



**Study guide for  
SHEPHERD OF HERMAS**

# Lexham Bible Dictionary

## SHEPHERD OF HERMAS

An early work that conveys a series of visions, mandates, and parables revolving around early Christian life in Rome. It is grouped with the writings known as the Apostolic Fathers.

### Reception

Shepherd of Hermas survives in fragments in two major Greek codices (Athous and Sinaiticus) and two Greek papyri (Michigan and Bodmer), and is complete in two early Latin translations (Osiek, Shepherd, 1–2). In the fourth-century Christian Bible, Codex Sinaiticus, Shepherd is placed at the end following Revelation (along with Epistle of Barnabas); the two works likely functioned as a type of appendix.

Shepherd was mentioned and well known by the early church fathers; Clement of Alexandria, Irenaeus, and Origen were especially ardent supporters of the work (Osiek, Shepherd, 4–6; Verheyden, “Shepherd,” 397). Among the church fathers, only Tertullian seems to have been against the work (Osiek, Shepherd, 4–5). The Muratorian Canon depicts Shepherd as not authoritative, but still useful for private reading.

Shepherd gradually lost its credence as an authoritative work, though its readership in the Church continued on in both the West and East for many centuries (Osiek, Shepherd, 6–7). Shepherd of Hermas appeared in some medieval Ethiopian Bibles but was probably viewed as additional, noncanonical material and is not included in modern Ethiopian Bibles; Shepherd is viewed as noncanonical for all other Christian traditions.

(For further information on why Shepherd of Hermas was once in a Bible but did not become canonical for the global church in the long-term, see this article: [Canon, Books in Codices](#).)

### Provenance

The Shepherd of Hermas was likely written in or around Rome and quite possibly over a stretch of time ranging from the late first century ad to the middle of the second century ad. The work is difficult to date due to varying references, including a mention of a Hermas in Rom 16:14, Vision 2.4.3’s reference to Clement of Rome within the work, and its mention in the Muratorian Canon as being composed “recently” during the bishopric of Pius in Rome (around the 140s ad; Osiek, Shepherd, 18; Verheyden, “Shepherd,” 397). Views on authorship also affect the work’s dating, depending on whether it was written by multiple hands over time, by one hand, or by multiple hands with one redactor (Osiek, Shepherd, 8–10; “Genre,” 114–15; Wilson, Toward, 10–23). The original author self-identifies as a freedman of Rome (Osiek, Shepherd, 21; Verheyden, “Shepherd,” 398). Shepherd’s Greek appears to be of a simple, “non-elite” style (Osiek, Shepherd, 21).

### Contents

The Shepherd of Hermas is divided into three separate sections joined thematically: 5 Visions (the fifth of which serves as an introduction to the Mandates), 12 Mandates, and 10 Similitudes. Following Osiek’s outline, the Shepherd of Hermas proceeds as follows (Shepherd, vii–viii):

1. Visions: Five visions—consisting of a vision of a woman, Rhoda; two visions of the Church as a woman and messages of judgment; a vision of the building of a tower and its meaning, which bears on the Church; and a vision of a great beast, which is an eschatological reckoning.
2. Mandates: Twelve mandates or sets of teachings—on the subjects of faith, simplicity, truth, sexual purity, marriage, “the Two Ways,” fearing God, restraining from certain behaviors, being single-minded, sadness, and discerning prophecy and desires.

3. Similitudes: A series of 10 allegories on various aspects of moral piety, holiness, and asceticism.

Although generally regarded as apocalyptic in genre, the Shepherd lacks many elements present in other apocalyptic literature; Osiek defines it more accurately as “paraenesis ... with an apocalyptic framework” (Osiek, Shepherd, 11; “Genre,” 115–19; compare Verheyden, “Shepherd,” 398). Many of its thematic emphases reveal a Jewish-Christian orientation with several Graeco-Roman influences (Osiek, Shepherd, 24–28). It certainly bears great similarity to Jewish “Two Ways” moral theology, and also has much in common with the New Testament book of James (Osiek, Shepherd, 24, 26). The main theme, in light of these influences, appears to be that of μετάνοια (metanoia, “repentance” or “conversion”; Osiek, Shepherd, 28–30; Verheyden, “Shepherd,” 399). The work reflects an interesting tradition of pneumatology and angelology that may reflect influences beyond the Judaeo-Christian tradition (Osiek, Shepherd, 31–34). Furthermore, its Christology is of great note: on the surface, it appears to have none. Jesus’ personal name is never mentioned in the work, and the title Christ is only present three times—and only in variants (Osiek, Shepherd, 34). However, Hauck suggests the Christology, especially represented by Similitude 5, is in keeping with a moral, purifying Christ (who is truly God and possesses the same Spirit as the Trinity) who desires his followers to be of like mind (Hauck, “Great,” 195–98).

The Shepherd of Hermas has much to say, both implicitly and explicitly, about early Christian life in Rome. Osiek notes that it is assumed in the text that churches at this time were still primarily located in the home, and despite mention of certain leaders’ titles (including apostles, overseers, presbyters, etc.), there seems to be no true formal structure (Osiek, Shepherd, 22–23; compare Lake, “Shepherd,” 37–40). Lake highlights the implicit early understandings of practices such as baptism that are consistent with other early sources, such as the Didache (“Shepherd,” 28–32).

#### Selected Resources for Further Study

- Hauck, Robert J. “The Great Fast: Christology in the Shepherd of Hermas.” *Anglican Theological Review* 75, no. 2 (Spring 1993): 187–98.
- Lake, Kirsopp. “The Shepherd of Hermas and Christian Life in Rome in the Second Century.” *Harvard Theological Review* 4, no. 1 (Jan 1911): 25–46.
- Osiek, Carolyn. “The Genre and Function of the Shepherd of Hermas.” *Semeia* 36 (1986): 113–21.
- — — —. *Shepherd of Hermas: A Commentary*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999.
- Verheyden, Jozef. “The Shepherd of Hermas.” *Expository Times* 117, no. 10 (July 2006): 397–401.
- Wilson, J. Christian. *Toward a Reassessment of the Shepherd of Hermas: Its Date and Its Pneumatology*. Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen, 1993.

Charles Meeks, “Shepherd of Hermas” *Lexham Bible Dictionary*, logos Bible software

# IVP Dictionary of the Later New Testament & Its Developments,

## HERMAS, SHEPHERD OF

The Shepherd of Hermas (or simply Hermas) is one of the more enigmatic documents to have survived from the sub-apostolic period. Relatively simple in style and widely popular in the second and third centuries, it is an important witness to the state of Christianity in Rome in the mid-second century. Expressing a Jewish Christian theological perspective by means of imagery, analogies and parallels drawn from Roman society and culture, the Shepherd reflects the efforts of its author(s) to deal with issues—for example, post-baptismal sin and repentance; the relationship between rich and poor within the church—of concern to at least part of the Christian community in Rome.

1. Genre and Structure
2. Contents
3. Authorship and Date
4. Concluding Observations
5. Later Influence

### 1. Genre and Structure.

The external structure of five Visions, twelve Mandates, and ten Similitudes (or Parables) masks the fact that on the basis of its internal structure the document falls into two parts: Visions 1–4, and the Shepherd proper, comprising the Mandates and Parables, to which Vision 5 serves as an introduction.

The genre of Visions 1–4 is that of a Jewish Christian apocalypse. A typical apocalypse (cf. Revelation) includes the following features: (1) a revelation from God, (2) usually in the form of a vision or dream, (3) often given through a mediator, (4) who provides an interpretation of the vision, (5) whose contents usually concern future events, especially the end times. Visions 1–4 neatly reflect this pattern, except for their contents: the focus is not on the end, but on the possibility of repentance because the end is not yet.

The Mandates reflect the form of a typical Jewish-Hellenistic homily. The closest parallels to the Parables of the Shepherd are found in the book of 1 Enoch. These parables, in which typically the telling of the “parable” is followed by a request for and granting of an interpretation, and finally blessings and curses upon those who either do or do not heed it, are more like “allegorical similes” than the more familiar parables of the Synoptic Gospels.

There is some evidence to suggest that the two major sections, Visions 1–4 and Vision 5/ Parable 10, were written and circulated separately. Two textual witnesses begin with Vision 5, and there are some discrepancies in the numbering of the Parables and internal inconsistencies which indicate that Parable 9 is a later addition. In all, it appears that two separate sections were later combined, at which time Parable 9 was added to unify and link them together, creating the Shepherd as it is known today. Whether these sections represent the work of two or three different contributors at different times (Giet), or the work of a single author, either written in stages over a period of time (Joly 1993, 529) or in a brief time (Maier, 58) continues to be debated.

## 2. Contents.

In Vision 1 Hermas sees a woman bathing and desires her, and then is confronted about his sin by an elderly woman, who represents the church. In Vision 2 he receives a revelation in the form of a book, and after fasting and prayer is granted its interpretation: forgiveness is possible for those who truly repent now and cleanse themselves of dipsychia, “doublemindedness.” Vision 3 is of the church as a tower built on a foundation of apostles, teachers, etc., with its diversity portrayed by the variety of stones used to build it. Vision 4, in which a huge monster appears, foreshadows tribulation. The shepherd replaces the elderly woman as revelator in Vision 5, and proceeds to introduce the following twelve Mandates and ten Parables.

The Mandates consist of a series of commandments regarding ethical behavior, given by the shepherd and explicated by means of lists of virtues and vices, with a smattering of dialogue between a patient shepherd and an unperceptive Hermas thrown in to advance matters. Key topics raised include faith, innocence, chastity, repentance, patience, truthfulness, cheerfulness and self-control, on the positive side, and evil desire, bad temper, doublemindedness and grief on the other.

The Parables (extended analogies or similes, utilizing cities, vineyards, trees, shepherds, sticks, mountains, a tower and a garment) reflect similar concerns. Parable 8, for example, is a vision of a willow tree and various kinds of sticks (some green and budded, some half green and half dry, others dry and insect-riddled, etc.), each of which represents a certain type of believer (in the three examples, respectively, those who were persecuted for the law, those so engaged in business that they fail to associate with the saints, and apostates).

The book ends with a charge to Hermas to write down and communicate what he has seen, and to live in accordance with it.

## 3. Authorship and Date.

3.1. Authorship. The “Hermas” to whom the Shepherd is attributed is certainly not Paul the Apostle (a suggestion arising from Acts 14:12) or the Hermas mentioned in Romans 16:14 (Origen's suggestion). According to the Muratorian Canon, which may be the oldest (c. 180–200?) known list of NT and early Christian writings, Hermas was the brother of Pius, bishop of Rome (c. 140–154). Whether or not this is so, nothing else is known about the author(s); apparent autobiographical information is likely fictional.

3.2. Date. The date of the Shepherd is difficult to establish. Reference to it by Irenaeus (c. 175) establishes a date before which it must have been written, but on the other end dates as early as the 70s and 80s of the first decade have been proposed. The evidence of the Muratorian Canon (Hermas wrote the Shepherd in Rome while his brother Pius was bishop) must be used with caution, since it appears to reflect a subtle attempt to discredit the Shepherd. The internal evidence is inconsistent. Data in Visions 1–4, together with the reference in Visions 8.3 to “Clement” who may possibly be the Clement of Rome responsible for 1 Clement, point to the end of the first century or the early part of the second, while the section comprising Vision 5/ Parable 10 seems to come from a later time. Recognition of the composite nature of the Shepherd resolves many of the difficulties. Visions 1–4 likely represent the earliest state of its formation, while the final editing, including the interpolation of Parable 9, may well have occurred about the time (mid-second century) suggested by the Muratorian Canon (see Canon).

#### 4. Concluding Observations.

Throughout the book Hermas wrestles with whether repentance and forgiveness of post-baptismal sin are available. The answer, which seeks to balance God's justice and mercy (cf. 4 Ezra), is yes, once, but only for a limited while, so one must repent quickly before the opportunity passes. In sum, Hermas seeks to affirm God's mercy while attempting to maintain a strict moralism (Snyder 1992). A second major concern is the behavior of the rich, and their relationship to the poor within the church (Osiek); Hermas' solution (chap. 51 [= Parable 2]) stands in tension with the Sermon on the Mount. While scholarship has tended to dissociate the two concerns, sociological perspectives suggest they are intimately related (Maier).

The Shepherd offers a glimpse of a Christianity whose piety (much like that of the Didache and Barnabas) is centered on observing the divine commandments and self-control. The distance from Romans (another document addressed to the Roman Christian community) in tone and perspective is considerable; its piety has much more in common with 1 Clement (although its social location differs greatly [Jeffers, 120; Maier]). Christological reflection is minimal (the Holy Spirit or angels carry out many christological functions). Although there is scarcely any direct use of the OT or early Christian documents, substantial parallels with Jewish wisdom traditions run throughout the document (Joly 1993). The use of Roman examples and categories is more than merely circumstantial (Reiling).

#### 5. Later Influence.

The Shepherd was generally well received in the early church. Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria and Origen (at least for a while) accepted it as Scripture, as apparently did Tertullian, although later, after he joined the rigorous sect of the Montanists, he referred to it as the “shepherd of the adulterers” for its “lax” approach to repentance. In the fourth century, Athanasius early on quoted it as canonical, and even after the Christology of the book proved to be congenial to his Arian opponents he continued to recommend it to new converts. His Alexandrian contemporary, Didymus the Blind, included it in his canon of Scripture, and it stands at the end, following Revelation and Barnabas, of the important fourth-century biblical manuscript, Codex Sinaiticus.

M. W. Holmes<sup>1</sup>

For the lazy - a short video Overview of shepherd of Herman can be found [HERE](#).

READ it for yourself [HERE](#)- two public domain translations

*Yes both are relatively archaic but comprehensible*

*if any consolation- it is easier than reading Jonathan Edwards in his Elizabethan English.*

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<sup>1</sup> M. W. Holmes “HERMAS, SHEPHERD OF” Dictionary of the Later New Testament & Its Developments, Eds. Ralph P. Martin Peter H. Davids(Downers Grove, IVP Academic, 1997.)

## Quotes about SHEPHERD OF HERMAS

The work entitled The Shepherd, written by Hennis, is an orthodox work that is included in The Ante-nicene Fathers. It was widely read among the early Christians, and some Christians viewed it as canonical Scripture. Muratorian Fragment gives what is considered by most to be the divinity statement on the book by the early church.

The Shepherd, the angel of repentance, says to Hermas about the false prophet: "For he speaks some truths." Clement of Alexandria (c. 195, E), 2.319.

Divinely, therefore, the power that spoke to Hennis by revelation said, "The visions and revelations are for those who are of double mind." Clement of Alexandria (c. 195, E), 2.341.

The Shepherd, speaking plainly of those who had fallen asleep, recognizes certain righteous ones among Gentiles and Jews—not only before the appearance of Christ—but before the Law . . . He adds, "They gave them the seal of preaching. They descended, therefore, with them into the water and again ascended." Clement of Alexandria (c. 195, E), 2.357.

As the Shepherd says, "The virtue, then, that encloses the church in its grasp is faith." Clement of Alexandria (c. 195, E), 2.360.

For instance, the Shepherd says: "You will escape the energy of the wild beast if your heart becomes pure and blameless." Clement of Alexandria (c. 195, E), 2.422.

Did not the power that appeared to Hermas in the vision in the form of the church, give for transcription the book that she wished to be made known to the elect? Clement of Alexandria (c. 195, E), 2.510.

What if that Hermas, whose writing is generally inscribed with the title The Shepherd, had not sat down after finishing his prayer? Tertullian (c 198, W), 3.686.

***Moreover, Hermas wrote The Shepherd very recently in our times in the city of Rome, while his brother, bishop Pius, sat in the chair of the church in Rome. And therefore it also should be read. However, it cannot be published in the church to the people. Nor can it be placed among the Prophets, for their number is complete.*** Muratorian Fragment (c. 200, W), 5.604.

The Montanists were opposed to The Shepherd because it allowed mercy to be given to repentant persons who had committed serious sins such as adultery. This opposition is reflected in the next two passages from Tertullian:

I would yield my ground to you, if the scrip-ture of The Shepherd—which is the only one that favors adulterers [i.e., allows forgiveness to adulterers]—had deserved to find a place in the divine canon. However, it has been habitu-ally judged by every council of churches among apocryphal and false works. Tertullian (c. 212, W), 4.85.

And, of course, that epistle of Barnabas [i.e., the Epistle According to the Hebrews] is more gen-erally received among the churches than that apocryphal Shepherd of adulterers. Tertullian (c. 212, W), 4.97.

## **Origen: OG fan boy of The Shepherd**

Even in that little treatise called The Shepherd or Angel of Repentance, composed by Hermas, we have the following: "First of all, believe that there is one God who created and arranged all things." Origen (c. 225, E), 4.252.

That we may believe on the authority of Holy Scripture that such is the case, hear how in the Book of Maccabees. ... In the book of The Shepherd, also, in the first commandment, he speaks as follows: "First of all believe that there is one God who created and arranged all things, and made all things to come into existence out of a state of nothingness." Perhaps, also, the expression in the Psalms has reference to this. Origen (c. 225, E), 4.270

The book of The Shepherd declares the same, saying that each individual is attended by two angels. Whenever good thoughts arise in our hearts, they are suggested by the good angel. But when those of a contrary kind arise, they are the instigation of the evil angel. Origen (c. 225, E), 4.332.

We deduce this also from a book, The Shepherd, which is despised by some, in respect of the command given to Hermas to write two books. Origen (c. 225, E), 4.359.

We believe that God made the things that exist out of nothing, as the mother of the seven martyrs in the Maccabees teaches, and as the angel of repentance in The Shepherd taught. Origen (c. 228, E), 9.306, 307.

If someone should desire to soften down a teaching of this kind and should venture to use a Scripture that is in circulation in the church, but is not acknowledged by all to be divine, the passage might be taken from The Shepherd, concerning some who are put in subjection to Michael as soon as they believe. Origen (c. 245, E), 9.509;

# Shepherd of HERMAS as Christain prophecy.

## THE GIFT OF PROPHECY IN CHURCH HISTORY.

### A. The Early Church.

Within the first several centuries A.D. the church was no stranger to continuing prophetic activity. Room was made within the church structure for prophets to function on both itinerant and local levels. Indeed, the writer to the Ephesians understood them to be foundational to the church (Eph. 2:20), for they received the mystery of Christ that the Gentiles were, through Christ, made "heirs together with Israel, members together of one body" (3:6).

One important 1st-century writing, the Didache (c. A.D. 90), was concerned with both types of prophetic activity, although it appears that the predominant prophetic activity within the communities that accepted the tradition of the Didache was an itinerant ministry (Did. 10.7; 11:1–12; but see 13:1–7). Following Jesus' admonition to assess the fruit of the "prophet," the writer of the Didache instructed his readers to disregard anyone who benefited financially from his or her own prophetic activity. This was particularly true of itinerants. Those who settled down in a particular Christian community, however, were to be supported for their contribution to the spiritual welfare of the community.

The early 2d century reveals the claims that Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, made regarding his own experience with this gift (Ignatius, Epistle 7:1–2). While preaching to the congregation at Philadelphia on one occasion, he claimed that the Holy Spirit spoke through him, revealing a problem of disunity within that congregation. Ignatius maintained that until that point in his sermon he had been unaware of the problem, and its exposure in his sermon led to its ultimate resolution. The Shepherd of Hermas, a devotional work most probably originating in Rome in the first third of the 2d century included a series of visions and provided guidelines for distinguishing between true and false prophetic claims (Herm. Man. 11). The esteem with which this work was held in the life of the church varied. Irenaeus (Against Heresies 4:20.2) called it *hġgraphġ* or *scriptura*, a term usually reserved for the canonical writings, although there is some ambiguity attached to Irenaeus's meaning when he used this term. Clement of Alexandria cited the work repeatedly in his *Stromata* (cf. 1.1.1; 1.85.4; 2.3.4; 4.74.4; et al.). Similarly, there is a marked resemblance between portions of Hermas and the visions found in the Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas (cf. Passion 4.6–7 and Herm. Vis. 4.1.4–8). Tertullian, on the other hand, found it offensive because he believed it was lenient on those who had lapsed from the faith during times of persecution (On Modesty 10.12). Still, it was believed to provide good devotional food for thought by much of the church, including those who framed the Muratorian canon.

Hermas was particularly concerned for the impact that so-called prophets had on the newly committed Christian, the young, and the spiritually immature. Like the writer of the Didache and Jesus before him, he advocated the test of "good fruit." Those who function as false prophets, he argued, are bold and shameless. Some are motivated by power, others by money. He notably singled out those who prophesy on the fringe of a congregation, unnoticed or disregarded by the larger body. He argued against the usefulness of privately given "personal" prophecies. Typically they were nothing more than "empty words" that often left the immature at the mercy of the false prophet (Herm. Man. 11). Competition between at least three different groups for recognition and acceptance of their prophetic claims was intense during this early period.

On the one side were those who embraced one or another brand of Gnosticism. Gnostics highlighted exclusive revelation claims as authoritative. Typically they judged the traditions of the apostles to be imperfect (Irenaeus, Against Heresies 1.13.6; 1.25.2; 3.12.12; Tertullian,

Prescription against Heretics 23.1). They held up their own visions and prophecies as being not only indicative of a legitimate and vibrant spirituality, but an authoritative one as well (Hippolytus, Refutation of All Heresies 6.37; 7.26; 10.26).

The Montanists, too, believed in the continuation of prophetic phenomena. Originating in Asia Minor in the last half of the 2d century, they held considerable strength in Phrygia and later in North Africa. Problematic though they were, recent scholarship suggests that these believers were essentially orthodox in theology (Hippolytus, Refutation of All Heresies 8.12; Epiphanius, Panarion 48.1; Jerome, Epistle 41.3). Their tendencies toward asceticism and apocalypticism, however, often brought them into conflict with church leaders. Tertullian (On Monogamy 4.1; 2.2) found in the Paraclete saying of John 16:12–13 ample justification for even the ascetic claims of this prophetic movement. From this passage he argued that through continuing prophetic activity, the Holy Spirit reveals to the church the mind of Christ little by little. The disciples had been unable to accept and process adequately everything that Jesus had intended for them to hear. Thus, by means of a form of progressive apostolic tradition found in Scripture and the *regula fidei*, or “rule of faith” (Tertullian, On Monogamy 2.2–3), the church had opportunity to accept or reject what the Spirit had revealed to the church in the form of visions and prophecies. To be sure, excesses were found in some Montanist prophecies. It appears that some predicted the imminent return of Christ, perhaps with setting dates for that event (Epiphanius, Heresies 48.2), while others pointed to Pepuza, a city in Asia Minor, as the New Jerusalem (Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 5.18.1). Most, however, were understood as providing guidance in specific situations (Tertullian, On Flight in Persecution 9.4) or as providing supplementary support for certain teachings thought already to be evident in Scripture (cf. Tertullian, On Modesty 21.7; On Chastity 10.5; On the Resurrection of the Flesh 11.2). The most substantial problem associated with Montanist prophecy was the question of authority. How far did it legitimately extend, and what relationship did it have to the official church authorities of the day?

The third group that claimed the activity of prophetic gifts were the orthodox themselves. The Didache clearly fell within this context, as did the Shepherd of Hermas. Irenaeus (Against Heresies 5.6.1) noted the existence of genuine prophecies in his day and spoke against those who rejected the gift (Demonstrations of the Apostolic Preaching 99). In the East, Origen, who lived in Alexandria (203–231), then moved to Caesarea (232–253), had little time for either Pythian or Montanist claims. He rejected all forms of ecstasy (*ekstasia*), frenzy (*maniken*), or trance as signs of genuine prophetic activity. Yet he did believe in the genuineness of some prophetic claims. As Origen taught it, prophecy came at a moment of revelation in which the prophet saw things clearly and was then able to communicate the profound truths of Christian doctrine revealed by the Holy Spirit, truths that had been received in that moment (Against Celsus 7.3). It helped to provide biblical understanding and spiritual growth to the Christian community. Thus, Origen appears to have been the first Christian writer to identify the gift with a form of exposition on the biblical text. The revealed understanding of the text was a prophetic word.

Prophecy, dreams, and visions found a unique place in the life of many early martyrs, as well as within the life of the much-persecuted North African church. Indeed, because of the presence of the martyr Perpetua; the advocate of Montanism, Tertullian; and the charismatic bishop Cyprian, the North African church seems to have been more actively involved in such activities than any other church of the 3d century. At least four categories of prophetic revelations may be found in writings that originated from the church at Carthage at that time.

First among these is the fact that many individuals received ecclesiastical appointment or confirmation of an appointment by this means (Cyprian, Epistles 39.1, 4; 40; 48.4; 63.1; 66.5, 10). That this practice was widespread may be observed from the fact that more than 30 other people joined Cyprian in one appointment made by this means (Cyprian, Epistle 70)

Second, were the many visions/prophecies that were given to provide comfort to the Confessors, those who had already been tried for their faith and were either awaiting sentencing, serving a sentence, or awaiting their execution (Cyprian, Epistles 6.1–2; 10.4; 58.1; 78.1–2). Indeed, the persecuted church understood the ability of an individual to make a confession before the magistrates to be a fulfillment of Jesus' promise that at such a time as they were persecuted, the Holy Spirit would provide them with a prophetic response (Matt. 10:19–20; Mark 13:9–13; Luke 12:11–12; 21:11–19). Thus, there appears to have been a close relationship between prophecy and martyrdom.

Third, there were those times when visions and prophecies provided personal guidance or direction. Cyprian claimed to have been directed into hiding by the Lord (Cyprian, Epistle 16.4, 7) at the time of a severe persecution about A.D. 252. During a later persecution, in A.D. 257, Cyprian received another revelation that allegedly foretold of his martyrdom (Life and Passion of Cyprian 7), thereby enabling him to set his house in order.

At times, appeals to such revelations were also used to provide direction to a congregation. Such a usage of revelatory claims does raise questions of discernment and the possibility of improper manipulation of the gullible (cf. von Harnack), but the claim still remains. On at least four occasions Cyprian provided leadership and exhortation to the congregations over which he presided as bishop by appealing to prophetic claims (Epistle 11.1–4) that exhorted the churches to unity in a time of deep conflict. In spite of the widespread character of the gift of prophecy, it did lose some of its spontaneity as time progressed. Adolf von Harnack saw that fact as in some way related to the formation of the biblical canon. David Hill and David Aune have suggested that prophetic phenomena came into disrepute by their association with such sects as the Montanists and the rise of a class of more “rational” theologians and teachers. James Ash has argued that the decline in the prophetic gifts was due to the identification of these gifts with those in church leadership and especially with the bishop. Undoubtedly, there are elements of truth in each of these explanations. Indeed, only by a movement from the spontaneous to an emphasis on the formalized did it become possible for Chrysostom (Homily 29 on 1 Cor. 12:1–2) to plead ignorance of what Paul meant when he wrote about spiritual gifts, because they “no longer take place.” Still, prophetic gifts were present even in the more routine aspects and offices of a maturing church. It is also possible to identify them outside the church's formal structure.

From the The New International, Dictionary of Pentecostal Charismatic Movements<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The New International, Dictionary of Pentecostal Charismatic Movements, Stanley M. Burgess, Editor and Eduard M. Van Der Maas, Associate Editor (Grand Rapids, Zondervan 2010)

# Key Concepts in the Work

## False Prophecy, Prophets

Mandate 11 in the epistle of Hermas deals almost entirely with the problem of false prophecy. The author of the Shepherd of Hermas also warns against those who use “prophecy” to collect money for themselves, give empty answers, have an earthly spirit, and attempt to gain a prominent place. Again the behavior of the prophet is the key issue. The true prophet is “meek, gentle, lowly-minded, refrains from all wickedness and evil desire of the world, and makes himself poorer than all men” (Herm. Man. 11.8).

The true prophet also does not give oracular answers to questions put to him, especially in private. The authentic prophetic ministry is a congregational one that arises as the community is in prayer (Herm. Man. 11.9). Culturally this was to differentiate the prophetic gift from fortunetellers and soothsayers.

## REVEAL, REVELATION

Revelation signifies the unveiling or disclosure of that which is hidden or secret. In the NT it refers usually to the disclosure of divine things, often associated with the second coming or the revealing of Jesus, which cannot be known apart from a divine act of revelation often attributed to the Spirit of God.

In the early Christian writings the concept of revelation had a general use and a specific use. The general was understood as when God uncovers something the other more technical use deals primarily with the revelation of Jesus Christ whether it be his second coming or his first. Of the words used for revelation, reveal, apokalyptō or apokalypsis occurs in the Shepherd of Hermas (thirty-three times).

The conspicuous fact about these writings is that the idea of revelation of God's counsel or of Jesus' person has lost its NT content and has been reduced chiefly to visionary and apocalyptic experiences. Characteristically these terms do not refer to the counsel of God or to the Second Coming of Christ.

The great majority of instances, revelation is used of visionary experiences and their interpretation (almost all of the examples from Hermas [more than fifty]), of personal directions Or the disclosure of various matters.

The conclusion with regard to Hermas as it relates to the use of revelation. It is not used in the exalted way as it is in the New Testament apocalyptic writings to mean the unveiling of Jesus and his second coming. More so in the way Paul uses it to refer to a lesser revelation as in Philippians. I think this is because the author clearly understood they were writing prophecy that was to be judged and not anything with apostolic authority.

## VISIONS, ECSTATIC EXPERIENCE

Ecstasy is the state of being removed from the awareness of the mundane perceptions of the sensory world and awakening to the perception of the extrasensory world. It should be noted this does not imply eastern ideas of a loss of consciousness or enters into trance like state.

Such an awareness could be as late as an impression or as strong as a mental image that so captures the mind one perceives. And experience is it as if it were real.

Those who experience ekstasis, and the community that has a sufficient number of members who have this experience, are confirmed in their convictions that the visible world is only the partial context in which one lives out one's life. In the early church, visions and ecstatic experience serve to confirm for its members the sense that the new community is in tune with the invisible, eternal, divine order. The presence of God's Spirit assures them of God's approval of the new community and direction of its life and mission. This confirmation allows them to deflect the criticism of and withstand hostility from those outside the community.

The Didache speaks of itinerant charismatic teachers as a regular feature of life in the church at the beginning of the second century. These figures traveled from community to community, bringing words from the Spirit. While the Didache offers some guidelines for their treatment and discernment of their genuineness, these teachers enjoyed considerable *carte blanche* by means of their charismatic authority.

Hermas is also concerned about the discernment of the true charismatic prophet and the exploiter of the office. The true prophet speaks to the assembled community: his or her visions are directed to strengthening the group's convictions and offering moral direction. The profiteer offers answers to individuals who come with questions like people consulting a pagan oracle (Herm. Man. 11.1-17).

The Shepherd of Hermas is a collection of revelatory discourses and is often called an apocalypse (Osiek; Hellholm). It is reminiscent of Daniel and 4 Ezra in its emphasis on the need for ascetic preparation for visions. Some scholars, following J. Donaldson, debate this generic definition on account of the abundance of paraenetic material, particularly in the last two sections (the Commands and Parables). These moral directives, however, are embedded in and legitimated by the prophet's ecstatic experiences: the commands are spoken directly by the angelic being to him.

Hermas, and the parables are a combination of angelic revelation and the seer's participation in the visions themselves. Hermas is therefore very much in keeping with other early Christian apocalypses (Osiek) and is best analyzed from within that genre.

The author himself is a prophet within the circle of churches at or near Rome. L. W. Barnard finds ample evidence within the book for the activity of prophets in the Roman church, as well as echoes of Hermas's own ministry within that circle (Herm. Vis. 2.2.6-8; Herm. Vis. 3.8.9-11; Herm. Sim. 10.2.2-4).

S. Tugwell has suggested, plausibly, that Hermas's "children" are the people of the Christian community in which he exercises this prophetic and admonitory ministry. The book functions in a manner very similar to Revelation. The seer opens for his congregation a window into the plan of God, and within this larger context he asks them to reevaluate their lives and commitments.

Hermas expresses deep concern that all believers should repent and rededicate themselves to walking in righteousness. C. Osiek and Tugwell agree that he shows special concern for those who are doubleminded, among whom the wealthy figure prominently. These believers are in danger of denying their Lord for the sake of their property when persecution comes (Herm. Vis. 3.6.5-7) and are caught between dedication to the law of God and the laws of the earthly city in which they are too much at home (Herm. Sim. 1.1-11). Such people suffer from placing too much value on this world and its concerns; the remedy is to set their life in the world in a larger

interpretative context. Again the vision form is effective, challenging the visible world's claim to primary importance with a glimpse of the eternally significant.

Through the series of visionary revelations Hermas clarifies for his congregations the nature of the world in which they live. The primary goal of life is incorporation into the church (the tower that is being built and tested even now). All worldly business and actions must be evaluated by this one criterion: Does it lead toward cementing or jeopardizing one's place in the body of the saved? Moreover the tower is revealed as nearing completion; there can be no delay in responding to the offer of repentance and rededication. The believers stand near the close of this age and the dawn of the next, when the righteous shall receive their inheritance and the wicked shall be exposed (Herm. Sim. 3–4). Hermas's vision gives considerable significance to the present moment in which repentance is offered and steadfastness to the end mandated. The commands of the Shepherd are given as a sort of end-time rule; the visions' unveiling of the demands of the moment gives these commands their binding authority.

In a manner again similar to Revelation, Hermas posits a coming period of persecution (Herm. Vis. 2.2.6–8; 4.1.1–4.2.6). Here Hermas seeks, in Osiek's words, "to shape heavily a community's perception of reality." The believers must not forget that the unbelieving society is hostile to Christ and therefore to Christ's true followers. We have seen Hermas's concern for the believers who have prospered in an all too comfortable relationship with that society. The word of the vision shatters this symbiosis. As the prosperous Christians in Asia Minor were most in danger of participating in Babylon's sins and succumbing to the pressure to join the worshipers of the beast, so the wealthy in the Roman church are called to question their easy alliance with the pagan society and, when the time comes, be prepared to choose their Lord over their property and place in society. The restrictions on the term of repentance also serve to motivate the believers to fortify themselves in their commitment now, since future apostasy will receive no pardon (Herm. Vis. 2.2.8).

## Other aspects of content

### Christology.

In Hermas's visions, he describes the Son of God (see Son of God) in the constant company of six archangels who are God's counselors and guardians of the church (Herm. Sim. 5.5.3; 9.6.2; 9.12.8). While Hermas's christology is probably adoptionist (cf. Herm. Sim. 5.6.), he identifies a principal angel more strongly with the Spirit than with Christ (Herm. Man. 11.9).

### The Two Ways Tradition.

The existence of a Two Ways tradition in early Judaism and Christianity has been confirmed by the striking catechism in the Qumran Rule of the Community (1QS 3:13–4:26). While it is based on OT types of moral instruction (Deut 30:15–20; Ps 1) and Jewish notions of good and evil inclinations (Sir 33:7–15; T. Asher 1:3–9), the tradition includes both a cosmic antithesis of good and evil angels and an eschatological meting out of rewards and punishments. A truncated version of this tradition may be present in Paul's catalogue of works of the flesh and fruits of the Spirit (Gal 5:17–24), but a much fuller account is found in Hermas Mandates 6.2 (cf. Did. 1.1–2.7 and *Doctrina Apostolorum*).

### Dipsychia

Dipsychia ("double-soulness" or "doublemindedness") and its related verb and adjective occur 55 times in Hermas ("doublemindedness") 16 times, ("to be doubleminded") 20 times, and; ("doubleminded") 19 times- as contrasted to a total of 10 times in all other early Christian literature up to this time. The expression may derive from the Hebrew which, however, seems to have more to do with human dealings with one another. In some of the Christian references the word group more closely approximates its meaning in Hermas, that is, having to do with one's relationship to God. Here, the key is the discussion in Mandate 9, where it becomes clear that for our author the struggle of the doubleminded is not the moral struggle between good and evil, as it is, for instance in T Ash. 1-4, or between honesty and dishonesty, but between trust or lack of trust in God. It is "a divided allegiance . . . doubt, uncertainty with regard to God and salvation, and with regard to their own affairs." The doubleminded one hesitates to ask anything from God because of previous sinfulness (v. 1), but is reassured that God does not keep grudges (vv. 2-3), and is encouraged to have the confidence to ask boldly and without hesitation, the opposite of doublemindedness, and therefore to choose faith which has power and to abandon doubt which is powerless. Doublemindedness is the fate of the person caught between the two spirits, not with a clear-cut distinction between good and evil, but in that the spirit at work in the doubleminded is a spirit of discouragement and doubt. This discouragement necessarily then over-flows into the rest of one's life, causing disruptions such as dissension (Sim. 8.9.4) and unwillingness to act justly (Sim. 8.8.1-3). But the starting point is not deeds; it is lack of trust in God. The doubleminded are drawn to the false prophet of Mandate 11 because they are kindred spirits: not demonic or evil, just earthly and empty<sup>3</sup>

### Apostasy

The Shepherd of Hermas makes a number of references to the matter of apostasy. The noun apostate (*apostatēs*), appearing in Hermas (Herm. Sim. 8.6.2–6), indicates the reality of a pastoral problem at the time. "Apostates" are in effect deconverted, doing "the deeds of the heathen" (Herm. Sim. 8.9.3). Hermas's admonition against a servant denying his Lord (Herm. Sim. 9.28.4) is a probable echo from 2 Peter 2:1, Jude 4 and 1 John 2:2. To do so is to "deny" one's own life (Herm. Vis. 2.2.7–8). The impulse for such denial is fear of persecution and a

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<sup>3</sup> Caroly Osiek, *Shepherd of Hermas: A Commentary*. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999.) 30-31

desire to hold on to one's wealth (Herm. Vis. 3.6.5; Herm. Sim. 8.8.5; see Riches). For the "apostate" (i.e., the denier), unlike the lesser sinners (hypocrites and false teachers who may find repentance if it is speedily sought), there is no repentance but only death (Herm. Sim. 9.19.1).

#### Apostleship

The Shepherd of Hermas. This document, written possibly about A.D. 140–45, consists of preliminary visions seen by Hermas and mandates and similitudes conveyed to Hermas by a glorious figure in the garb of a shepherd. It is in the third vision and the ninth similitude that references to apostles are found.

In the third vision Hermas sees a tower, which represents the church, being built with stones squared and white, representing the apostles, bishops, teachers and deacons (Herm. Vis. 3.5.1). In the ninth similitude forty stones are identified as "apostles and teachers of the preaching of the Son of God" (Herm. Sim. 9.15.4). The apostles are described as those who preached to the twelve nations who inhabit the whole world (Herm. Sim. 9.17.1; 9.25.2). The apostles and teachers, having fallen asleep themselves, are said to have preached to them that had fallen asleep before them (Herm. Sim. 9.16.5). In this document, then, it is the preaching of the gospel that is seen as the main function of the apostles, whether that be thought of in terms of preaching to all the inhabitants of the world during their lifetime or to the dead when the apostles themselves joined their ranks.

#### The Hellenistic World and proto-gnosticism

The Christianity of the apostolic fathers was lived in a thoroughly Hellenized Roman world. These writers all wrote in Greek, but in addition many of them reveal a significant dependence upon Greek thought. They can on occasion appeal to Hellenistic virtues and perspectives, Hellenistic philosophy, and to ethics that resemble the best in Hellenism (e.g., Stoicism).

Hellenistic influence upon Hermas, on the other hand, is only encountered at a relatively superficial level. Although there appears to be some Polemical content against Greek influence in the form of an proto-gnosticism. Hermas probably opposes gnostics in Similitudes 5.7.2 and 9.22, arguing against those who falsely claim knowledge.

#### Assurance after post baptism sin and apostasy.

So what about a person who sinned after baptism? This issue is taken up in the Shepherd of Hermas, Mandate 4.3.1–7 (cf. 1.8; Hippolytus Haer. 9.12.20–26). Hermas is told that there is no repentance after baptism (Herm. Man. 4.3.2). The passage is rather confusing after this, but at its end Hermas is given assurance of his salvation, as are all who practice these things (Herm. Man. 4.3.7).

The Shepherd gives his instruction in such a way as not to give an excuse (aphormē). At the same time he points out the weakness of humanity and the wiles of the devil as causes for sin (Herm. Man. 4.3.4). For his main answer to the question, the Shepherd seems to rely on the foreknowledge and mercy of God in the granting of repentance, the Shepherd himself being given the authority over this repentance (Herm. Man. 4.3.5). It seems, then, that the Shepherd does not say it is impossible for a person to be saved if they sin after baptism, but that they will be saved only with difficulty (dyskolōs; cf. Herm. Sim. 9.23.3; Herm. Man. 9.6), akin to 1 Peter 4:18 and Jude 22–23.

#### Repentance (the common view)

Shepherd of Hermas. Repentance dominates Hermas—the shepherd is none other than the angel of repentance. The book begins by addressing Hermas's need and the need of his children for repentance (Herm. Vis. 1.2-3) but quickly moves on to call all believers who have

sinned to hasten to repent (Herm. Sim. 8.11). By repentance the “Gentiles” may join the church, represented as a tower being built in a vast plain; it is also the means by which believers who have fallen again into sin may be restored to their place in the church. There is a helpful distinction between the church as a historical institution and the church as the eternal assembly of the purified that receives the promise of God. Sinners may be found in the midst of the former, but only those who repent shall attain to the latter.

Hermas lends urgency to repentance by stressing the proximity of the end of the age, when the tower shall be completed and the unrepentant shut out forever (Herm. Vis. 3.5; Herm. Sim. 10.4). He lends seriousness to repentance by proclaiming that there is only one repentance for the believer (Herm. Man. 4.1). Believers may be forgiven and restored, but they must repent speedily and not fall away again; novitiates must not fall away at all (Behm). Repentance is always the gift of God (Herm. Sim. 8.6), who desires that “all who were called through his Son should be saved” (Herm. Sim. 8.11; cf. 1 Tim 2:4). It is an understanding that a certain action is wrong and blameworthy, combined with a commitment to walk thereafter in the right way (Herm. Man. 4.2). For repentance to be shown to be pure and genuine, and thus to result in remission of sin, it must bear the fruit of obedience to the commands of God (Herm. Man. 2; Herm. Sim. 9.33), given in a sort of shorthand in the Mandates. As in 1 and 2 Peter, repentance for sins is inseparable from the positive counterpart of commitment to righteousness (Herm. Sim. 6.1). The one repentance must be kept undefiled: the Christian life is a preservation of one's withdrawal from the control of sin and Satan and one's submission to the works and commands of God (Herm. Man. 12.3).

Hermas allows those who formerly denied Jesus to repent but allows no chance for repentance for those who, after his proclamation, deny the Lord (Herm. Vis. 2.2), suggesting that Hermas's situation is one of high tension between church and society. His rhetoric promotes fidelity at any cost, as did the rhetoric of Hebrews. It is better for a person to remain an unbeliever than to come to the knowledge of God only to fall away again (Herm. Sim. 9.17.5–18.2; cf. 2 Pet 2:20–22).

#### Metanoia (repentance as conversion)

Though some have raised doubts, most scholars conclude that Metanoia is the major theme or concern in Hermas. But much depends on what is understood by the term. One major line of interpretation assumes that behind the author's preoccupation lie the beginnings of a church discipline of penitence. Such an assumption is unfounded. But to say that Metanoia is the central message does not presuppose a discipline of penance; this distinction is often blurred by commentators. The attitude of repentance is a fundamental Jewish and Christian value. It does not in itself require any ritual or ecclesiastical discipline of reincorporation

Another problem involved is the theology of repentance in the early church. While 1 John 1:6–2:2 and 5:15–18 seem to equivocate over whether sin after baptism is forgivable, Heb 6:4–6 and 10:26–31 take the position that it is not. Hermas reaffirms the ideal that only those newly called, not the already baptized, have another chance (Man. 4.3.1–7). Previously, he had announced with heavenly authority the possibility of forgiveness for the baptized—but only once and in eschatological context (Vis. 2.2.4–5). If this teaching is seen as compromising the original disciplinary rigor of Hebrews, then Hermas can be seen as a step along the way of moral decline after the pristine earlier ideals. Alternatively, the author stands in a tradition that always offered repentance to the baptized, especially in eschatological perspective. He could also represent a middle position that uses eschatological expectation as the occasion to proclaim an exceptional “jubilee” release from sin. Hermas attempts, as does already the author of

1 John, to hold in tension the ideal that there be no necessity of forgiveness after baptism with the reality that there is. The same teachers who teach no repentance after baptism to

catechumens also preach repentance to baptized sinners, not by insincerity or deception, but by adjustment to this reality. The church, all the while maintaining the integrity of baptism, did not wish to make baptism a greater obstacle to salvation. The central problem is not one of church discipline, but of anthropology: the problem of the sinning Christian. Seen in the perspective of those caught between ideal and reality, there is a tension but not a contradiction. The change envisioned is not a ritual or repetitive action, but a fundamental personal change. Though it may have to be repeated, the underlying conviction is that it is permanent. This is the reason why consistently throughout this commentary, the word *Metanoia* is translated not by the usual "repentance" but by "conversion." The English "repentance," like the most frequent German translation "Busse," the French "penitence," and even less so the Latin *paenitentia* (Sim. 9.33.3, etc.), does not convey the profound change of heart envisioned and pleaded for by *Hermas*. It is not a question of ritual or repeated action, not a discipline or an expectation, but personal and corporate transformation through the power of the good spirit, which necessitates new commitments for the future, not only the eschatological future, but the immediate historical future as well. The best image for what the author intends is the old woman church who becomes younger as the process of transformation takes shape (Vis. 3.10-13). The narrative contains all the elements of surprise, delight, reenergizing, and future expectation. The rejuvenated woman is the symbol of the whole church, which experiences conversion together. It is therefore incomprehensible that some commentators see in *Hermas* a move into individualist ethics, seemingly mistaking a move from public, national, and political to private, domestic, or nonpolitical for a move from communal to individualist.<sup>230</sup> True, the revelation is given to one person, but that characteristic is common to nearly all apocalyptic literature. The concerns are not with a broad sweep of history but with the daily life of the faithful. But the seer is deputed immediately to communicate the revelation to the church (Vis. 2.4.3). The paraenesis is consistently addressed to persons in the plural. The various visions of the church, from the tower and building stones to the twelve mountains, are of a collective society in which each unit is part of the whole. The concern for the doing of justice toward others recurs regularly. The very last admonition in the book is to help those who suffer (Sim. 10.2-4). The whole purpose of

the book is the dissemination of a message of conversion to all believers. It is not a philosophical discussion on virtue, as is the case, for instance, with its probable contemporary, the *Tabula of Cebes*. Rather, it is a "how to" book of instruction for Christian believers in community. The social function of *Hermas* is to maintain the close integration of Christian faith and life, to keep attitudes and especially behavior consonant with articulated beliefs. This is probably one reason that the book is long on ethical teaching and short on what is usually recognized as theology. In fact, the eclectic theology of the book reinforces the conviction of the author that the best theology is that written on the heart of believers and communicated through eyes, speech, hands, and feet. Without the message of the possibility of further conversion after that of baptism, there would be no incentive for the alienated to rejoin the community. As it is, the author is able to realize his goal of reinforcing and re-creating the holiness of the community, especially in its members' dealings with each other. *Metanoia*, change of heart, makes that possible.<sup>4</sup>

#### Power to live godly life

The Mandates of the Shepherd of *Hermas* have much to say about drawing on God's strengthening power for getting rid of sinful tendencies and acquiring virtue. In Mandates 5.2, for example, *Hermas* stresses the need to deal with an angry temper. He sees it as a dangerous vice that opens the believer up to the influence of evil spirits. *Hermas* suggests that those who are filled with faith can overcome it "because the power of the Lord is with them [hē

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<sup>4</sup> Caroly Osiek, *Shepherd of Hermas: A Commentary*. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999.) 28-30

dynamis tou theou met' autōn estin]" (Herm. Man. 5.2.1). For Hermas, since faith is powerful (ischyra), believers should "trust God that you will receive all the requests you make" (Herm. Man. 9.7; cf. also Herm. Man. 9.10; 11.4).

One needs to guard against doubt (dipsychia) because it is from the devil (Herm. Man. 9.9). In drawing on the power of God, Hermas also emphasizes the need to repent from sin (Herm. Vis. 3.5.5.), fear the Lord (Herm. Man. 7.4: "the fear of the Lord is powerful"), and trust in the Holy Spirit (Herm. Man. 11.21: "the divine Spirit that comes from above is powerful").

## Concluding thoughts: Reading the shepherd

Don't read like you read the Bible - It is a mistake to look for perfect overall consistency in the text except in a few stylistic tendencies like oral patterns of repetition.

If one assumes the content comes from the author own visionary experiences he then wrote down then it makes sense to not expect an overall consonance of details. For each experience is God saying something for that moment, no farther. In keeping with second order revelation of Christian prophecy. That is revelation which is not authoritative in the sense of being binding on the conscience. The shepherd is an example of a record of revelation not given to convey timeless truths but time bound exhortations that moves The church godward.

So Each story or unit must be taken primarily on its own merits.

It is not ideas or concepts that are at work here, to read so one learn hermas' theology to add to your own theology would be a misuses of the work.

Given the nature of the literature (Christain prophecy) What is at work are symbols and images, which are infinitely pliable and given to spark the imagination stir the emotions and bring the whole person to action.

Like all prophetic ministry: Hermas challenges the status quo, he calls the church to be in practice what it already is in position.

The content of revelation be analyzed theological to bring forth ideas and concepts. Such activity All one is doing is parsing the way God communicates a meaningful message through the symbols and metaphorical world of one Christain.

God speaks to a prophetic person in a way that will be cryptic and yet God's lisp is shaped for the thought world of the on receiving the revelation. Thus the person being addressed has the best chance to understands and convey a message that aims at listening eliciting repentance(if needed) inspire desire, comfort wounding, calling forth courage, and grounding misguided longing in grace and love,

Such literature is about lived Faith in a godward action, loving God in such a way we embody our faith in how we act, actions that are consistent with Christian character and behavior.