D. Miller, "When the Gods Meet: Ps 82 and the Issue of Justice," *Journal for Preachers* 9 (1986), pp. 2-5.
44. For example, Jn 4,34; 5,30; 10, 37, etc.
45. Does the voice of the narrator in vv. 51-53, which interprets the statement of the high priest as prophetic, hide the political character of the event? W. Grundmann provides a comprehensive treatment of the issue in question. See "The Decision of the Supreme Court to Put Jesus to Death (John 11: 47-57) in its Context: Tradition and Redaction in the Gospel of John," in E. Bammel and C.F.D. Moule, eds., *Jesus and the Politics of His Day*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988, pp. 295-318.
46. Brown, *John*, p. 442.
47. See the Ancient Near Eastern Texts (ANET), 69.71.72, quoted in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 5, p. 1188.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 1189.
49. Jer 2,8; 3,15; 10,21; and 25,34-38.
50. K. L. Barker & J. Kohlenberger, *NIV Commentary, 2 vols.*, London, Sydney, Auckland:

Hodder & Stoughton, 1994, vol. 1, p. 1170.

51. See the commentary on Jer 23,1-8, in Barker & Kohlenberger, *NIV Commentary*, p. 1204.
52. For a detailed study of its usage, see J. Jeremias, "*Poimēn*," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, 10 vols.* (1995), vol. 6, pp. 485-502.
53. Cassidy, *John's Gospel in New Perspective*, 13-16.
54. For the documentation, see D. Magie, *De Romanorum Iuris Publici Sacrique Vocabulis Sollemnibus in Graecum Sermonem Conversis*, Leipzig: Teubner, 1905, pp. 67-68, cited by Cassidy, *John's Gospel in New Perspective*, p. 13; see also C. Koester, "The Saviour of the World (Jn 4:42)," *JBL* 109 (1990), p. 667.
55. Cassidy, *John's Gospel in New Perspective*, p. 13.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 14; also cited by A. Deissman, *Light from the Ancient East*, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1965, p. 355.
57. Cited by Cassidy, *John's Gospel in New Perspective*, p.14.
58. *Ibid.*, pp. 10-16.
59. Pliny's attitude towards emperors as it is expressed in his letters is an evidence for such emperor worship. See K. Scott, "The Elder and Younger Pliny on Emperor Worship," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 63 (1932), pp. 156-165.
60. Rayan, "Jesus and Imperialism," p. 105.
61. Quoted in Cassidy, *John's Gospel in New Perspective*, p. 90.
62. J. Marsh, *Saint John*, London: Penguin Books, 1988, p. 394.
63. For the meaning of *kleptēs*, see H. Preisker, "*Kleptēs*," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 3, pp. 754-756.
64. For the use of *lēistēs* in the NT, see K. H. Rengstorf, "*Lēistēs*," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 4, pp. 260-262.
65. Brown, *John*, p. 393.
66. C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John*, London: SPCK, 1991, p. 369.
67. Bultmann, *John*, p. 372.
68. R. J. Cassidy, *Jesus, Politics and Society: A Study of Luke's Gospel*, New York: Orbis Books, 1978, pp. p. 78 and p. 177; see also J. Galtung, *The True Worlds: A Transnational Perspective*, New York: 1980, p. 132, quoted in Rayan, "Jesus and Imperialism," p. 103.
69. For the political situation and the economic life in Palestine at the time of Jesus, see Safrai and Stern, *The Jewish People in the First Century*, pp. 216-419 and 631-700.
70. Cassidy, *Jesus, Politics, and Society: A Study of Luke's Gospel*, pp. 54-55.
71. Marsh, *John*, p. 397.
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75. Desrochers, *Towards a New India*, p. 89