

cat crook!

PARADIGMS: "SHEPHERD" Elliott #1081

This paradigm-metaphor is so rich paganly, Jewishly, Christianly that I could quickly write a four-p. thinksheet on it--but I'll confine myself, as usual, to one p., using the rough-notes format:

1. After you've done "Shepherd," "Sheep," "Flock," and cross-reff. in your 5-vol. INTERPRETER'S DICTIONARY OF THE BIBLE, try the 17pp. in Kittel's THEOL.DICT. OF THE NT, 4.485-502, and its 4p. article on its virtual antonym, *wolf* (pp.308-11).
2. My mother, 87, stayed alive till I could get to her, heard me recite the early part of Ps.23, died on vs.4, and I closed her eyes. That OT *locus classicus* on our metaphor has its NT parallel in Jn.10.
3. The *physical* base is that (shep)herding is to nomadic life what agriculture is to settled, viz. the economic support-base. Furthermore, even in settled life, in the dry summer months the shepherd must wander alone, independent [with all the temptations pertaining thereto: so the rabbis put it as the lowest, least respectable occupation--but early Christianity does not concur, for Jesus associates with the lowest]. ...during which time the shepherd is totally responsible for the flock.
4. The *political* reality of the monarch in the ancient Near East was similar: responsibility for the tribe or nation's surviving and thriving. The metaphor is ancient: the divinely appointed shepherd-king goes all the way back to Sumer, and appears in afterlife as Osiris' crook [of whom I own a 4,700-year-old statuette]... "the Good Shepherd" with also whip, an early Christian model for Jesus, who now, without awaiting the afterlife, combines care-love [the crook] with justice [the cat-'o-nine-tails]. From Egypt we go to Greece: Here, too, the blending of shepherd-king and shepherd-god: Orpheus with his shepherd's pipes/lyre, as in the current [ending 12Feb78] "Art of Spirituality" exhibit at the Met.Mus.of Art (see, in its catalog, the wonderful conflations of good shepherd with Jonah and Jesus, one sculpture I helped identify 17 years ago: pp.35,63,78). Plato: Shepherd as "schema" of the divine law; Philo: "nous" shepherds our irrational powers, as ruler protects his irrational people--and "logos" of God shepherds the universe. So on to Israel: Because theocratic, Israel never gives a king the shepherd title, which is reserved for God and the Messiah. Besides title for God [all the OT reff.: Gen.48.15, 49.24; Ps.23.1; but many reff. to God with shepherd functions: lamb-carrying, Is.40.11, e.g.: Israel, and the believer, are God-sheltered]. And I have no doubt that India six centuries before Jn.10, which uses also the Mediterranean "good shepherd" from the early Near East, provided the "I am" formula to go with it and many other expressions in Jn.: "I am" appears 51 times in Gita.10, the last being intransitive, as with YHWH in Ex.3.
5. As for *Jesus* in the Synoptics, the "good shepherd" motif appears in the three-losts chapter of L. (vv.4-6); and both Mt.(7.15, 10.16a) and L.(10.3) use the admonitory wolf [rabb.lit. accusing God of being a wolf to his oppressed people, but this use of wolf never in early Xn lit.]. See how the shepherd/wolf metaphor of warning is developed elsewhere by L.(Ac.20.29, Paul's Miletus speech, combining warning/comfort as does J.'s Mt.-L. speech). The wolf [Gk.rt., "rend, ravish, wound"] is cunning, crafty, wily, deceptive, and may even be a man reduced to animal [=werewolf!]. So false teachers and other wolflike enemies of the Faith attack from outside the community (Mt.10.16a and L.10.3; Ac.20.29) and from inside (Ac.20.30; so "in sheep's clothing" [Mt.7.15], i.e. as church members and even successful, achievers, fruitful). On guard to discern judaizing and gnosticizing wolves!
6. *Future*: Jesus' death averts for us the wolf danger (Jn.10; cf. Zech.12.10, 13.1-6), even if you're eaten as a martyr (2Cl.5.2-4). Cf. catacombs angelus-pastor bonus. And Marcion as wolf!...As for "pastoring" the church, much in and beyond NT; e.g., Shepherd of Hermas. (And pastors of Qumran!)...Wolf to lie down with sheep (Is.11.6, 65.25)... "Gathering" as salvation image.... Jesus as salvific Lamb.