

Shepherd of Hermas

Help for reading and understanding Hermas may be found in Carolyn Osiek's *Shepherd of Hermas: A Commentary*, Hermeneia. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999 (cited as *OSH* below).

The Shepherd is a different person from Hermas. The Shepherd is a heavenly figure, probably intended to be viewed as an angel, who gives revelation to Hermas (who is a Christian man) in a series of visions. The book is structured as a series of sections: first five visions (ὄρασις), the fifth of which serves as the introduction to a series of twelve commands (ἐντολή, traditionally, “mandates”), followed by ten parables (παραβολή, traditionally, “similitudes”). In the first four visions the revelation given to Hermas comes through a woman (portrayed, sometimes in a bizarre way, as an older or younger woman) who is an allegory for the church. In vision five the Shepherd is introduced and becomes the revelatory agent for the remainder of the book. He is also described as the angel of repentance to whom Hermas has been entrusted.

The primary concern of the book is Christian life and character. The twin themes which dominate the Shepherd are the opposing concepts of self control and double-mindedness—ἐγκράτια and διψυχία (the later of which is probably to be understood as lack of faith). The repeated refrain that explains how to move from the negative (διψυχία) to the positive (ἐγκράτια) is the need for μετανοία (repentance).¹¹⁵ One of the peculiarities of the book is that Jesus is never identified by name; neither *Jesus* nor *Jesus Christ* appear in the book—perhaps, as some have suggested, out of reverence for his name (following the Jewish superstition of not pronouncing the name of God).¹¹⁶ Jesus is referred to in the book, though indirectly as κύριος or υἱός.

The book probably originated in the early-mid second century, probably in Rome. One can sense in the Shepherd many of the concerns and issues of sin and obedience of the early church as they struggle with life in Rome. The book was very popular in the early church and many thought it should have been part of the NT canon. The original Greek text has not been well preserved. In Similitude 9.30–10.5 (the end of the book) there is

¹¹⁵ Osiek argues that μετανοία should be understood as conversion rather than repentance (though she views these concepts through a Roman Catholic grid).

¹¹⁶ J. Christian Wilson, *Five Problems in the Interpretation of the Shepherd of Hermas*, Mellen Biblical Press series, v. 34 (Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 1995), 73–79. The author of Hermas was probably a Jewish Christian—possibly, Wilson suggests, someone with a Qumran background (though Osiek concludes that such suggestions come up short [*OSH*, 24–25]).

no complete extant Greek evidence for the text. In most of these sections the text is found only in Latin translation though there are some scattered Greek fragments.¹¹⁷

Ἐντολή α' (Mandate 1)

1.¹¹⁸ Πρῶτον πάντων πίστευσον, ὅτι εἷς ἐστὶν ὁ θεός, ὁ τὰ πάντα κτίσας καὶ καταρτίσας καὶ ποιήσας ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος εἰς τὸ εἶναι τὰ πάντα καὶ πάντα χωρῶν, μόνος δὲ ἀχώρητος ὢν. 2.¹¹⁹ πίστευσον οὖν αὐτῷ καὶ φοβήθητι αὐτόν, φοβηθεὶς δὲ ἐγκράτευσαι. ταῦτα φύλασσε, καὶ ἀποβαλεῖς πᾶσαν πονηρίαν ἀπὸ σεαυτοῦ καὶ ἐνδύση πᾶσαν ἀρετὴν δικαιοσύνης καὶ ζήση τῷ θεῷ, ἐὰν φυλάξης τὴν ἐντολὴν ταύτην.

1.1. First of all, believe that God is one, the one who created and designed all things, and who made all things out of what did not exist in order that they might exist, and who contains all things, but alone being uncontained. 2. Wherefore, believe him and fear him, and because you fear, be self-controlled. Guard these things and you will cast off all evil from yourself and you will put on every righteous virtue and you will live for God, if you keep this commandment.

¹¹⁷ Holmes gives the Greek text where it is extant, the Latin where it is not (AF, 514–27).

¹¹⁸ 1.1. πίστευσον, 2SAMB > πιστεύω; three ptcps, AAPMSN: κτίσας, καταρτίσας, ποιήσας; three forms of εἶμι: two ptcps (ὄντος, PAPMSG, and ὢν, PAPMSN) and one inf (εἶναι); χωρῶν, PAPMSN > χωρέω, to *make room, contain* (B 1094.3). Remember the hierarchy of rules which determines which of two nominatives is the subject of a linking verb. The article ὁ governs four adj substan ptcps, the three aor ptcps immed. following the article and also χωρῶν. The ptcp τοῦ ὄντος is also substantival. The inf with εἰς τό = purpose. The phrase τὰ πάντα occurs twice, first as the object of a ptcp, the second as acc of gen ref, so-called subj of inf.

¹¹⁹ 1.2. πίστευσον, 2SAAM > πιστεύω; φοβήθητι, 2SAPM > φοβέω; φοβηθεὶς, APPMSN, this adv ptcp is probably causal (see transl.); ἐγκράτευσαι, 2SAMB > ἐγκρατεύομαι, to *control oneself, abstain*; φύλασσε, 2SPAM > φυλάσσω; ἀποβαλεῖς, 2SFAI > ἀποβάλλω (liquid future); ἐνδύση, ζήση, both 2SFMI > ἐνδύω, ζάω (by form, both could also be 2SAAS); φυλάξης, 2SAAS > φυλάσσω.

Ἐντολή ια' (Mandate 11)

1.¹²⁰ Ἐδειξέ μοι ἐπὶ συμψελλίου καθήμενους ἄνθρώπους καὶ ἕτερον ἄνθρωπον καθήμενον ἐπὶ καθέδραν, καὶ λέγει μοι· Βλέπεις τοὺς ἐπὶ τοῦ συμψελλίου καθήμενους; Βλέπω, φημί, κύριε. Οὗτοι, φησί, πιστοὶ εἰσι, καὶ ὁ καθήμενος ἐπὶ τὴν καθέδραν ψευδοπροφήτης ἐστίν, ὃς ἀπόλλυσι τὴν διάνοιαν τῶν δούλων τοῦ θεοῦ· τῶν διψύχων δὲ ἀπόλλυσιν, οὐ τῶν πιστῶν. 2.¹²¹ οὗτοι οὖν οἱ δίψυχοι ὡς ἐπὶ μάντιν ἔρχονται καὶ ἐπερωτῶσιν αὐτόν, τί ἄρα ἔσται αὐτοῖς· κάκεῖνος ὁ ψευδοπροφήτης, μηδεμίαν ἔχων ἐν ἑαυτῷ δύναμιν πνεύματος θεοῦ, λαλεῖ μετ' αὐτῶν κατὰ τὰ ἐπερωτήματα αὐτῶν καὶ κατὰ τὰς ἐπιθυμίας τῆς πονηρίας αὐτῶν καὶ πληροῖ τὰς ψυχὰς αὐτῶν, καθὼς αὐτοὶ βούλονται. 3.¹²² αὐτὸς γὰρ κενὸς ὢν κενὰ καὶ ἀποκρίνεται κενοῖς· ὁ γὰρ ἐὰν ἐπερωτηθῆ, πρὸς τὸ κένωμα τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἀποκρίνεται. τινὰ δὲ καὶ ῥήματα ἀληθῆ λαλεῖ· ὁ γὰρ διάβολος πληροῖ αὐτὸν τῷ αὐτοῦ πνεύματι, εἴ

¹²⁰ 11.1. Ἐδειξέ, 3SAAI > δεικνύμι, *to show, point out* (B 214), the subject of this verb is the Shepherd to whom Hermas was entrusted, first met in Vision 5; συμψέλιον, ου, τό, *bench* (Latin loanword, *subsellium*, consistently spelled συμψελλίον in Hermas; B 961); ἕτερος, *other, different*, context makes it clear that here ἕτερος *does* refer to another of a different kind (this cannot be assumed in every instance); καθέδρα, ας, ἡ, *chair* (B 490); διάνοια, ας, ἡ, *mind, understanding* (B 234); δίψυχος, ον, *double-minded, doubting, hesitating* (B 253); τῶν διψύχων δὲ ἀπόλλυσιν, supply τὴν διάνοιαν from preceding clause: “he destroys [the mind] of the double-minded.”

¹²¹ 11.2. μάντις, εως, ὁ, *soothsayer, diviner, fortune teller* (B 616; some older texts have μαγός, *magician*, here); θεῖος, θεία, θεῖον, *divine* (B 496); πληροῖ, 3SPAΙ > πληρώω, omicron contract verb: πληρῶ, πληροῖς, πληροῖ, etc.

¹²² 11.3. δυνήσεται, 3SFMI > δύναμαι; ῥήξαι, AAN > ῥήσσω, *to throw down*, “fig., of the devil, who tries to cause the righteous man to fall Hm 11:3” (B 905).

τινα δυνήσεται ῥῆξαι τῶν δικάων. 4.¹²³ ὅσοι οὖν ἰσχυροί εἰσιν ἐν τῇ πίστει τοῦ κυρίου, ἐνδεδυμένοι τὴν ἀλήθειαν, τοῖς τοιούτοις πνεύμασιν οὐ κολλῶνται, ἀλλ' ἀπέχονται ἀπ' αὐτῶν· ὅσοι δὲ δίψυχοί εἰσι καὶ πυκνῶς μετανοοῦσι, μαντεύονται ὡς καὶ τὰ ἔθνη καὶ ἑαυτοῖς μείζονα ἀμαρτίαν ἐπιφέρουσιν εἰδωλολατροῦντες· ὁ γὰρ ἐπερωτῶν ψευδοπροφήτην περὶ πράξεώς τινος εἰδωλολοάτρης ἐστὶ καὶ κενὸς ἀπὸ τῆς ἀληθείας καὶ ἄφρων.

5. πᾶν γὰρ πνεῦμα ἀπὸ θεοῦ δοθὲν οὐκ ἐπερωτᾶται, ἀλλὰ ἔχον τὴν δύναμιν τῆς θεότητος ἀφ' ἑαυτοῦ λαλεῖ ἅπαντα, ὅτι ἄνωθεν ἐστὶν ἀπὸ τῆς δυνάμεως τοῦ θείου πνεύματος. 6. τὸ δὲ πνεῦμα τὸ ἐπερωτῶμενον καὶ λαλοῦν κατὰ τὰς ἐπιθυμίας τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐπίγειόν ἐστι καὶ ἐλαφρόν, δύναμιν μὴ ἔχον· καὶ ὅλως οὐ λαλεῖ, ἐὰν μὴ ἐπερωτηθῇ. 7. Πῶς οὖν, φημί, κύριε, ἄνθρωπος γινώσεται, τίς αὐτῶν προφήτης καὶ τίς ψευδοπροφήτης ἐστίν; Ἄκουε, φησί, περὶ ἀμφοτέρων τῶν προφητῶν· καὶ ὡς σοι μέλλω λέγειν, οὕτω δοκιμάσεις τὸν προφήτην καὶ τὸν ψευδοπροφήτην. ἀπὸ τῆς ζωῆς δοκίμαζε τὸν ἄνθρωπον τὸν ἔχοντα τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ θεῖον.

8. πρῶτον μὲν ὁ ἔχων τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἄνωθεν πραῦς ἐστὶ καὶ ἡσύχιος καὶ ταπεινόφρων καὶ ἀπεχόμενος ἀπὸ πάσης πονηρίας καὶ ἐπιθυμίας ματαίας τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου καὶ ἑαυτὸν ἐνδεέστερον

¹²³ 11.4. ἐνδεδυμένοι, RPPMPN > ἐνδύω; κολλῶνται, 3PPPI > κολλάω, *to joining together, join oneself to, join, cling to, associate with* (“pass. most freq. in act. sense,” B 555–56); πυκνῶς, adv., *frequently*; μαντεύονται, 3PPMI > μαντεύομαι, *to divine, consult an oracle/fortune teller* (B 616); ἐπιφέρουσιν, 3PPAI > ἐπιφέρω, *to bring upon*; εἰδωλολατροῦντες, PAPMPN > εἰδωλολατρέω, *to be/become an idolator/image-worshipper, commit idolatry* (B 280), instrumental ptcp, “by committing...”; εἰδωλολοάτρης, ου, ὁ, *idolater, image-worshipper* (B 280).

ποιεῖ πάντων τῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ οὐδενὶ οὐὲν ἀποκρίνεται
 ἐπερωτώμενος, οὐδὲ καταμόνας λαλεῖ, οὐδὲ ὅταν θέλη ἄνθρωπος
 λαλεῖν, λαλεῖ τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, ἀλλὰ τότε λαλεῖ, ὅταν θελήσῃ
 αὐτὸν ὁ θεὸς λαλῆσαι. 9. ὅταν οὖν ἔλθῃ ὁ ἄνθρωπος ὁ ἔχων τὸ
 πνεῦμα τὸ θεῖον εἰς συναγωγὴν ἀνδρῶν δικαίων τῶν ἐχόντων
 πίστιν θεῖον πνεύματος καὶ ἔντευξις γένηται πρὸς τὸ θεὸν τῆς
 συναγωγῆς τῶν ἀνδρῶν ἐκείνων, τότε ὁ ἄγγελος τοῦ προφητικοῦ
 πνεύματος ὁ κείμενος πρὸς αὐτὸν πληροῖ τὸν ἄνθρωπον, καὶ
 πληρωθεὶς ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῷ πνεύματι τῷ πνεύματι τῷ ἁγίῳ λαλεῖ
 εἰς τὸ πλῆθος, καθὼς ὁ κύριος βούλεται. 10. οὕτως οὖν φανερόν
 ἔσται τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς θεότητος. ὅση οὖν περὶ τοῦ πνεύματος τῆς
 θεότητος τοῦ κυρίου ἡ δύναμις αὕτη.

He showed me men seated on a bench, and another man seated on a chair. And he said to me, "Do you see those men seated on the bench?" "I see them, sir," I replied. "These," he said, "are faithful, but the one seated on the chair is a false prophet who destroys the mind of the double-minded, not of believers. 2. These double-minded ones come to him as to a fortune teller, and ask him what will happen to them. And that false prophet, not having the power of a divine spirit in himself, answers them in accordance with their questions and their wicked desires, and fills their souls just as they themselves wish. 3. For since he himself is empty, he gives empty answers to empty enquirers, for no matter what is asked, he answers according to the emptiness of the man asking. But he does speak some true words, for the devil fills him with his own spirit, to see if he will be able to break down any of the righteous. 4. So, those who are strong in the faith of the Lord, having clothed themselves with the truth, do not associate with such spirits, but have nothing to do with them. But those who are double-minded and frequently change their minds practice fortune telling like the pagans and bring greater sin upon themselves by their idolatries. For the one who consults a false prophet on any matter is an idolator and lacks the truth and is senseless. 5. For no spirit given by God needs to be consulted; instead, having the power of deity, it speaks everything on its own initiative, because it is from above, from the power of the divine Spirit. 6. But the spirit that is consulted and which answers according to the desires of the people consulting it is earthly and fickle, and has no power, and does not speak at all unless it is asked." 7. "So how, sir," I asked, "will a man know which of them is a prophet, and which is a false prophet?" "Hear," he said, "about both the prophets, and on the basis of what I am going to tell you, you can test the prophet and the false prophet. Determine the man who has the divine Spirit by his life. 8. In the first place the one who has the divine Spirit from above is gentle and quiet and humble, and stays away from all evil and futile desires of this age, and considers

himself to be poorer than others, and gives no answer to anyone when consulted. Nor does he speak on his own (nor does the Holy Spirit speak when a man wants him to speak), but he speaks when God wants him to speak. 9. So, then, when the man who has the divine Spirit comes into an assembly of righteous men who have faith in a divine Spirit, and intercession is made to God by the assembly of those men, then the angel of the prophetic spirit which is assigned to him fills the man, and being gilled with the Holy spirit the man speaks to the multitude, just as the Lord wills. 10. In this way, then, the Spirit of the Deity will be obvious. Such, therefore, is the power of discernment with respect to the divine Spirit of the Lord.”

11.11. ἄκουε νῦν, φησί, περὶ τοῦ πνεῦματος τοῦ ἐπιγείου καὶ κενοῦ καὶ δύναμιν μὴ ἔχοντος, ἀλλὰ ὄντος μωροῦ. 12. πρῶτον μὲν ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἐκεῖνος ὁ δοκῶν πνεῦμα ἔχειν ὑψοῖ ἑαυτὸν καὶ θέλει πρωτοκαθεδρίαν ἔχειν, καὶ εὐθύς ἰταμός ἐστι καὶ ἀναιδής καὶ πολύλαλος καὶ ἐν τρυφαῖς πολλαῖς ἀναστρεφόμενος καὶ ἐν ἐτέραις πολλαῖς ἀπάταις καὶ μισθοὺς λαμβάνων τῆς προφητείας αὐτοῦ· ἐὰν δὲ μὴ λάβῃ, οὐ προφητεύει. δύναται οὖν πνεῦμα θεῖον μισθοὺς λαμβάνειν καὶ προφητεύειν; οὐκ ἐνδεχεται τοῦτο ποιεῖν θεοῦ προφήτην, ἀλλὰ τῶν τοιούτων προφητῶν εἰγείον ἐστι τὸ πνεῦμα. 13. εἶτα ὅλως εἰς συναγωγὴν ἀνδρῶν δικαίων οὐκ ἐγγίζει, ἀλλ’ ἀποφεύγει αὐτούς· κολᾶται δὲ τοῖς διψύχοις καὶ κενοῖς καὶ κατὰ γωνίαν αὐτοῖς προφητεύει καὶ ἀπατᾷ αὐτοὺς λαλῶν κατὰ τὰς ἐπιθυμίας αὐτῶν πάντα κενῶς· κενοῖς γὰρ καὶ ἀποκρίνεται· τὸ γὰρ κενὸν σκεῦος μετὰ τῶν κενῶν συντιθέμενον οὐ θραύεται, ἀλλὰ συμφωνοῦσιν ἀλλήλοις. 14. ὅταν δὲ ἔλθῃ εἰς συναγωγὴν πλήρη ἀνδρῶν δικαίων ἐχόντων πνεῦμα τὸ ἐπιγειοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ φόβου φεύγει ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ, καὶ κωφοῦται ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἐκεῖνος καὶ ὅλως συνθραύεται, μηδὲν δυνάμενος λαλῆσαι. 15. ἐὰν γὰρ εἰς αὐτοῖς θῆς κεράμιον κενόν, καὶ πάλιν ἀποτιβάσαι θελήσῃς τὴν

ἀποθήκη, τὸ κεράμιον ἐκεῖνο, ὃ ἔθηκας κενον, κενὸν καὶ εὐρήσεις· οὕτω καὶ οἱ προφηταὶ οἱ κενοὶ ὅταν ἔλθωσιν εἰς πνεύματα δικαίων, ὅποιοι ἦλθον, τοιοῦτοι καὶ εὐρίκονται.

16. ἔχεις ἀμφοτέρων τῶν προφητῶν τὴν ζωὴν. δοκίμαζε οὖν ἀπὸ τῶν ἔργων καὶ τῆς ζωῆς τὸν ἄνθρωπον τὸν λέγοντα τῷ πνεύματι τῷ ἐρχομένῳ ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἔχοντι δύναμιν· τῷ ἐρχομένῳ ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ κενῷ μηδὲν πίστευε, ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ δύναμις οὐκ ἔστιν· ἀπὸ τοῦ διαβόλου γὰρ ἔρχεται 18. ἄκουσον οὖν τὴν παραβολὴν, ἣν μέλλω σοι λέγειν· λάβε λίθον καὶ βάλε εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν, ἴδε, εἰ δύνασαι ἄψασθαι αὐτοῦ· ἢ πάλιν λάβε σίφωνα ὕδατος καὶ σιφώνισον εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν, ἴδε, εἰ δύνασαι τρυπῆσαι τὸν οὐρανόν. 19. Πῶς, φημί κύριε, δύναται ταῦτα εἴρηκας. Ὡς ταῦτα οὖν, φησὶν, ἀδύνατά ἐστιν, οὕτω καὶ τὰ πνεύματα τὰ ἐπίγεια ἀδύνατά ἐστι καὶ ἀδρανῆ. 20. λάβε οὖν τὴν δύναμιν τὴν ἄνωθεν ἐρχομένην· ἡ χάλαζα ἐλάχιστόν ἐστι κοκκάριον, καὶ ὅταν ἐπιπέσῃ ἐπὶ κεφαλὴν ἀνθρώπου, πῶς πόνον παρέχει; ἢ πάλιν λάβε σταγόνα, ἢ ἀπὸ τοῦ κεράμου πίπτει χαμαὶ ἄνωθεν ἐλάχιστα πίπτοντα ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν μεγάλην δύναμιν ἔχει· οὕτω καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ θεῖον ἄνωθεν ἐρχόμενον δυνατὸν ἐστι· τούτῳ οὖν τῷ πνεύματι πίστευε, ἀπὸ δὲ τοῦ ἐτέρου ἀπέχου.