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Conceptual Blends with Shepherd(s)/Sheep Imagery in Selected Patristic Writings

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Abstract

This article addresses the problem of the Christian discourse, and more specifically conceptual blends with "shepherd," "sheep" and related concepts in an input space in the writings of Ignatius of Antioch, St Augustine, Cyprian of Carthage and others. The analysis of selected blends shows their importance in Christian discourse and their role in the creation of the doctrine and practice of the early Church. The article shows that conceptual blends are a flexible tool for conceptualising different notions in accordance with the aims of their authors. The overall objective of the article is to show the role of language in the formation of the Christian identity and doctrine, and the usefulness of the blending theory in the description of these phenomena.

Słowa kluczowe: amalgamaty pojęciowe, dyskurs chrześcijański, patrystyka, owca, pasterz
Key words: conceptual blends, Christian discourse, patristics, sheep, shepherd

Christianity, unlike Judaism, out of which it grew, or the Greek and Roman cults which it replaced, is to a great extent a religion of beliefs and dogmas, not sacrifices or deeds.[1] This means that its identity manifests itself through various statements, declarations, narratives or descriptions – in other words, through language. In most cases these linguistic forms express abstract notions such as "salvation," "redemption," "grace" or "Trinity" by referring to various human experiences or elements of the physical world. Grace, for example, is very often conceptualised as a fluid (1 Timothy 1: 14); salvation as an ontological change (1 John 3: 14); redemption as an actual act of buying out (1 Peter 1: 18).

[1] "For the ancient Greeks and Romans, religion was an affair of rituals and practices, not doctrine," R.L. Wilken, *The First Thousand Years. A Global History of Christianity*, New Haven–London 2012, p. 92.

There is also a reverse process, namely a specific experience or form of behaviour typical of a given culture may become a source of related conceptualisations, such as in the case of conceptualisations based on the imagery of shepherd(s)/sheep, which has been omnipresent in the Christian discourse since its very beginning. Conceptualisations of this sort make up the basis of the hierarchical structure and dynamics of relationships between the clergy and laity in the Catholic Church; the "one shepherd and one flock" principle represents the idea of Christian unity and ecumenical efforts as well as the theological rationale behind all decisions against dissident activity within the Christian communities or the Church; The image of "a lost sheep" symbolises God's unique love towards every individual as an individual, corresponding at the same time to the presumption that there is one proper way everyone should follow, and that Christianity "is the way" (Acts 9: 2).

Linguistically speaking, conceptualisations involving shepherd(s)/sheep imagery may be seen as a set of conceptual blends of various types with one of the input spaces containing such elements as "shepherd," "sheep," "fold," "pasture," "wolf," etc., along with the roles and functions attributed to each of them and relationships between them.[2] This simple imagery turns out to be a very powerful and versatile linguistic instrument that may easily be adapted to the rhetorical needs and aims of Christian speakers and writers depending on what elements or dependencies of the input space they place in the foreground. In this way, Christian authors have been able to create and modify principles and rules pertaining to Church doctrine, liturgy, discipline and practice, conveying them at the same time in a convincing way. The detailed presentation of even a small part of the conceptual blends with shepherd/sheep, etc., elements in the input space and how they have been employed throughout centuries in the Christian discourse, is of course not possible in a short text, and therefore what follows should be regarded as a preliminary sketch presenting some instances and patterns of how they are used in selected patristic texts to demonstrate their flexibility and consequences.

Shepherd(s)/sheep imagery in the ancient world and the Bible

Shepherd(s)/sheep imagery is very common in antiquity, also outside of the Bible. The shepherd image with its varied symbolical meaning, most often connoting a ruler or God, is known in Mesopotamia, Egypt, the Ancient Near East and the Hellenistic world.[3] However, the shepherd/sheep blends belonging to the Christian discourse have their roots in the Scripture, both in the Hebrew Bible and in the New Testa-

[2] Detailed presentation of the exact type of the blends discussed here goes beyond the scope of this paper. The background of my presentation is the notion of the blend with specific input spaces proposed by G. Fauconnier, M. Turner, *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending And The Mind's Hidden Complexities*, New York 2002.

[3] N. Cachia, *The Image of the Good Shepherd as a Source for the Spirituality of the Ministerial Priesthood*, Roma 1997, pp. 30–37. The secular version of this conceptualisation may also be found in modern Europe, for example in J.S. Bach's cantata, *Schafe können sicher weiden*, where it also refers to the ruler (shepherd) and the ruled ones (sheep).

ment. Among various instances of their usage in the Hebrew Bible, the most significant ones in the context of this analysis are to be found in Jeremiah 23: 1–4 and Ezekiel 34: 1–8, where leaders of Israel are compared to bad shepherds who do not look after them properly. In Christian teaching these passages will be used with reference to the Christian clergy, thus relegating the non-clergy members of the Church to the status of sheep. In the New Testament the three most important instances of shepherd(s)/sheep imagery are the Parable of the Lost Sheep (Matthew 18: 12–14; Luke 15: 3–7); John 10, where Jesus presents himself as the Good Shepherd, and John 21: 15–19, where Jesus commands Peter to feed his sheep. Also scattered in the Bible are various references to everyday experience concerning shepherds or sheep that strengthen the conceptualisation and the roles/qualities of shepherds or sheep: sheep are submissive (Isaiah 53: 7; Jeremiah 11: 9) and trust the shepherd (John 10: 3–5); a shepherd had to watch for those sheep who strayed and to count the animals returning to the fold at night (Leviticus 27: 32, Jeremiah 33: 13); dogs are used to help manage sheep (Job 30: 1) etc.[4] The related, central biblical and Christian symbol of the lamb connoting the Christ is not discussed in this paper.

Shepherd(s)/sheep imagery as conceptual blends

As mentioned earlier, numerous instances of shepherd(s)/sheep imagery present in the Bible may be seen as exemplifications of various conceptual blends, such as THE LEADERS OF ISRAEL ARE SHEPHERDS/THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL ARE SHEEP, BISHOPS/PRESBYTERS ARE SHEPHERDS/LAITY ARE SHEEP, CHRIST IS SHEPHERD/CHRISTIANS ARE SHEEP, etc. with shepherd/sheep/wolves and other elements in one of the input spaces. In the case both of the Hebrew Bible and of the texts that would form the canon of the New Testament, we may notice that because they became part of the Christian Holy Scripture or God's Word, these conceptualisations were indeed regarded as actual words of God, being central in the development of the Christian doctrine. Conceptualisations employing shepherd/sheep imagery in texts of various Christian writers are most often elaborations of these biblical conceptual blends.[5]Selected examples of such elaborations, the probable reasons behind them and their practical consequences are discussed below.

Christians are sheep

this simple blend may be found in *The Shepherd of Hermas* – an allegorical work that takes its title from the shepherd who is a guide to the narrator, yet its imagery differs from the biblical text, being both more detailed (various forms of behaviour of sheep such as leaping or feeding symbolise various states of separation from God) and

[4] G.L. Mattingly, *Shepherd* [in:] *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, David Noel Freedman, Allen C. Myers et al. (eds), Grand Rapids, MI 2000, p. 1208.

[5] For more on elaboration, see: Z. Kövecses, *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction*, Oxford 2002, p. 47.

connoting different things.[6] For example, one of the shepherds in the text is a contradiction of a good shepherd and represents an "angel of punishment" who, holding "a large whip," (unusual for a shepherd) "cast them [sheep] into a precipitous place, full of thistles and thorns."[7] Although *The Shepherd of Hermas* is one of the earliest Christian texts containing shepherd/sheep imagery, the conceptualisations present in it, due to their unique and distinct character, are generally not taken over or elaborated upon by other patristic authors.

Bishops are shepherds/laity are sheep

Although egalitarian with regard to those who could join it, in time Christianity divided its members into two categories: clergy (shepherds) and laity (sheep). When Christianity was recognised as an official religion of the Roman Empire, the gap between these groups was fairly distinct and bishops became members of the social elite.[8] The categories had different functions, and shepherd(s)/sheep imagery was a very useful rhetorical device in attributing different qualities and status to their respective members. The clergy were shepherds: active, knowledgeable, decision-makers. The laity were sheep, and were expected to be obedient in matters of doctrine and discipline.[9]

As early as the beginning of the second century, Ignatius of Antioch (c. 35/50–98/117) admonishes the addressees of his *Epistle to the Philadelphians*: "Wherefore, as children of light and truth, flee from division and wicked doctrines; but where the shepherd is, there follow as sheep. For there are many wolves that appear worthy of credit, who, by means of a pernicious pleasure, carry captive those that are running towards God; but in your unity they shall have no place."[10] *Epistle to the Philadelphians* is one of the earliest Christian texts in which we can see the BISHOPSARE SHEPHERDS/LAITY ARE SHEEP blend. Interestingly, the blend cannot be found in the New Testament texts, although they mention the division between *presbyteroi/episcopoi*[11] and other Christians (cf. 1 Timothy 3, James 5). Whenever "shepherd"

[6] *The Shepherd of Hermas* was written in the early 2nd century, which is why we cannot often find in it references to the texts that would later form the New Testament.

[7] *The Shepherd of Hermas*, Parable 6, 2. If not marked differently, all quotations of patristic texts after *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1–5, A. Roberts, J. Donaldson (eds.), Buffalo, NY and *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series*, vol. 1–7, P. Schaff (ed.), online version: http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/ [accessed: 15.11.2014]. The translations are not the most recent ones, but I decided to use them as they are easily available for those who would like to see the context of the blends discussed here.

[8] Ammianus Marcellinus writes of bishops as "enriched by offerings from matrons, riding in carriages, dressing splendidly, and feasting luxuriously, so that their entertainments surpass even royal banquets"; *Roman History*, 27, 3, 14; http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/ammianus_27_book27.htm [accessed: 19.11.2014].

[9] When Christianity became a religion of birth, not choice, the laity were also allowed to be ignorant in matters of faith. Pope Innocent IV (1243–1254) stated that the "measure of faith to which the laity were bound was to believe explicitly that God exists and rewards the good and implicitly the articles of the faith," N. Tanner, *New Short History of the Catholic Church*, London 2011, p. 85.

[10] *Epistle to the Philadelphians*, 2.

[11] We should not forget that these two terms may have referred at that time to specific functions within the Christian community (and may have been used interchangeably), not connoting a distinct status within it.

appears in the New Testament outside the four gospels, the term denotes Christ, never a clergy member (Hebrews 13: 20; 1 Peter 2: 25; 1 Peter 5: 4). Nevertheless, this blend very quickly becomes a standard conceptualisation describing the division of roles in the Church and is used extensively by patristic writers. An overwhelming majority of them were bishops, and therefore the blend was a very useful linguistic instrument in expressing their authority in matters of doctrine and discipline.

A good illustration of how radical the elaboration of this blend might be is Augustine of Hippo's (354–430) *Sermon on Pastors*, where he justifies bringing sinners back into the Church even against their will, employing imagery from the Hebrew Bible (Jeremiah 23: 1–4 and Ezekiel 34: 1–8):

> The straying sheep you have not recalled; the lost sheep you have not sought. (...). The sheep moreover are insolent [*et contumaces sunt oves*]. The shepherd seeks out the straying sheep, but because they have wandered away and are lost they say that they are not ours. "Why do you want us? Why do you seek us?" they ask. "You have been lost, I wish to find you." "But I wish to stray," – he says; "I wish to be lost." (...) However unwelcome, I dare to say: You wish to stray, you wish to be lost; but I do not want this." For the one whom I fear does not wish this. And should I wish it, consider his words of reproach: 'The straying sheep you have not recalled; the lost sheep you have not sought.' Shall I fear you rather than him? (...) I shall recall the straying; I shall seek the lost. Whether they wish it or not, I shall do it.[12]

This long passage demonstrates how a seemingly innocent BISHOPS ARE SHEPHERDS/LAITY ARE SHEEP blend may change into a potential excuse for or incentive to coercion in matters of religious discipline. In the context of pessimistic Augustinian theology, with its notion of *massa damnata*, such a firm and decisive attitude on the part of a bishop should be regarded as an action aiming to save the lost or ignorant Christians from eternal damnation, an act of solidarity and a manifestation of the bishop's responsibility towards God. The words "I shall recall the straying. (...) Whether they wish it or not, I shall do it" may be seen as an expression of perseverance and loving care of a shepherd worried about his sheep. Yet at the same time this skilful rhetorical extension of a stereotypical image of the sheep presented here as insolent or obstinate (*contumaces*) will have far-reaching consequences in the history of the West. According to Augustine, it is obstinacy that constitutes heresy (*contumacia dicitur heresis*).[13] Because *contumaces sunt oves*, the Church may, with divine authority, persecute heretics.

Augustine uses a similar image of sheep brought back against their will when commenting on the Parable of the Great Banquet (Luke 14: 15–24): "Let them be drawn away from the hedges, let them be plucked up from among the thorns. They have stuck fast in the hedges, they are unwilling to be compelled. 'Let us come in – they say – of our own good will.' This is not the Lord's order, 'Compel them – says he – to come in.' Let compulsion be found outside, the will arise within."[14]

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[12] *Sermo 46*, 14–15. The Latin text: http://www.augustinus.it/latino/discorsi/discorso_057_testo.htm [accessed: 19.11.2014].

[13] T.A. Fudge, *Jan Hus: Religious Reform and Social Revolution in Bohemia*, London–New York 2010, p. 138.

[14] *Sermo 62*, 8.

There are no references to sheep in the Parable of the Great Banquet, which instead stresses the universality of the Kingdom of God. Augustine, however, focusing on the term "compel," interprets the parable through the prism of the BISHOPS ARE SHEPHERDS/LAITY ARE SHEEP blend. According to this interpretation, "a servant" is a bishop, and people compelled to come in are those who do not wish to follow him. By adopting this blend in his reading of the parable, Augustine distorts altogether its original meaning.[15]

In his *Letter do Donatus*, part of a much broader Donatist controversy, Augustine once again refers to "compel," and employs the same blend: "You also are sheep belonging to Christ (...) but you are wandering and perishing. Let us not, therefore, incur your displeasure because we bring back the wandering and seek the perishing; for it is better for us to obey the will of the Lord, who charges us to compel you to return to His fold, than to yield consent to the will of the wandering sheep, so as to leave you to perish." This passage again demonstrates that a specific conceptual blend supported by a selective choice of specific words and expressions from the Bible ("compel" – Luke 14: 23; "bring back the wandering and seek the perishing" – Ezekiel 34, 4) enables Augustine to present his views with divine authority.

Augustine sometimes modifies the BISHOPS ARE SHEPHERDS/LAITY ARE SHEEP blend, adapting it to the needs of his argument and stressing these elements in input spaces that are important to him in a given moment. In his *Sermon on Pastors*, as we have seen, he claims that sheep are obstinate and that this is the reason why pastors may resort to coercion. In another sermon he reminds his listeners that because they are sheep, they should be obedient and humble: "So then, Brethren, do you with obedience hear that you are Christ's sheep; seeing that we on our part with fear hear, 'Feed My sheep'? If we feed with fear, and fear for the sheep; these sheep how ought they to fear for themselves? Let then carefulness be our portion, obedience yours; pastoral watchfulness our portion, the humility of the flock yours"[16]. Again, referring to the stereotypical image of sheep as obedient animals, Augustine maps this image onto his listeners and enriches it, presenting sheep not only as obedient but as humble as well. It goes without saying that sheep may be obedient but not humble, yet because obedience and humility are related as Christian virtues, Augustine smuggles the latter into his argument, in this way strengthening the illocutionary force of the blend.

On another occasion, while addressing the issue of bishops who are bad shepherds, Augustine ingeniously introduces another element from the input space into the blend, namely a pasture, and argues that it is not important who the shepherd is but what the sheep feed on, which is, indeed, a quite convincing solution to the problem: "The sheep of Christ, even through evil teachers, hear His voice (...) and

[15] It is worth remembering that Augustine had a very limited knowledge of Greek and interpreted the polysemic ἀναγκάζω (to compel, to urge) as "to coerce," a term which plays an instrumental role in his views on how the Church should deal with heretics. Cf. his *Letter to Boniface [On the Treatment of the Donatists]*, St Augustine, *Letters 165–203*, vol. 4, translated by S. Wilfrid Parsons, S.N.D. New York 1981, pp. 163–168.

[16] Augustine, *Sermo 96 on the New Testament*, 1.

therefore the sheep are safely fed, since even under bad shepherds they are nourished in the Lord's pastures."[17]

The BISHOPSARE SHEPHERDS/LAITY ARE SHEEP blend also appears as a rhetorical argument in Church documents. For instance, canon 64 of Council in Trullo reads: "It does not befit a layman to dispute or teach publicly, thus claiming for himself authority to teach, but he should yield to the order appointed by the Lord, and to open his ears to those who have received the grace to teach, and be taught by them divine things. (...) Why do you make yourself a shepherd when you are a sheep?"[18] John Chrysostom uses an almost identical argument, based on the roles attributed to sheep and shepherds, when he writes, "You are an inferior servant, not a master. You are a sheep, be not curious concerning the shepherd."[19]

The church is one flock

the passage from Ignatius' *Letter to the Philadelphians* quoted above also contains the CHURCH IS ONE FLOCK blend that appears too in John 10:16, where Jesus speaks of "one flock and one shepherd" .According to the Christian tradition, Ignatius of Antioch was John the Apostle's disciple, and this may explain why this blend was so important to him. On the other hand, ever since the beginning of the new religion various Christian authors have stressed the necessity of unity within the Christian communities and between them, which was understandable as Christianity was not a monolithic movement and experienced tensions, forced to cope with various dissident factions or heretical sects such as the Montanists, Ebionites, Valentinians etc. that emerged within it. This is why Ignatius insists that sheep "should flee from division and wicked doctrines; but where the shepherd is, there follow as sheep. For there are many wolves that appear worthy of credit, who, by means of a pernicious pleasure, carry captive those that are running towards God; but in your unity they shall have no place."

Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, and the author of the statement "extra Ecclesiam nulla salus" ("outside the Church there is no salvation"), also employs the CHURCH IS ONE FLOCK blend to support his theological argument of the need to belong to the Church in order to be saved. Considering the conditions under which the Church may receive the heretics who used to be its members and would now like to come back, and the heretics who were baptised by a heretical community yet were never the members of the Church and would like to join it now, he compares the former to the sheep who went astray, while the latter are not regarded by him as "sheep" and must be turned into "sheep" by being baptised by the orthodox, not heretical Christian community:

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[17] Augustine, *Letter 208* (*To Lady Felicia*), 5. Several centuries later Bernard of Clairvaux uses a similar blend with a pasture in an input space, writing that "needful nourishment of the sheep is ordinarily indeed in the good pastures of the Holy Scriptures (...).To this end, good and careful pastors do not cease to feed their flock to fatness with salutary and encouraging examples";*Sermon 76 on the Song of Songs*, 9: http://www.elfinspell.com/ChurchHistory/Petry-NoUncertainSound/BernardOfClairvaux-27-30.html [accessed: 17.11.2014].

[18] *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Second Series*, Volume 14, P. Schaff, Rev. E. Wallace (eds.), New York 2007 (the original edition 1900), p. 394.

[19] *Homily 2 on 2 Timothy*.

"We observe in the present day, that it is sufficient to lay hands for repentance upon those who are known to have been baptised in the Church, and have gone over from us to the heretics, if, subsequently acknowledging their sin and putting away their error, they return to the truth and to their parent; so that, because it had been a sheep, the Shepherd may receive into His fold the estranged and vagrant sheep. But if he who comes from the heretics has not previously been baptised in the Church, (...) he must be baptised, that he may become a sheep, because in the holy Church is the one water which makes sheep."[20]

Cyprian's stance, although expressed by such an interesting rhetorical exploit, was eventually rejected by the Church, and the custom of rebaptising heretics that lasted for some time in the East was abandoned.

Interestingly, the CHURCH IS ONE FLOCK blend is sometimes used with reference to the whole of humanity, for example by Tertullian, who writes in one of his treatises: "Tell me, is not all mankind one flock of God? Is not the same God both Lord and Shepherd of the universal nations? Who more perishes from God than the heathen, so long as he errs? Who is more re-sought by God than the heathen, when he is recalled by Christ?"[21] Putting an equals sign between the whole humanity and the Church, Tertullian underlines the universal character of the new religion.

Enemies of christian unity or christians are wolves

The passage from the *Letter to the Philadelphians* quoted earlier contains yet another blend derived from the input space referring to shepherd/sheep imagery, namely ENEMIES OF CHRISTIAN UNITY OR CHRISTIANS ARE WOLVES ("For there are many wolves that appear worthy of credit (...) but in your unity they shall have no place"). Teachers of false doctrines are also conceptualised as wolves on other occasions. Such identification appears twice in *Church History* by Eusebius of Caesarea: with reference to Marcion, who is described as "the wolf of Pontus" (V, 1–3, 4) and to Maximilla, a prophetess of Montanus, who was reported to have said of herself: "I am driven away from the sheep like a wolf. I am not a wolf"(V, 16, 17).[22] Ambrose of Milan praises Pope Siricius in his letter as the one who can "discover the wolves, and meet them as a wary shepherd, so as to keep them from scattering the Lord's flock by their unbelieving life and dismal barking."[23] Canon 72 of Council in Trullo excludes the possibility of marriage between an orthodox Christian and a heretic, arguing that "it is not right that the sheep be joined with the wolf."[24]

Augustine, on the other hand, in one of his sermons juxtaposes sheep with wolves, arguing that sometimes wolves may become sheep:

"But what are we to think? Those who did hear, were they sheep? Lo? Judas heard, and was a wolf: he followed, but, clad in sheep-skin, he was laying snares for the Shep-

[20] Cyprian of Carthage, *Epistle 70*, 2.

[21] Tertullian, *On Modesty*, 7.

[22] Eusebius, *Church History*, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/2501.htm [accessed:19.11.2014].

[23] St Ambrose of Milan, *Letter 42*, 1; www.tertullian.org/fathers/ambrose_letters_05_letters41_50.htm [accessed: 16.11.2014].

[24] *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Second Series*, Vol. 14, *op.cit.*, p. 397.

herd. Some, again, of those who crucified Christ did not hear, and yet were sheep; (...) Now, how is this question to be solved? They that are not sheep do hear, and they that are sheep do not hear. Some, who are wolves, follow the Shepherd's voice; and some, that are sheep, contradict it. Last of all, the sheep slay the Shepherd. The point is solved; for someone in reply says: "But when they did not hear, as yet they were not sheep, they were then wolves: the voice, when it was heard, changed them, and out of wolves transformed them into sheep; and so, when they became sheep, they heard, and found the Shepherd, and followed Him."[25]

Similarly, John Chrysostom also uses the wolf/sheep contrast in one of his homilies, expounding Matthew 10, 16:

"For so long as we are sheep, we conquer: though ten thousand wolves prowl around, we overcome and prevail. But if we become wolves, we are worsted, for the help of our Shepherd departs from us: for He feeds not wolves, but sheep."[26]

These brilliant and complex conceptualisations from the quill of Augustine and John Chrysostom demonstrate again the potential hidden in the blend discussed here.

Heresy/bad behaviour as contagious for flock

Another interesting type of blend employing sheep imagery as an input space conceptualises the heresy or morally unacceptable behaviour of some believers as a contagious disease that may spread in the flock and affect other sheep.

Cyprian of Carthage uses this blend in order to exclude from the community those whose actions or attitude he regards as unacceptable or scandalous. "Nor is he a useful or prudent shepherd who lets in among his flock sheep that are sickly or diseased so as to infest his entire flock by exposure to the disease they bring with them" – he writes in one of his letters.[27] Interestingly, perceiving bad behaviour as contagious and a threat to the moral purity of the community seems to stand in opposition to the attitude of Jesus presented in the Gospels, for whom the moral misconduct of an individual does not corrupt others. Cyprian's stance as a bishop and leader of the community (or "a prudent shepherd") reveals here how difficult and problematic it was to transfer the idealistic principles of Jesus as an apocalyptic prophet onto the everyday life of a Christian community no longer awaiting His imminent *parousia*.

Theodoret of Cyrrhus (c. 393–c. 457) employs the same blend in his letter to Joannes, Bishop of Antioch, part of a serious theological dispute in which Joannes is depicted as a source of disease (heresy): "I have been distressed at the thought that one appointed to the shepherd's office, entrusted with the charge of so great a flock and appointed to heal the sick among his sheep, is both himself unsound, and that to a terrible degree, and is endeavouring to infect his lambs with his disease and treats the sheep of his folds with greater cruelty than that of wild beasts."[28]

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[25] Augustine, *Treatise on the Gospel of St John* 45, 10.

[26] John Chrysostom, *Homily on Matthew* 33, 1.

[27] Letter 59, 15, 2 [in:] *The Letters of St Cyprian of Carthage*, vol. 3, Mahwah, NJ, p. 83.

[28] *Letter 150*.

Vincent of Lérins (died c. 445), author of the famous "Vincentian canon,"[29] an essential stage in the development of the Christian doctrine, is another who uses this blend to conceptualise and revile unorthodox beliefs: "If any man deliver to you another message than that you have received, let him be blessed, praised, welcomed,– no; but let him be accursed, i.e., separated, segregated, excluded, lest the dire contagion of a single sheep contaminate the guiltless flock of Christ by his poisonous intermixture with them."[30]

Conclusions

Even this necessarily brief presentation of selected examples of the blends with shepherd(s)/sheep imagery leaves no doubt that they have played a significant role in creating and shaping the Christian doctrine. Employed and elaborated upon skilfully by the Christian authors, they enrich and expand it and as they are anchored in the Bible, they provide the doctrine with the divine authority. What is more, they are still alive even today and may be used in a fresh way; the most recent example of such a fresh version of the blend may be found in one of Pope Francis' homilies in which he urges priests to be "shepherds living with the smell of the sheep."[31]

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[29] "We hold that faith which has been believed everywhere, always, and by everyone," T.G. Guarino, *Vincent of Lérins and the Development of Christian Doctrine*, Grand Rapids, MI 2013, p. xii.

[30] *Commonitory*, 8 (23).

[31] http://www.thecatholictelegraph.com/pope-francis-priests-should-be-shepherds-living-with-the-smell-of-the-sheep/13439 [accessed: 20.11.2014].