

THE SHEPHERD OF HERMAS

The Shepherd of Hermas is a tip of tiresome mystical drivel that was considered to be scripture by many in the early Church. In the Eastern Church, it was widely regarded as scripture in the 2nd and 3rd centuries. The Muratorian Canon used by the Church of Rome about 200 AD which was the earliest canon of the Church permitted the Shepherd of Hermas to be used in private worship. In 367 AD, because of Athanasius, the entire Eastern Church allowed converts to try and get spiritual guidance from that heretical drivel.

The Shepherd seems to have been written by a brother of Pope Pius 1 who reigned from about 140 AD to 155 AD. It was written in this time. The Muratorian Canon says so though The Shepherd itself claims to have been written earlier than that in the time of Clement of Rome. The work could be first century for it seems to have been formed in the womb of a very primitive Church.

Some place the authorship in the time of Pope Zephyrinus (197-217 AD) (see New Age Bible Versions, page 564) but that is too late. The book could only have gained its popularity in a Church that did not have official gospels for it conflicts with them at every major point and many minor ones.

Gore tells us that the writer was stupid (page 496, The Reconstruction of Belief) and careless (page 525). The writer seems to have denied the full humanity of Jesus (page 525). The reason he seemed to have been stupid was the silliness of the doctrines and the receptiveness towards paganism. That does not make him stupid. He was writing for a stupid Church.

Hermas said he was taken away into Arcadia. Arcadia was the place where the pagan god, Pan, lived. Hermas believed that the pagans were divinely inspired when he did not refer to Heaven instead. This contradicts the gospels.

There is a raunchy bit where the writer enjoyed the embraces and kisses and stayed overnight with a lady in his vision. Jesus forbade sexy thoughts and visions. And so did the hypocritical Hermas.

The book says that the apostles and the bishops and the teachers and deacons agree with one another (Vision 2). He approves of them which tells us a lot about what tradition was saying about the apostles at that time. If this is true, then the gospels were written by heretics and forgers intent on perverting the true faith as exemplified in Hermas.

Hermas says you can tell a true prophet of God by the fact that the prophet is tranquil (Vision 5). This is wrong for Jesus and Moses endured a lot of stress. Remember Jonah. The book is denying the validity of these prophets at least at certain times and is certainly saying that the gospels are lying about Jesus or that there are no gospels. Jesus often got angry, tired and nearly died of fright before his crucifixion. The existence of this Jesus was denied in the early Church which is the same as rejecting the gospels.

The book claims that Hermas received a revelation from God telling him “that for post-baptismal sin there was indeed forgiveness, but for one such sin only – no more” (Vision 2:2). This is a serious departure from the practice and teaching of Jesus Christ. Jesus pardoned Zaccheaus who committed countless sins. Hermas fantasised about a married woman and wondered if he could get pardoned for this sin. His answer shows great hypocrisy for even if he never committed that sin again there were plenty of others to choose from. Baptism would only be lawful on your deathbed which conflicts with the urgency of the message to repent and get saved delivered by Jesus. Jesus declared the Holy Spirit to be in his apostles indicating that they had the same status as baptised persons assuming baptism gives the Holy Spirit as tradition says. But he forgave their many sins after this time.

Hermas wrote, “Put off grief from thyself, for it is the sister of doubt and all ill-temper...Dost thou not understand that grief is the most evil of all the spirits, and most to be dreaded by the servants of God, and more than all spirits it destroys man and obliterates the Holy Spirit?” (741). Nobody could believe any of this. One is entitled to grieve when God does evil for a purpose for that purpose may not do you much good. Grief does not bring doubt but could be caused by faith. Jesus grieved on the cross. When you only get one chance for post-baptismal sin there is plenty to despair about. It is not grief that is to be fought – it is fear. Jesus did suggest that fear was bad so again Hermas rejects Jesus.

It says that Jesus was adviser to God which denies that Jesus Christ claimed to be the only Son of a perfect God. A God who needs an adviser is not all knowing or perfect. The adviser would be better than he. Jesus always speaks of himself as inferior to God in the New Testament. The Bible Jesus follows a pattern of acting inferior to God at all times so this doctrine denies much of the New Testament. Even if Jesus was God the Son he could not advise the Father for the Father is unbegotten while the Son and the Spirit proceed from him.

It supports the nonsensical notion of water baptism having the power to save.

It numbers the apostles at 40 contradicting the gospels twelve.

It asserts that black skin is a sign of unrepentant badness and of being under the spell of evil spirits.

Jesus had a purse in common with the apostles yet the Shepherd says, “They that are rich in this world, unless their riches be cut away, cannot become useful” (page 572). So you have to give up material things to be useful as a Christian.

It says that there is nothing easier than keeping the commandments of God to earn salvation which is an exaggeration that the New Testament would have had no time for. Paul said that we needed somebody to keep the Law for us because we could not keep it ourselves.

Hermas never looks on Jesus as a historical person (page 46, Jesus, One Hundred Years Before Christ). He never uses the name of Jesus or calls him Christ but speaks of a spiritual force with some personal aspects for he calls the Son of God the Law. Hermas never speaks of events in the life of Jesus implying that the public Church had no more than some collections of Jesus’ sayings. Hermas gives twelve new commandments that bring salvation if obeyed – the Bible says salvation is by grace alone without obedience – and obedience to the gospels is not one of them. This is an unthinkable omission for one that knows and respects the gospels. By implication, it says that Jesus had no provable historical existence and known life for us to emulate.

The work reflects the fact that the Church may have plotted to keep people ignorant of the details concerning Jesus in the gospels. The popularity of Hermas testified to the scheming obscurantism of the Church. It hated the gospel Jesus whether it knew of him or not.