

The Shepherd of Hermas

Modern English version · SermonIndex

Hermas · c. AD 100-160

A long early Christian work in the form of visions, commandments and parables, written in Rome. It was widely read, and some early Bible manuscripts copy it beside the New Testament, though the church did not receive it as Scripture.

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Vision 1

Chapter 1

Vis. 1 1.1 The man who raised me sold me to a woman named Rhoda, in Rome. Many years later I met her again, and I began to love her as a sister.

Translator's note. This opens the first of the "Visions." Hermas tells his story in the first person. Almost everything we know about him comes from the book itself. A later document, the Muratorian Fragment, says that Hermas wrote the book in Rome while his brother Pius was bishop there.

Vis. 1 1.2 Some time later I saw her bathing in the Tiber river. I gave her my hand and helped her out of the water. When I saw how beautiful she was, I thought to myself: "I would be happy if I had a wife with such beauty and character." That was the only thing I considered, and nothing else, not one thing.

Vis. 1 1.3 Some time later, as I was walking to Cumae and praising God's creation, how great, glorious and powerful it is, I became drowsy as I walked. A spirit took hold of me and carried me through a trackless place that no person could walk through. The ground was steep and broken up by water. When I had crossed that river, I came to level ground. I knelt down and began to pray to the Lord and to confess my sins.

Translator's note. The Greek place name is usually taken to mean Cumae, a town on the coast near Naples. Some scholars think it refers to a place

| nearer Rome, or simply means “the villages.”

Vis. 1 1.4 While I was praying, heaven opened, and I saw the woman I had desired greeting me from heaven. She said, “Hermas, greetings.”

Vis. 1 1.5 I looked at her and said, “Lady, what are you doing here?” She answered, “I was taken up so that I could accuse you of your sins before the Lord.”

Vis. 1 1.6 I said to her, “Are you now accusing me?” “No,” she said, “but listen to the words I am going to say to you. God, who lives in the heavens, made what exists out of what did not exist, and increased and multiplied it for the sake of his holy church. He is angry with you because you sinned against me.”

Vis. 1 1.7 I answered her: “I sinned against you? Where, or when, did I say an indecent word to you? Did I not always regard you as a goddess? Did I not always respect you as a sister? Why do you falsely accuse me, lady, of these wicked and filthy things?”

Vis. 1 1.8 She laughed and said to me: “The desire for evil came up in your heart. Or do you not think it is an evil thing for a righteous man if an evil desire comes up in his heart? It is a sin, and a great one. For the righteous man plans what is right. As long as he plans what is right, his reputation in heaven stands firm, and he finds the Lord easy to be reconciled to in everything he does. But those who plan evil in their hearts bring death and captivity on themselves. This is especially true of those who make this present world their own, take pride in their wealth, and do not hold on to the good things to come.”

| *Translator’s note.* This echoes Jesus’ teaching that sin begins in the heart ([Matthew 5:28](#)).

Vis. 1 1.9 “Those who have no hope, but have given up on themselves and their lives, will regret it in their souls. But you, pray to God, and he will heal your sins and those of your whole household and of all the saints.”

| *Translator’s note.* The verb usually means “repent,” but here it may mean a regret that comes too late.

Chapter 2

Vis. 1 2.1 After she had said these words, the heavens were shut. I was shaking all over and filled with sorrow. I said to myself: “If this sin is written down against me, how can I be saved? How will I appease God for my sins, which are fully grown? What words can I use to ask the Lord to be merciful to me?”

| *Translator’s note.* “Fully grown” translates a Greek word meaning “complete” or “full-grown.” It may refer to sins actually carried out, as opposed to sinful thoughts.

Vis. 1 2.2 While I was thinking this over and debating in my heart, I saw in front of me a large white chair made of snow-white wool. An old woman came, in shining clothing, holding a book in her hands. She sat down alone and greeted me: "Hermas, greetings." I was grieving and crying, and I said, "Greetings, lady."

Translator's note. The old woman is the church. This is revealed in Vision 2, and Vision 3 explains why she appears old.

Vis. 1 2.3 She said to me: "Why are you gloomy, Hermas? You are patient and slow to anger, always laughing. Why do you look so downcast and not cheerful?" I said to her, "Because of a most excellent woman who says that I have sinned against her."

Vis. 1 2.4 She said: "Far be such a thing from a servant of God! But the thought certainly did come up in your heart about her. A thought like that brings sin on the servants of God. It is an evil and shocking plan when a deeply reverent spirit, already proven, desires an evil act. This is especially true of Hermas, who is self-controlled, who keeps away from every evil desire, and who is full of complete simplicity and great innocence."

Chapter 3

Vis. 1 3.1 "But God is not angry with you for this. He is angry so that you will turn back your household, which has sinned against the Lord and against you, their parents. But because you love your children, you did not correct your household, and you let it be ruined. That is why the Lord is angry with you. But he will heal all the evils in your household from the past. For because of their sins and lawless deeds you have been ruined by the affairs of daily life."

Translator's note. This points to a major theme of the book. Hermas's children have sinned against the Lord, even blaspheming him and betraying their parents (Vision 2.2), and Hermas has failed to correct them.

Vis. 1 3.2 "But the Lord's great compassion has taken pity on you and your household. He will strengthen you and set you firmly in his glory. Only do not be lazy, but take courage and strengthen your household. For just as a blacksmith, by hammering his work, masters the thing he wants to make, so the righteous word, spoken day by day, overcomes all evil. So do not stop correcting your children. For I know that if they repent with all their heart, they will be written in the books of life with the saints."

Vis. 1 3.3 After she had finished saying these words, she said to me, "Do you want to hear me read?" I said, "I do, lady." She said to me, "Be a listener and hear the glories of God." I heard great and wonderful things that I was not able to remember. For all the words were fearsome, more than a person can bear. But I remembered the last words, since they were helpful to us and gentle:

Vis. 1 3.4 “See, the God of the powers, whom I love, created the world by his mighty power and his great understanding, and by his glorious plan put beauty on his creation. By his strong word he fixed the heaven and set the earth on the waters, and by his own wisdom and foresight he created his holy church, which he also blessed. See, he moves the heavens, the mountains, the hills, and the seas, and everything becomes level for his chosen people. He does this so that he may give them the promise he made with great glory and joy, if they keep the laws of God that they received in great faith.”

Translator’s note. “Set the earth on the waters” echoes [Psalm 24:2](#) and [Psalm 136:6](#).

Chapter 4

Vis. 1 4.1 When she finished reading and rose from the chair, four young men came, picked up the chair, and went away toward the east.

Vis. 1 4.2 She called me over, touched my chest, and said, “Did you like my reading?” I said to her, “Lady, I like these last parts, but the first parts were hard and harsh.” She said to me, “These last parts are for the righteous, but the first parts are for the pagans and the apostates.”

Vis. 1 4.3 While she was speaking with me, two men appeared, took her by the arms, and went away toward the east, to where the chair had gone. She left cheerfully, and as she went she said to me, “Be brave, Hermas.”

Translator’s note. The word for “be brave” (andrizou) is the same verb Paul uses in [1 Corinthians 16:13](#) (“act like men,” “be courageous”).

Vision 2

Chapter 1

Vis. 2 1.1 As I was walking to Cumae, at about the same time of year as the year before, I remembered the vision of the previous year. Again a spirit took me and carried me to the same place as the year before.

Translator’s note. Most translators take Kōmas as the town of Cumae near Naples. Some scholars have suggested it may simply mean “to the countryside” or “to the villages.”

Vis. 2 1.2 When I came to the place, I knelt down and began to pray to the Lord and glorify his name, because he had considered me worthy and had made known to me my earlier sins.

Scripture: [Psalm 86](#); [Isaiah 24:15](#)

Vis. 2 1.3 After I got up from prayer, I saw in front of me the old woman whom I had seen the year before. She was walking and reading a little book. She said to me, “Can you report these things to God’s chosen ones?” I said to her, “Lady, I cannot remember so much. Give me the little book so that I can copy it.” “Take it,” she said, “and give it back to me.”

Vis. 2 1.4 I took it, went off to a place in the countryside, and copied everything letter by letter, because I could not make out the syllables. When I had finished the letters of the little book, suddenly the book was snatched from my hand. I did not see by whom.

Chapter 2

Vis. 2 2.1 After fifteen days, during which I fasted and earnestly begged the Lord, the understanding of the writing was revealed to me. This is what was written:

Vis. 2 2.2 “Your descendants, Hermas, have rejected God, have blasphemed the Lord, and have betrayed their parents with great evil. They have been called betrayers of parents, and their betrayal did them no good. Instead, they have gone on to add debauchery and foul, tangled wickedness to their sins, and so their lawless deeds have reached their full measure.”

Vis. 2 2.3 “But make these words known to all your children and to your wife, who will be a sister to you. For she too does not hold back the tongue she uses to do wrong. But when she hears these words, she will hold back and will receive mercy.”

Translator’s note. “Who will be a sister to you” is usually understood to mean that Hermas and his wife will from now on live together without sexual relations, though the exact sense is debated.

Vis. 2 2.4 “After you have made known to them these words, which the Master commanded me to reveal to you, all the sins they committed before will be forgiven them. So will the sins of all the saints who have sinned up to this day, if they repent with their whole heart and remove double-mindedness from their hearts.”

Translator’s note. “Double-mindedness” (dipsychia), literally “two-souledness,” is one of Hermas’s most important words. It means being divided in loyalty, wavering in trust toward God. [James 1:8](#) and 4:8 use the related adjective dipsychos (“double-minded”).

Vis. 2 2.5 “For the Master has sworn by his glory concerning his chosen ones: if there is still sin after this day has been set, they will not have salvation. For repentance for the righteous has an end. The days of repentance are fulfilled for all the saints, but for the pagans there is repentance until the last day.”

Translator’s note. Hermas teaches that a set time of repentance has been fixed for believers, after which there is no more. The New Testament sets no such deadline. It promises forgiveness to believers who confess their

sins (1 John 1:9), though Hebrews 6:4–6 does give a stern warning about falling away. Later, in Mandate 4.3, Hermas explains his teaching as a single repentance granted to believers who sin after baptism.

Vis. 2 2.6 “So tell the leaders of the church to straighten their ways in righteousness, so that they may receive the promises in full with great glory.”

Vis. 2 2.7 “So stay firm, you who work righteousness, and do not be double-minded, so that your passage may be with the holy angels. Blessed are you who endure the great tribulation that is coming, and all who will not deny their life.”

Vis. 2 2.8 “For the Lord swore by his Son that those who have denied their Christ have been cut off from their life, that is, those who are going to deny him in the days to come. But to those who denied him earlier, he has been merciful because of his great compassion.”

Translator’s note. Christians in the Roman world sometimes faced persecution, and some denied Christ under pressure. Here Hermas treats past and future denial differently. Those who denied Christ before this revelation can find mercy. Those who deny him in the coming tribulation are said to be cut off.

Chapter 3

Vis. 2 3.1 “But you, Hermas, must no longer hold a grudge against your children. And do not neglect your sister, so that they may be cleansed from their earlier sins. They will be corrected with just discipline if you do not hold a grudge against them. Holding a grudge produces death. But you, Hermas, have had great troubles of your own because of the sins of your household, because you did not care about them. Instead you neglected them and got tangled up in your own evil business dealings.”

Translator’s note. “Your sister” most likely means Hermas’s wife. Earlier, in 2.2.3, she is called the wife “who is to be your sister.” This seems to mean that from now on they will live together as brother and sister in the faith.

Vis. 2 3.2 “But you are saved because you did not turn away from the living God, and by your simplicity and your great self-control. These things have saved you, if you hold on to them. And they save all who do such things and live in innocence and simplicity. These people will overcome all wickedness and will hold firm to eternal life.”

Vis. 2 3.3 “Blessed are all who work righteousness. They will never be destroyed.”

Vis. 2 3.4 “And you will say to Maximus: ‘See, tribulation is coming. If it seems right to you, deny again. The Lord is near to those who turn to him,’ as it is written in the book of Eldad and

Modat, who prophesied to the people in the wilderness.”

Translator’s note. Eldad and Modat are the two men called Eldad and Medad in [Numbers 11:26-29](#), who prophesied in the camp. The book quoted here, a writing under their names, has not survived.

Chapter 4

Vis. 2 4.1 Brothers, while I was asleep, a revelation was given to me by a very handsome young man. He said to me, “Who do you think the old woman is, from whom you received the little book?” I said, “The Sibyl.” “You are wrong,” he said. “She is not.” “Then who is she?” I said. “The church,” he said. I said to him, “Why, then, is she old?” “Because,” he said, “she was created first of all. That is why she is old. And the world was put in order for her sake.”

Translator’s note. The Sibyl was a legendary prophetess of the pagan world, and Jews and Christians also wrote “Sibylline” oracles. Hermas’s first guess shows how people in his world thought about revelations. The idea that the church existed “first of all” can be compared with [Ephesians 1:4](#), where God chose his people “before the foundation of the world.”

Vis. 2 4.2 After that I saw a vision in my house. The old woman came and asked me whether I had already given the book to the elders. I said I had not. “You have done well,” she said, “for I have words to add. When I have finished all the words, they will be made known through you to all the chosen.”

Vis. 2 4.3 “So write two little books, and send one to Clement and one to Grapte. Clement will send his to the cities abroad, for that has been entrusted to him. Grapte will instruct the widows and orphans. And you will read yours in this city, with the elders who lead the church.”

Translator’s note. This Clement is probably the Clement of Rome who wrote 1 Clement, but we cannot be sure. The passage shows that the church at Rome already had leaders who were called “elders,” and a person who handled letters to other churches. Nothing else is known of Grapte.

Vision 3

Chapter 1

Vis. 3 1.1 The third vision that I saw, brothers, was like this.

Vis. 3 1.2 I had fasted often and asked the Lord to show me the revelation he had promised to show me through that old woman. That same night the old woman appeared to me and said to me: “Since you are so eager and determined to know everything, come to the field where you farm. At about the fifth hour I will appear to you and show you what you must see.”

Translator's note. The Greek verb behind “where you farm” is rare and its exact sense is uncertain. It may be connected with growing grain.

Vis. 3 1.3 I asked her, “Lady, to what place in the field?”
“Wherever you like,” she said. I chose a beautiful, secluded spot.
But before I spoke to her or named the place, she said to me, “I will come there, where you want.”

Vis. 3 1.4 So, brothers, I went out to the field and counted the hours. I came to the place where I had arranged for her to come, and I saw an ivory bench set there. On the bench lay a linen cushion, and over it a cover of fine linen was spread out.

Translator's note. The Greek word for “bench” is borrowed from the Latin *subsellium*, a bench or seat.

Vis. 3 1.5 When I saw these things lying there with no one at the place, I was astonished. Trembling took hold of me and my hair stood on end, and a kind of shudder came over me, because I was alone. So I pulled myself together, remembered the glory of God, took courage, knelt down, and confessed my sins to the Lord again, as I had before.

Vis. 3 1.6 Then she came with six young men whom I had also seen before. She stood by me and listened to me praying and confessing my sins to the Lord. She touched me and said, “Hermas, stop asking about your sins all the time. Ask about righteousness too, so that you can take some part of it to your household.”

Vis. 3 1.7 She lifted me up by the hand and led me to the bench, and said to the young men, “Go and build.”

Vis. 3 1.8 After the young men had gone away and we were alone, she said to me, “Sit here.” I said to her, “Lady, let the elders sit first.” “Do as I tell you,” she said. “Sit down.”

Vis. 3 1.9 When I wanted to sit on the right side, she did not let me, but motioned with her hand for me to sit on the left. I was thinking about this and feeling hurt that she did not let me sit on the right, and she said to me, “Are you upset, Hermas? The place on the right is for others, those who have already pleased God and have suffered for the sake of the name. You are far from being able to sit with them. But stay as you are in your simplicity, and you will sit with them, along with all who do their works and endure what they endured.”

Chapter 2

Vis. 3 2.1 “What did they endure?” I asked. “Listen,” she said.
“Whips, prisons, great tribulations, crosses, wild animals, for the sake of the name. That is why the places on the right of the holy place belong to them, and to anyone who suffers for the name. The rest have the places on the left. But for both, those who sit on the

right and those who sit on the left, the gifts and promises are the same. The only difference is that they sit on the right and have a certain glory.”

Translator’s note. Compare [Mark 10:35–40](#), where James and John ask to sit at Jesus’ right and left. Jesus answers by speaking of the suffering they will share with him.

Vis. 3 2.2 “You want very much to sit on the right with them, but your shortcomings are many. You will be cleansed from your shortcomings. And all who are not double-minded will be cleansed from all their sins up to this day.”

Vis. 3 2.3 After saying this she wanted to leave. But I fell at her feet and begged her, by the Lord, to show me the vision she had promised.

Vis. 3 2.4 She took my hand again, lifted me up, and sat me on the couch on the left, and she sat on the right. She lifted a shining rod and said to me, “Do you see something great?” I said to her, “Lady, I see nothing.” She said to me, “Look, don’t you see a great tower in front of you, being built over water with shining square stones?”

Vis. 3 2.5 The tower was being built as a square by the six young men who had come with her. Tens of thousands of other men were bringing stones, some from the deep and some from the land, and handing them to the six young men. They took them and built.

Vis. 3 2.6 All the stones that were dragged up from the deep they set directly into the building, for they were already shaped and fit together with the others. They joined to each other so tightly that their joints could not be seen. The tower looked as though it had been built from a single stone.

Vis. 3 2.7 But of the other stones, the ones brought from dry land, they threw some away and set some into the building. Others they broke up and threw far from the tower.

Vis. 3 2.8 Many other stones lay around the tower, and they did not use them for the building. Some of them were scabby, others had cracks, others were cut short, and others were white and round and did not fit into the building.

Vis. 3 2.9 I saw other stones thrown far from the tower. They came onto the road but did not stay on it, and rolled off the road into rough, pathless ground. Others fell into the fire and burned. Others fell near the water and could not roll into it, though they wanted to roll and get into the water.

Chapter 3

Vis. 3 3.1 After showing me these things, she wanted to hurry away. I said to her, “Lady, what good is it to me to have seen these

things and not know what they mean?" She answered, "You are a clever fellow, wanting to know about the tower." "Yes, lady," I said, "so that I can tell the brothers, so that they may become more cheerful, and hearing these things may know the Lord in great glory."

Vis. 3 3.2 She said, "Many will hear. Some of them will rejoice when they hear, and some will weep. But even these, if they hear and repent, will rejoice. So listen to the parables of the tower, for I will reveal everything to you. And do not trouble me anymore about revelations. These revelations are finished; they have been completed. But you will not stop asking for revelations, for you are shameless."

Translator's note. Hermas is told that these revelations are finished, yet more revelations follow later in the book. The author probably means that this particular series of revelations is complete.

Vis. 3 3.3 "The tower that you see being built is I, the church, who have appeared to you now and before. So ask whatever you want about the tower, and I will reveal it to you, so that you can rejoice with the saints."

Translator's note. The image of the church as a building made of stones (people) fits [1 Peter 2:5](#) and [Ephesians 2:20-22](#).

Vis. 3 3.4 I said to her, "Lady, since you have once considered me worthy to have everything revealed to me, reveal it." She said to me, "Whatever can be revealed to you will be revealed. Only let your heart be turned toward God, and do not be double-minded about whatever you see."

Vis. 3 3.5 I asked her, "Why is the tower built on water, lady?" "I told you before," she said, "and you are searching carefully. By searching you find the truth. So hear why the tower is built on water: because your life was saved and will be saved through water. The tower has been founded on the word of the almighty and glorious name, and it is held up by the invisible power of the Master."

Translator's note. "The name" may mean God's name or the name of the Son of God; later in the book Hermas says the name of the Son of God holds up the whole world (Parables 9.14.5).

Chapter 4

Vis. 3 4.1 I answered her, "Lady, this is great and marvelous. But who are the six young men who are building, lady?" "They are the holy angels of God, the first created, to whom the Lord handed over all his creation to increase and build up and rule over all creation. Through them the building of the tower will be finished."

Translator's note. The six building angels are Hermas's own picture. The Bible speaks of angels as servants sent to help those who will inherit

salvation ([Hebrews 1:14](#)), but it never describes them as builders of the church.

Vis. 3 4.2 “And who are the others who are bringing the stones?” “They too are holy angels of God. But these six are above them. So the building of the tower will be finished, and everyone will rejoice together around the tower and glorify God, because the building of the tower has been finished.”

Vis. 3 4.3 I asked her, “Lady, I would like to know what becomes of the stones, and what they mean.” She answered me, “It is not because you are worthier than everyone else that this is revealed to you. There are others ahead of you, and better than you, to whom these visions ought to have been revealed. But so that God’s name may be glorified, it has been revealed and will be revealed to you, for the sake of the double-minded, who debate in their hearts whether these things are real or not. Tell them that all these things are true, that nothing is outside the truth, and that everything is strong and sure and well founded.”

Chapter 5

Vis. 3 5.1 “Now listen about the stones that go into the building. The stones that are square and white and fit together at the joints are the apostles, bishops, teachers, and deacons who lived in the holiness of God. They watched over, taught, and served God’s chosen purely and reverently, some having fallen asleep and some still alive. They always agreed with each other, had peace among themselves, and listened to each other. That is why their joints fit together in the building of the tower.”

Translator’s note. This is one of the early lists of church ministries. Hermas speaks of “bishops” (overseers) and “deacons”, as Paul does in [Philippians 1:1](#). The three verbs “watched over, taught, and served” match the three offices of bishop, teacher and deacon.

Vis. 3 5.2 “And who are the ones dragged up from the deep and set into the building, who fit at the joints with the other stones already built in?” “These are the ones who suffered for the name of the Lord.”

Vis. 3 5.3 “I want to know who the other stones are, the ones brought from dry land, lady.” She said, “The ones that go into the building without being cut are the ones the Lord tested and approved, because they walked in the Lord’s uprightness and carried out his commandments.”

Vis. 3 5.4 “And who are the ones that are brought and placed in the building?” “They are new in the faith, and faithful. They are warned by the angels to do good, because evil has been found in them.”

Vis. 3 5.5 “And who are the ones they threw away and discarded?”

"These are people who have sinned and want to repent. That is why they were not thrown far away from the tower: they will be useful for the building if they repent. So those who intend to repent will be strong in the faith if they repent now, while the tower is still being built. But once the building is finished, they will have no place anymore. They will be cast out. All they have is this: to lie beside the tower."

Translator's note. Hermas offers sinners a limited time to repent, before the tower is finished; this deadline is a distinctive feature of his book.

Chapter 6

Vis. 3 6.1 "Do you want to know about the ones broken up and thrown far from the tower? These are the sons of lawlessness. Their faith was only pretense, and none of their wickedness left them. That is why they have no salvation: they are not useful for building because of their wickedness. That is why they were broken up and thrown far away, because of the Lord's anger, since they provoked him."

Vis. 3 6.2 "As for the others, the many you saw lying about and not going into the building: of these, the scabby ones are those who have known the truth but do not remain in it."

Translator's note. The Greek word describes a rough, scaly surface, like skin with a rash or mange.

Vis. 3 6.3 "And who are the ones with cracks? These are people who hold things against each other in their hearts and are not at peace with each other. They wear a face of peace, but when they part from each other, their evils remain in their hearts. These are the cracks the stones have."

Vis. 3 6.4 "The stunted ones are people who have believed, and most of their life is lived in righteousness, but some parts of it are in lawlessness. That is why they are stunted and not whole."

Vis. 3 6.5 "And the white, round ones that did not fit into the building, who are they, lady?" She answered me, "How long will you be foolish and senseless, asking everything and understanding nothing? These are people who have faith, but who also have the wealth of this age. When tribulation comes, because of their wealth and their business affairs, they deny their Lord."

Translator's note. This is one of the book's main warnings: wealth and business make it hard for Christians to stay faithful under pressure. Compare [Mark 10:23-25](#) and [1 Timothy 6:9-10](#).

Vis. 3 6.6 I answered her, "Lady, when will they become useful for the building?" "When," she said, "the wealth that leads their souls astray has been cut away from them, then they will be useful to God. A round stone cannot become square unless it is trimmed and something is cut away from it. In the same way, those who are rich

in this age cannot become useful to the Lord unless their wealth is cut away from them.”

Vis. 3 6.7 “Learn it from yourself first. When you were rich, you were useless. But now you are useful and helpful for life. Be useful to God. You yourself are taken from these same stones.”

Translator’s note. The Greek of the last sentence is difficult and may be corrupt. It seems to mean that Hermas himself was once one of these stones.

Chapter 7

Vis. 3 7.1 “As for the other stones you saw thrown far from the tower, falling onto the road and rolling off the road into the wilderness: these are people who have believed, but because of their double-mindedness they leave their true road. They think they can find a better road, and they wander and suffer, walking in the wilderness.”

Vis. 3 7.2 “The ones falling into the fire and burning are people who have turned away completely from the living God. It no longer comes into their heart to repent, because of their lustful desires and the evil deeds they have done.”

Vis. 3 7.3 “Do you want to know about the others, who fall near the water and cannot roll into the water? These are people who have heard the word and want to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then, when the purity of the truth comes to their mind, they change their minds and go back again after their evil desires.”

Vis. 3 7.4 So she finished the explanation of the tower.

Vis. 3 7.5 Being bold, I asked her further about all these stones that had been thrown away and did not fit into the building of the tower. Was repentance open to them, and did they have a place in this tower? “Repentance is open to them,” she said, “but they cannot fit into this tower.”

Vis. 3 7.6 “They will fit into another, much lesser place, and only after they have been tormented and have fulfilled the days of their sins. They will be moved because they shared in the righteous word. And then they will be moved out of the torments they suffered for the evil deeds they did. But if repentance does not come into their heart, they are not saved, because of the hardness of their hearts.”

Translator’s note. Hermas does not say whether this torment happens in this life or after death; in Parables 6–7 (also called Similitudes), “torment” means troubles in this life, such as losses and sickness, sent to punish and correct.

Chapter 8

Vis. 3 8.1 When I stopped asking her about all these things, she said to me, “Do you want to see something else?” I was very eager to see it, and I was delighted at the prospect.

Vis. 3 8.2 She looked at me, smiled, and said, “Do you see seven women around the tower?” “I see them, lady,” I said. “This tower is being carried by them at the command of the Lord.”

Vis. 3 8.3 “Now listen to what they do. The first of them, the one with her hands clasped, is called Faith. Through her God’s chosen are saved.”

Vis. 3 8.4 “The second, the one who wears a belt as if ready for action and who acts with courage, is called Self-control. She is the daughter of Faith. Whoever follows her is blessed in his life, because he will keep away from all evil deeds, believing that if he keeps away from all evil desire, he will inherit eternal life.”

Vis. 3 8.5 “And who are the others, lady?” “They are daughters of each other. Their names are Simplicity, Knowledge, Innocence, Reverence, and Love. When you do all the works of their mother, you can live.”

Translator’s note. The seven women (Faith, Self-control, Simplicity, Knowledge, Innocence, Reverence, Love) are virtues that carry the tower. Compare the chain of virtues in [2 Peter 1:5-7](#).

Vis. 3 8.6 “I would like to know, lady,” I said, “what power each of them has.” “Listen,” she said, “to the powers they have.”

Vis. 3 8.7 “Their powers are held up by each other and follow each other, just as they were born. From Faith is born Self-control, from Self-control Simplicity, from Simplicity Innocence, from Innocence Reverence, from Reverence Knowledge, and from Knowledge Love. Their works are pure, reverent, and divine.”

Vis. 3 8.8 “Whoever serves these women and is strong enough to hold on to their works will have his dwelling in the tower with God’s saints.”

Vis. 3 8.9 I asked her about the times, whether the end was already here. She cried out in a loud voice: “Foolish man, don’t you see the tower still being built? When the building of the tower is finished, the end will come. But it will be built up quickly. Ask me nothing more. This reminder and the renewal of your spirits are enough for you and for the saints.”

Vis. 3 8.10 “But this was not revealed to you alone. You are to make it known to everyone,

Vis. 3 8.11 after three days, for you must understand it first. First I order you, Hermas, to speak all these words that I am going to tell you into the ears of the saints, so that when they hear them and do them, they will be cleansed from their evils, and you with them.”

Chapter 9

Vis. 3 9.1 “Listen to me, children. I brought you up in great simplicity, innocence, and reverence, through the mercy of the Lord who let righteousness drip down upon you, so that you would be made righteous and holy, free from all wickedness and all crookedness. But you do not want to stop your wickedness.”

Translator’s note. The speaker is the elderly woman, who was revealed in Vision 2 to be the Church. “Children” means the church’s members.

Vis. 3 9.2 “So now listen to me. Be at peace with each other, look after each other, and help each other. Do not enjoy God’s creations lavishly by yourselves, but share them also with those who are in need.”

Translator’s note. The Greek phrase rendered “lavishly” (ek katachymatos) is unusual. It seems to mean “in overflowing abundance.”

Vis. 3 9.3 “For some people bring weakness on their bodies by eating too much, and they harm their flesh. But those who have no food suffer harm in their flesh because they do not have enough to eat, and their bodies waste away.”

Vis. 3 9.4 “So this failure to share is harmful to you who have plenty and do not share with those in need.”

Vis. 3 9.5 “Consider the judgment that is coming. So you who have more than enough, seek out the hungry while the tower is not yet finished. For after the tower is finished, you will want to do good, and you will not have the chance.”

Translator’s note. In this vision the tower being built stands for the church (Vision 3.3.3).

Vis. 3 9.6 “So take care, you who boast in your wealth, in case those in need groan, and their groaning goes up to the Lord, and you are shut out with your goods outside the door of the tower.”

Translator’s note. Compare [James 5:1-6](#), which also warns the rich that the cries of the poor reach God.

Vis. 3 9.7 “So now I speak to you who lead the church and who take the seats of honor. Do not be like the poisoners. Poisoners carry their drugs in boxes, but you carry your drug and your poison in your heart.”

Translator’s note. Compare Jesus’ warning against those who love the best seats ([Matthew 23:6](#)).

Vis. 3 9.8 “You are hardened, and you do not want to cleanse your hearts and join your thinking together with a pure heart, so that you may receive mercy from the great King.”

Vis. 3 9.9 “So watch out, children, that these divisions do not rob

you of your life.”

Vis. 3 9.10 “How can you expect to discipline the Lord’s chosen when you have no discipline yourselves? So discipline each other and be at peace with each other. Then I too can stand joyfully before the Father and give an account for all of you to the Lord.”

Chapter 10

Vis. 3 10.1 When she stopped speaking with me, the six young men who were building came and took her away to the tower. Four others picked up the couch and also carried it to the tower. I did not see their faces, because they were turned away.

Vis. 3 10.2 As she left, I asked her to give me a revelation about the three forms in which she had appeared to me. She answered, “You must ask someone else about these, so that they may be revealed to you.”

Vis. 3 10.3 Brothers, in the first vision last year she had appeared to me very old, sitting in a chair.

Vis. 3 10.4 In the second vision her face was younger, though her body and hair were old, and she spoke to me standing. She was more cheerful than before.

Vis. 3 10.5 In the third vision she was entirely young and extremely beautiful. Only her hair was old. She was completely cheerful, and she sat on a couch.

Vis. 3 10.6 I was deeply troubled about this and wanted to understand the revelation. In a vision of the night I saw the old woman saying to me, “Every request needs humility. So fast, and you will receive what you ask from the Lord.”

Vis. 3 10.7 So I fasted one day, and that same night a young man appeared to me and said, “Why do you keep asking for revelations in your prayers? Be careful that you do not harm your flesh by asking so much.”

Vis. 3 10.8 “These revelations are enough for you. Can you see greater revelations than the ones you have seen?”

Vis. 3 10.9 I answered him, “Sir, this is all I ask: that the revelation about the three forms of the old woman may be complete.” He answered me, “How long will you people be without understanding? Your double-mindedness makes you senseless, and so does the fact that your hearts are not turned to the Lord.”

Vis. 3 10.10 I answered him again, “But from you, sir, we will learn about them more accurately.”

Chapter 11

Vis. 3 11.1 "Listen," he said, "to what I have to say about the forms you are asking about."

Vis. 3 11.2 "Why did she appear to you in the first vision as an older woman, sitting in a chair? Because your spirit is old and already withered and has no power, because of your weaknesses and double-mindedness."

Vis. 3 11.3 "For old people no longer have hope of becoming young again, and they expect nothing but their last sleep. In the same way you too, weakened by the affairs of this life, gave yourselves up to listlessness and did not throw your cares on the Lord. Instead your mind was broken, and you grew old in your sorrows."

Translator's note. "Throw your cares on the Lord" echoes [Psalm 55:22](#) and [1 Peter 5:7](#).

Scripture: [1 Peter 5:7](#)

Vis. 3 11.4 "Then why was she sitting in a chair, sir? I would like to know." "Because anyone who is sick sits in a chair because of his weakness, so that the weakness of his body may be supported. There you have the meaning of the figure in the first vision."

Chapter 12

Vis. 3 12.1 "In the second vision you saw her standing, with a younger and more cheerful face than before, but with the body and hair of an older woman. Listen to this parable too," he said.

Vis. 3 12.2 "Suppose an older man has already given up hope for himself because of his weakness and poverty, and expects nothing but the last day of his life. Then suddenly an inheritance is left to him. He hears it and gets up, and filled with joy puts on strength. He no longer lies down but stands, and his spirit, already worn out by his earlier ways, is renewed. He no longer sits but takes courage. In the same way you also, when you heard the revelation the Lord revealed to you,"

Vis. 3 12.3 "that he had compassion on you, he renewed your spirits, and you laid aside your weaknesses. Strength came to you and you were made strong in faith. The Lord saw that you had been made strong, and he rejoiced. That is why he showed you the building of the tower, and he will show you other things if you are at peace among yourselves with your whole heart."

Chapter 13

Vis. 3 13.1 "In the third vision you saw her younger, beautiful, and cheerful, and her form was beautiful."

Vis. 3 13.2 "For suppose someone who is grieving receives good news. At once he forgets his earlier sorrows and gives his mind to

nothing but the news he has heard. From then on he is strengthened for what is good, and his spirit is renewed because of the joy he has received. In the same way you have received renewal of your spirits by seeing these good things.”

Vis. 3 13.3 “And that you saw her sitting on a couch means that the position is strong, for a couch has four feet and stands firmly. Even the world is held together by four elements.”

Translator’s note. The “four elements” are those of Greek natural philosophy: earth, water, air, and fire.

Vis. 3 13.4 “So those who have repented will become completely young again and firmly founded: those who have repented with their whole heart. You have the complete revelation. Do not ask anything more about revelation. If anything is needed, it will be revealed to you.”

Vision 4

Chapter 1

Vis. 4 1.1 The fourth vision I saw, brothers, came twenty days after the previous vision. It was a picture of the tribulation that is coming.

Vis. 4 1.2 I was going into the country along the Via Campana. The place is about ten stades from the public road, and it is easy to get to.

Translator’s note. The Via Campana was a road leading out of Rome. It is usually thought to have run along the right bank of the Tiber toward the coast. A stade was about 185 meters, so ten stades is a little under two kilometers.

Vis. 4 1.3 As I walked along by myself, I asked the Lord to complete the revelations and visions he had shown me through his holy church. I asked him to strengthen me and to give repentance to his servants who had stumbled, so that his great and glorious name would be glorified, because he had considered me worthy to be shown his wonders.

Scripture: [Psalm 100](#)

Vis. 4 1.4 While I was glorifying him and thanking him, something like the sound of a voice answered me: “Do not be double-minded, Hermas.” I began to think to myself and say, “How could I be double-minded, when I have been so firmly founded by the Lord and have seen such glorious things?”

Translator’s note. “Double-minded” (Greek dipsychos) means wavering between trust and doubt. It is one of Hermas’s favorite words. The same adjective appears in [James 1:8](#) and 4:8.

Vis. 4 1.5 I went a little further, brothers, and look, I saw a cloud of dust that seemed to reach the sky. I began to say to myself, “Could it be cattle coming and raising the dust?” It was about a stade away from me.

Vis. 4 1.6 As the dust grew bigger and bigger, I suspected it was something supernatural. The sun shone out a little, and look, I saw an enormous beast, like some sea monster, with fiery locusts coming out of its mouth. The beast was about a hundred feet long, and its head looked like pottery.

Translator’s note. The Greek word (keramos) can mean an earthenware jar or a roof tile, so the exact picture is unclear.

Vis. 4 1.7 I began to cry and ask the Lord to rescue me from it. And I remembered the word I had heard: “Do not be double-minded, Hermas.”

Vis. 4 1.8 So, brothers, clothing myself with faith in the Lord and remembering the great things he had taught me, I took courage and went straight toward the beast. The beast came on with such a rushing roar that it could have destroyed a city.

Vis. 4 1.9 I came close to it, and this huge sea monster stretched itself out on the ground and put out nothing but its tongue. It did not move at all until I had gone past it.

Vis. 4 1.10 On its head the beast had four colors: black, then the color of fire and blood, then gold, then white.

Translator’s note. The four colors are explained later in this vision (4.3).

Chapter 2

Vis. 4 2.1 After I had passed the beast and gone on about thirty feet, look, a young woman met me, dressed as though she were coming out of a bridal room. She was entirely in white, with white sandals, veiled to the forehead, with a headband for a veil. Yet her hair was white.

Vis. 4 2.2 From the earlier visions I knew that it was the church, and I became more cheerful. She greeted me, saying, “Greetings, man.” And I greeted her back: “Greetings, lady.”

Translator’s note. The church’s bridal appearance (4.2.1) recalls [Revelation 21:2](#), where the new Jerusalem comes down “as a bride adorned for her husband.”

Vis. 4 2.3 She answered, “Did nothing meet you?” I said to her, “Lady, such a huge beast, one that could destroy whole peoples! But by the power of the Lord and by his great mercy, I escaped it.”

Vis. 4 2.4 “You escaped well,” she said, “because you threw your care on God and opened your heart to the Lord, believing that you

can be saved by nothing except the great and glorious name. That is why the Lord sent his angel who is over the beasts, whose name is Thegri, and shut its mouth so that it would not harm you. You escaped a great tribulation because of your faith, and because you were not double-minded when you saw such a beast.”

Translator’s note. Thegri is the angel set over wild beasts. The name is not known from any other source, and the manuscripts spell it in different ways. Compare [Daniel 6:22](#), where God’s angel shuts the lions’ mouths.

Scripture: [Daniel 6:22](#)

Vis. 4 2.5 “So go and explain his great deeds to the Lord’s chosen ones. Tell them that this beast is a picture of the great tribulation to come. If you prepare yourselves beforehand and turn to the Lord in repentance with all your heart, you will be able to escape it. But your heart must become pure and without blemish, and you must serve the Lord blamelessly for the rest of your life. Throw your cares on the Lord, and he will set them right.”

Translator’s note. “Throw your cares on the Lord” echoes [Psalm 55:22](#) (54:23 in the Greek Old Testament) and [1 Peter 5:7](#).

Vis. 4 2.6 “You who are double-minded, believe the Lord: believe that he can do all things, that he turns his anger away from you, and that he sends scourges on you who are double-minded. Woe to those who hear these words and ignore them. It would have been better for them not to have been born.”

Translator’s note. The last sentence echoes Jesus’ words about Judas in [Matthew 26:24](#) and [Mark 14:21](#).

Chapter 3

Vis. 4 3.1 I asked her about the four colors the beast had on its head. She answered me, “You are curious again about such things.” “Yes, lady,” I said, “tell me what these are.”

Vis. 4 3.2 “Listen,” she said. “The black is this world in which you live.”

Vis. 4 3.3 “The fiery and bloody part means that this world must be destroyed by blood and fire.”

Vis. 4 3.4 “The golden part is you, who have escaped this world. Just as gold is tested by fire and becomes useful, so you who live among these things are being tested. Those of you who remain and pass through their fire will be purified. Just as gold throws off its dross, so you will throw off all sorrow and distress. You will be purified and will be useful for building the tower.”

Translator’s note. Compare [1 Peter 1:6-7](#), where faith is tested by trials as gold is tested by fire.

Vis. 4 3.5 “The white part is the age to come, in which God’s

chosen will live. For those chosen by God for eternal life will be spotless and pure.”

Vis. 4 3.6 “So do not stop speaking into the ears of the saints. You also have the picture of the great tribulation to come. But if you are willing, it will be nothing. Remember what was written before.”

Vis. 4 3.7 After saying this she left, and I did not see where she went, for a cloud came up. I turned back in fear, thinking the beast was coming.

Vision 5: The Shepherd comes

Chapter 1

Vis. 5 1.1 While I was praying at home and sitting on my couch, a man came in who was glorious in appearance and dressed like a shepherd. He wore a white goatskin and had a bag on his shoulders and a staff in his hand. He greeted me, and I greeted him back.

Translator’s note. This is the Shepherd who gives the book its name. In 5.1.7 Hermas calls him “the angel of repentance.”

Vis. 5 1.2 At once he sat down next to me and said, “I was sent by the most venerable angel to live with you for the rest of the days of your life.”

Translator’s note. “The most venerable angel” is not named. Some readers have taken him to be Christ, others Michael, but Hermas does not say.

Vis. 5 1.3 I thought he had come to test me, and I said to him, “Who are you? I know the one to whom I was handed over.” He said to me, “Don’t you recognize me?” “No,” I said. “I am the shepherd,” he said, “to whom you were handed over.”

Vis. 5 1.4 While he was still speaking, his appearance changed, and I recognized him. He was the one to whom I had been handed over. At once I was confused. Fear took hold of me, and I was completely broken with grief, because I had answered him so badly and foolishly.

Vis. 5 1.5 He answered me, “Do not be confused, but strengthen yourself in my commandments, which I am about to give you. I was sent to show you again everything you saw before, the main points that are useful for you. First of all, write down my commandments and the parables. The rest you will write as I show you. That is why I order you to write down the commandments and parables first: so that you can have them at hand to read, and be able to keep them.”

Vis. 5 1.6 So I wrote down the commandments and parables, as he had ordered me.

Vis. 5 1.7 If you hear them and keep them, walk in them, and do

them with a pure heart, you will receive from the Lord all he promised you. But if you hear them and do not repent, but go on adding to your sins, you will receive the opposite from the Lord. The shepherd, the angel of repentance, ordered me to write all these things down in this way.

Mandate 1

Chapter 1

Mand. 1 1.1 First of all, believe that God is one. He created all things and put them in order, and he made all things come into being out of what did not exist. He contains everything, but he alone cannot be contained.

Translator's note. This is the first Mandate (commandment). Irenaeus quotes it as "Scripture," without naming Hermas (Against Heresies 4.20.2), and Origen and others also valued it highly. Compare [Ephesians 4:6](#).

Mand. 1 1.2 So believe him and fear him, and in fear practice self-control. Keep these things, and you will throw all wickedness away from yourself and put on every virtue of righteousness, and live to God, if you keep this commandment.

Mandate 2

Chapter 1

Mand. 2 1.1 He said to me, "Have simplicity and be innocent, and you will be like children who do not know the evil that destroys people's lives."

Mand. 2 1.2 "First, do not speak against anyone, and do not listen with pleasure to someone who does. Otherwise you who listen will also be guilty of the sin of the one who slanders, if you believe the slander you hear. For if you believe it, you too will hold something against your brother. In this way you will be guilty of the sin of the one who slanders."

Scripture: [James 4:11](#)

Mand. 2 1.3 "Slander is evil. It is a restless demon, never at peace, always living among divisions. So keep away from it, and you will always enjoy well-being with everyone."

Mand. 2 1.4 "Put on reverence. In it there is nothing evil to stumble over; everything is smooth and cheerful. Do good, and from the earnings God gives you, give simply to all who are in need, without hesitating over whom to give to and whom not to. Give to everyone, for God wants gifts to be given to all from his own

bounty.”

Mand. 2 1.5 “Those who receive will give an account to God of why they received and for what. Those who receive because they are in distress will not be judged, but those who receive hypocritically will pay the penalty.”

Mand. 2 1.6 “So the giver is innocent. For he received from the Lord this service to carry out, and he carried it out simply, without making distinctions about whom to give to and whom not. So this service, done simply, was honored by God. Whoever serves simply in this way will live to God.”

Mand. 2 1.7 “So keep this commandment as I have told you, so that your repentance and that of your household may be found in simplicity, and your innocence pure and undefiled.”

Mandate 3

Chapter 1

Mand. 3 1.1 Again he said to me, “Love truth, and let all truth come out of your mouth, so that the spirit God made to live in this flesh may be found true by all people. In this way the Lord who lives in you will be glorified, for the Lord is true in every word and with him there is no falsehood.”

Mand. 3 1.2 “So those who lie reject the Lord and defraud him, because they do not hand back to him the deposit they received. For they received from him a spirit that does not lie. If they give it back as a lying spirit, they have defiled the Lord’s commandment and have defrauded him.”

Mand. 3 1.3 When I heard this, I wept bitterly. When he saw me weeping, he said, “Why are you crying?” “Because, sir,” I said, “I do not know whether I can be saved.” “Why?” he said. “Because, sir, I have never in my life spoken a true word. I have always spoken deceitfully with everyone, and I presented my lie as truth to everyone. No one ever contradicted me. They believed my word. So how, sir, can I live after doing this?”

Mand. 3 1.4 “You are thinking well and truly,” he said. “For as God’s servant you should have walked in truth. An evil conscience should not live with the spirit of truth, nor should grief be brought on the holy and true spirit.” “Sir,” I said, “I have never properly heard such words before.”

Mand. 3 1.5 “Now you are hearing them,” he said. “Keep them. Then, when what you say now is found to be true, even the lies you told earlier in your business can become trustworthy. For those too can become trustworthy. If you keep these things and from now on speak all truth, you will be able to secure life for yourself. And

whoever hears this commandment and keeps away from lying, that most evil thing, will live to God.”

Mandate 4

Chapter 1

Mand. 4 1.1 “I command you,” he said, “to keep purity, and do not let any thought come into your heart about another man’s wife, or about sexual immorality, or any such evil things. For when you do this, you commit a great sin. But if you always remember your own wife, you will never go wrong.”

Mand. 4 1.2 “For if this thought comes into your heart, you will go wrong, and if other evil thoughts like it come, you commit sin. For this thought is a great sin for a servant of God. And if someone does this evil deed, he brings death on himself.”

Mand. 4 1.3 “So watch out. Keep away from this thought. For where holiness lives, lawlessness ought not to come up into the heart of a righteous man.”

Mand. 4 1.4 I said to him, “Sir, allow me to ask you a few questions.” “Ask,” he said. “Sir,” I said, “if a man has a wife who is a believer in the Lord, and he discovers that she has committed adultery, does the husband sin by living with her?”

Mand. 4 1.5 “As long as he does not know, he does not sin,” he said. “But if the husband knows about her sin, and the wife does not repent but persists in her immorality, and the husband keeps living with her, he becomes guilty of her sin and shares in her adultery.”

Mand. 4 1.6 “What, then, sir,” I said, “should the husband do if the wife keeps on in this passion?” “Let him divorce her,” he said, “and let the husband live by himself. But if he divorces his wife and marries another, he also commits adultery.”

Scripture: [Mark 10:11](#); [Matthew 5:32](#); [Matthew 19:9](#); [1 Corinthians 7:11](#)

Mand. 4 1.7 “If, then, sir,” I said, “after the wife has been divorced she repents and wants to return to her own husband, will she not be taken back?”

Mand. 4 1.8 “Certainly,” he said. “If the husband does not take her back, he sins and brings a great sin on himself. The one who has sinned and repents must be taken back, but not many times. For God’s servants have only one repentance. So, for the sake of her repentance, the husband should not marry someone else. This course of action applies to both wife and husband.”

Mand. 4 1.9 “It is not only adultery,” he said, “if someone defiles his flesh. Whoever does the same things the pagans do also

commits adultery. So if someone persists in such deeds and does not repent, keep away from him and do not live with him. Otherwise you also share in his sin.”

Mand. 4 1.10 “That is why you were commanded to live by yourselves, whether husband or wife, for repentance is possible in such cases.”

Mand. 4 1.11 “So I am not,” he said, “giving an excuse for this kind of thing to be carried on. I say this so that the one who has sinned will sin no more. As for his earlier sin, there is one who can give healing, for he is the one who has authority over all things.”

Chapter 2

Mand. 4 2.1 I asked him again: “Since the Lord has considered me worthy to have you live with me always, put up with a few more words from me. For I understand nothing, and my heart has been hardened by my earlier deeds. Help me understand, because I am very foolish and understand nothing at all.”

| Scripture: [Mark 6:52](#)

Mand. 4 2.2 He answered me, “I am set over repentance, and I give understanding to all who repent. Don’t you think that repenting is itself understanding? To repent,” he said, “is great understanding. For the one who has sinned understands that he has done evil before the Lord, and the deed he did comes up in his heart, and he repents and no longer does evil, but does good lavishly, and humbles his own soul and torments it because he sinned. You see, then, that repentance is great understanding.”

Mand. 4 2.3 “That is why, sir,” I said, “I am asking you for everything in detail. First, because I am a sinner, so that I may know what deeds I should do in order to live, since my sins are many and varied.”

Mand. 4 2.4 “You will live,” he said, “if you keep my commandments and walk in them. And whoever hears these commandments and keeps them will live to God.”

Chapter 3

Mand. 4 3.1 “Sir,” I said, “I will go on to ask something more.” “Speak,” he said. “Sir,” I said, “I have heard from some teachers that there is no other repentance except the one when we went down into the water and received forgiveness of our earlier sins.”

Mand. 4 3.2 He said to me, “You heard correctly. For that is how it is. For someone who has received forgiveness of sins should not sin again, but live in purity.”

Mand. 4 3.3 “But since you are asking about everything in detail, I

will explain this to you as well, without giving an excuse to those who are going to believe or who have recently believed in the Lord. For those who have recently believed or are going to believe do not have repentance for sins. But they do have forgiveness of their earlier sins.”

Mand. 4 3.4 “So for those who were called before these days, the Lord has set repentance. For the Lord knows the heart and knows everything beforehand. He knew the weakness of people and the cunning of the devil, and that the devil would do some harm to God’s servants and act wickedly toward them.”

Mand. 4 3.5 “So the Lord, being very compassionate, had compassion on his creation, and set this repentance. And the authority over this repentance was given to me.”

Mand. 4 3.6 “But I tell you,” he said, “that after that great and holy calling, if someone is tempted by the devil and sins, he has one repentance. But if he keeps on sinning and repenting, it does that person no good, for he will scarcely live.”

Translator’s note. This is one of the best-known and most debated teachings of the book. After baptism there is a single further chance of repentance, which Hermas presents as offered to those already called. Tertullian, writing later as a Montanist (On Modesty 10, 20), attacked the book from the opposite side: he thought it too lenient and called it the “Shepherd of adulterers.” The New Testament promises forgiveness to believers who confess their sins ([1 John 1:9](#)) and speaks of Christ as their advocate when they sin ([1 John 2:1](#)), with no such limit.

Mand. 4 3.7 I said to him, “I have been given new life by hearing these things so precisely from you. For I know that if I no longer add to my sins, I will be saved.” “You will be saved,” he said, “and so will all who do these things.”

Chapter 4

Mand. 4 4.1 I asked him again, “Sir, since you are putting up with me, explain this to me as well.” “Speak,” he said. “Sir,” I said, “if a wife, or a husband, dies, and the one who is left marries again, does the one who marries sin?”

Mand. 4 4.2 “He does not sin,” he said. “But if he remains single, he gains greater honor and great glory with the Lord. Yet if he does marry, he does not sin.”

Translator’s note. Compare [1 Corinthians 7:8-9](#), 39-40. Like Paul, Hermas says remarriage after a spouse’s death is not sin, while counting remaining single as the better course.

Mand. 4 4.3 “So keep purity and reverence, and you will live to God. From now on, from the day you were handed over to me, keep everything I tell you and will tell you, and I will live in your house.”

Mand. 4 4.4 “And there will be forgiveness for your earlier sins if you keep my commandments. And there will be forgiveness for everyone if they keep these commandments of mine and walk in this purity.”

Mandate 5

Chapter 1

Mand. 5 1.1 “Be patient and understanding,” he said, “and you will overcome all evil deeds and do all righteousness.”

Translator’s note. This begins the fifth Mandate (Commandment), which is about patience and quick temper.

Mand. 5 1.2 “For if you are patient, the Holy Spirit who lives in you will be pure, not darkened by another, evil spirit. Living in a roomy place, he will rejoice and be glad with the vessel in which he lives, and will serve God with great cheerfulness, having well-being in himself.”

Translator’s note. “The vessel” is the person in whom the Spirit lives. For the Holy Spirit living in the believer, compare [1 Corinthians 6:19](#).

Mand. 5 1.3 “But if any quick temper comes in, the Holy Spirit, being delicate, is immediately cramped, since the place is not clean, and he seeks to leave the place. For he is choked by the evil spirit and has no room to serve the Lord as he wants, being defiled by quick temper. For the Lord lives in patience, but the devil lives in quick temper.”

Mand. 5 1.4 “So when both spirits live in the same place, it is bad and harmful for the person in whom they live.”

Mand. 5 1.5 “If you take a very little wormwood and pour it into a jar of honey, isn’t all the honey ruined? Isn’t so much honey spoiled by the smallest bit of wormwood? The wormwood destroys the sweetness of the honey, and the master no longer values it as he did, because it has turned bitter and lost its usefulness. But if wormwood is not put into the honey, the honey stays sweet and is useful to its master.”

Mand. 5 1.6 “You see that patience is sweeter than honey and is useful to the Lord, and he lives in it. But quick temper is bitter and useless. So if quick temper is mixed with patience, patience is defiled, and its prayer is no longer useful to God.”

Mand. 5 1.7 “Sir,” I said, “I would like to know how quick temper works, so that I can guard against it.” “Yes indeed,” he said, “if you and your household do not guard against it, you have lost all your hope. But guard against it, for I am with you. And all who repent with their whole heart will keep away from it. For I will be with them and keep them safe, for they have all been justified by the

most venerable angel.”

Translator’s note. Hermas does not say who “the most venerable angel” is, and scholars disagree; some think of Michael, others of the Son of God. In the New Testament, people are justified by God through Christ ([Romans 3:24-26](#)), not by an angel.

Chapter 2

Mand. 5 2.1 “Now listen,” he said, “to how quick temper works, how evil it is, how it overturns my servants by its working, and how it leads them away from righteousness. But it does not lead away those who are full of faith, and it cannot work against them, because my power is with them. It leads away the empty and the double-minded.”

Translator’s note. “Double-minded” is a favorite word of Hermas. The same Greek word appears in [James 1:8](#) and 4:8.

Mand. 5 2.2 “When it sees such people at peace, it forces its way into that person’s heart. Then, over nothing, the man or woman becomes bitter: over daily affairs, or food, or some petty matter, or a friend, or giving or receiving, or other silly things like these. For all these things are silly and empty and foolish and useless to God’s servants.”

Mand. 5 2.3 “But patience is great and strong. It has power that is solid and thrives in a wide, open space. It is cheerful, joyful, and free of worry, praising the Lord at all times. It has nothing bitter in itself, and it always remains gentle and calm. So this patience lives with those who have complete faith.”

Mand. 5 2.4 “But quick temper is first of all silly, light, and foolish. Then from foolishness comes bitterness, from bitterness anger, from anger wrath, and from wrath rage. Then this rage, built up from so many evils, becomes a great and incurable sin.”

Mand. 5 2.5 “For when these spirits live in one vessel where the Holy Spirit also lives, the vessel cannot hold them, but overflows.”

Mand. 5 2.6 “So the delicate Spirit, not used to living with an evil spirit or with harshness, leaves such a person and seeks to live with gentleness and calm.”

Mand. 5 2.7 “Then, when he leaves the person in whom he lived, that person becomes empty of the righteous Spirit. From then on he is filled with evil spirits and is unstable in everything he does. He is pulled back and forth by the evil spirits and is completely blinded to good thinking. This is what happens to all who are quick-tempered.”

Translator’s note. Compare the picture in [Matthew 12:43-45](#) of a person left empty and then filled with evil spirits.

Mand. 5 2.8 “So keep away from quick temper, the most evil spirit.

Put on patience, and stand against quick temper and bitterness, and you will be found with the reverence that is loved by the Lord. So be careful that you do not neglect this commandment. For if you master this commandment, you will also be able to keep the other commandments I am going to give you. Be strong in them and be strengthened, and let all be strengthened who want to walk in them.”

Mandate 6

Chapter 1

Mand. 6 1.1 “I commanded you,” he said, “in the first commandment to keep faith, fear, and self-control.” “Yes, sir,” I said. “But now,” he said, “I also want to show you their powers, so that you understand what power and working each one has. For their workings are of two kinds. They apply to what is righteous and to what is unrighteous:”

Translator’s note. This is the sixth Mandate. The first commandment (6.1) told Hermas to believe in God, fear him and practise self-control.

Mand. 6 1.2 “So believe what is righteous, but do not believe what is unrighteous. For what is righteous has a straight way, but what is unrighteous has a crooked one. But you, walk on the straight and level way, and leave the crooked one alone.”

Mand. 6 1.3 “For the crooked way has no tracks, only pathless ground and many stumbling blocks, and it is rough and thorny. So it is harmful to those who walk on it.”

Mand. 6 1.4 “But those who walk the straight way walk smoothly and without stumbling. For it is neither rough nor thorny. You see, then, that it is more beneficial to walk this way.”

Mand. 6 1.5 “It pleases me, sir,” I said, “to walk this way.” “You will walk it,” he said, “and whoever turns to the Lord with his whole heart will walk in it.”

Scripture: [Joel 2:12](#)

Chapter 2

Mand. 6 2.1 “Now listen,” he said, “about faith. There are two angels with a person, one of righteousness and one of wickedness.”

Translator’s note. Similar ideas appear in Jewish writings of the period, such as the Dead Sea Scrolls’ Community Rule, which speaks of two spirits of truth and falsehood. Barnabas 18 also sets angels of light and angels of Satan over the two ways. Scripture speaks of the struggle between flesh and Spirit ([Galatians 5:17](#)), but it does not teach that two angels dwell with each person.

Mand. 6 2.2 “How, then, sir,” I said, “will I know what they do, since both angels live with me?”

Mand. 6 2.3 “Listen,” he said, “and you will understand them. The angel of righteousness is gentle, modest, mild, and quiet. When he comes up into your heart, he immediately speaks with you about righteousness, purity, reverence, contentment, every righteous deed, and every glorious virtue. When all these things come up into your heart, know that the angel of righteousness is with you. These are the works of the angel of righteousness. So believe him and his works.”

Mand. 6 2.4 “Now look at the works of the angel of wickedness. First of all, he is quick-tempered, bitter, and foolish, and his works are evil and bring ruin on God’s servants. So when he comes up into your heart, know him by his works.”

Mand. 6 2.5 “Sir,” I said, “I don’t know how to recognize him.” “Listen,” he said. “When quick temper or bitterness comes upon you, know that he is in you. Next come the desire for many activities, and extravagance in much food and drink, in many drinking bouts, and in all kinds of foods that are not needed. Then come desires for women and for gain, much pride and boasting, and everything like these. When these come up into your heart, know that the angel of wickedness is in you.”

Mand. 6 2.6 “So when you recognize his works, keep away from him. Do not trust him at all, because his works are evil and harmful to God’s servants. So you have the workings of both angels. Understand them and believe the angel of righteousness,”

Mand. 6 2.7 “but stay away from the angel of wickedness, because his teaching is evil in every action. For if someone is a faithful person, and a thought from this angel comes up into his heart, that man or woman is bound to commit some sin.”

Mand. 6 2.8 “But on the other hand, if someone is very wicked, man or woman, and the works of the angel of righteousness come up into his heart, he is bound to do something good.”

Mand. 6 2.9 “You see, then,” he said, “that it is good to follow the angel of righteousness, and to renounce the angel of wickedness.”

Mand. 6 2.10 “This commandment explains the things that concern faith, so that you may believe the works of the angel of righteousness, and by doing them live to God. And believe that the works of the angel of wickedness are harmful. So by not doing them you will live to God.”

Mandate 7

Chapter 1

Mand. 7 1.1 “Fear the Lord,” he said, “and keep his commandments. By keeping God’s commandments you will be strong in everything you do, and your conduct will be beyond compare. For by fearing the Lord you will do everything well. This is the fear you must have, and so be saved.”

Translator’s note. This is the seventh Mandate. Its opening words echo [Ecclesiastes 12:13](#) (“Fear God and keep his commandments”). “Fear” here means reverence for God, as in [Proverbs 1:7](#).

Mand. 7 1.2 “But do not fear the devil. For by fearing the Lord you will have mastery over the devil, since there is no power in him. And where there is no power, there is no fear either. But where there is glorious power, there is fear too. For everyone who has power inspires fear. But the one who has no power is despised by everyone.”

Translator’s note. Compare [James 4:7](#): “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”

Mand. 7 1.3 “But fear the devil’s works, because they are evil. So if you fear the Lord, you will not do them, but will keep away from them.”

Mand. 7 1.4 “So there are two kinds of fear. If you want to do evil, fear the Lord, and you will not do it. And if you want to do good, fear the Lord, and you will do it. So the fear of the Lord is strong, great, and glorious. So fear the Lord, and you will live to him. And all who fear him and keep his commandments will live to God.”

Mand. 7 1.5 “Why, sir,” I said, “did you say about those who keep his commandments, ‘They will live to God’?” “Because,” he said, “all creation fears the Lord, but does not keep his commandments. So those who fear him and keep his commandments have life with God. But those who do not keep his commandments have no life in him.”

Mandate 8

Chapter 1

Mand. 8 1.1 “I told you,” he said, “that God’s creations are of two kinds. And self-control is also of two kinds. For there are some things you must restrain yourself from, and some things you must not.”

Translator’s note. This is the eighth Mandate.

Mand. 8 1.2 “Show me, sir,” I said, “what we must restrain ourselves from and what we must not.” “Listen,” he said. “Restrain yourself from what is evil, and do not do it. But do not restrain yourself from what is good; do it. For if you hold back from doing good, you commit a great sin. But if you hold back from doing evil, you do great righteousness. So hold back from all evil, and do

good.”

Mand. 8 1.3 “What, sir,” I said, “are the evils we must hold back from?” “Listen,” he said. “From adultery and sexual immorality, from lawless drunkenness, from wicked luxury, from overindulgence in food, from lavish spending of wealth, from boasting, arrogance, and pride, and from lying, slander, hypocrisy, holding grudges, and all blasphemy.”

Mand. 8 1.4 “These are the most evil deeds in human life. So God’s servant must hold back from these deeds. For whoever does not hold back from these cannot live to God. So hear also the things that come next after these.”

Mand. 8 1.5 “Sir,” I said, “are there still other evil deeds?” “Yes, many,” he said, “from which God’s servant must hold back: theft, lying, fraud, false witness, greed, evil desire, deceit, vanity, boasting, and everything like these.”

Mand. 8 1.6 “Do you not think these are evil?” “Very evil,” I said, “for God’s servants.” “The one who serves God must hold back from all these. So hold back from all these, so that you may live to God and be enrolled among those who hold back from them. So these are the things you must hold back from.”

Mand. 8 1.7 “Now hear what you must not hold back from but do,” he said. “Do not hold back from what is good, but do it.”

Mand. 8 1.8 “Explain to me too, sir,” I said, “the power of the good things, so that I may walk in them and serve them, and so that by doing them I may be saved.” “Listen also,” he said, “to the good works that you must do and not hold back from.”

Mand. 8 1.9 “First of all: faith, the fear of the Lord, love, harmony, words of righteousness, truth, and patience. Nothing is better than these in the life of people. If someone keeps these things and does not hold back from them, he becomes blessed in his life.”

Mand. 8 1.10 “Then hear what follows: to serve widows; to look after orphans and those in need; to ransom God’s servants from their distress; to be hospitable, for doing good is found in hospitality; to oppose no one; to be calm; to become poorer than all people; to respect the elderly; to practice justice; to preserve brotherhood; to bear insult; to be patient; to hold no grudge; to encourage those who are weary in soul; not to cast off those who have stumbled in the faith, but to bring them back and cheer them; to warn those who sin; not to oppress debtors and the needy; and anything like these.”

Translator’s note. Caring for widows and orphans echoes [James 1:27](#), and the call to hospitality echoes [Hebrews 13:2](#). Ransoming fellow Christians from captivity or slavery is also mentioned in other early Christian writings (for example, 1 Clement 55:2).

Mand. 8 1.11 “Do you think these are good?” he said. “What, sir,” I said, “is better than these?” “Then walk in them,” he said, “and do not hold back from them, and you will live to God.”

Mand. 8 1.12 “So keep this commandment. If you do good and do not hold back from it, you will live to God, and all who do so will live to God. And again, if you do not do evil and hold back from it, you will live to God, and all will live to God who keep these commandments and walk in them.”

Mandate 9

Chapter 1

Mand. 9 1.1 He said to me, “Take double-mindedness away from yourself, and do not be at all double-minded about asking God for anything, saying to yourself, ‘How can I ask the Lord and receive, having sinned so much against him?’”

Translator’s note. This is the ninth Mandate, on prayer and doubt. Compare [James 1:5–8](#), where “double-minded” (dipsychos) is the adjective related to Hermas’s “double-mindedness” (dipsychia).

Mand. 9 1.2 “Do not think these things. Turn to the Lord with your whole heart and ask him without doubting, and you will know his great compassion, that he will not abandon you but will fulfill the request of your soul.”

Mand. 9 1.3 “For God is not like people who hold grudges. He holds no grudge and has compassion on what he has made.”

Mand. 9 1.4 “So cleanse your heart of all the emptiness of this age and of the words just mentioned. Then ask the Lord, and you will receive everything. You will not lack any of your requests, if you ask the Lord without doubting.”

Mand. 9 1.5 “But if you doubt in your heart, you will receive none of your requests. For those who doubt toward God are the double-minded, and they get none of what they ask for.”

Mand. 9 1.6 “But those who are complete in faith ask for everything, trusting in the Lord, and they receive, because they ask without doubting and are not double-minded in anything. For every double-minded person, unless he repents, will be saved with difficulty.”

Mand. 9 1.7 “So cleanse your heart of double-mindedness and put on faith, for it is strong. Believe God that you will receive all the requests you make. And if you ever ask the Lord for something and receive it rather slowly, do not be double-minded because you did not receive the request of your soul quickly. For it is certainly because of some temptation or some wrongdoing you do not know

about that you are receiving your request more slowly.”

Mand. 9 1.8 “So do not stop asking for the request of your soul, and you will receive it. But if you give up and are double-minded in asking, blame yourself and not the one who gives to you.”

Mand. 9 1.9 “Watch out for this double-mindedness. For it is evil and senseless, and it uproots many from the faith, even very faithful and strong people. For this double-mindedness is the devil’s daughter and does great evil to God’s servants.”

Mand. 9 1.10 “So despise double-mindedness and rule over it in everything, putting on strong and powerful faith. For faith promises everything and completes everything, but double-mindedness, which does not trust itself, fails in all the works it undertakes.”

Mand. 9 1.11 “You see, then,” he said, “that faith is from above, from the Lord, and has great power. But double-mindedness is an earthly spirit, from the devil, and has no power.”

Translator’s note. Compare [James 3:15–17](#), which contrasts wisdom “from above” with wisdom that is “earthly” and “demonic.”

Mand. 9 1.12 “So serve faith, which has power, and keep away from double-mindedness, which has no power, and you will live to God. And all who think this way will live to God.”

Mandate 10

Chapter 1

Mand. 10 1.1 “Take grief away from yourself,” he said, “for it is also a sister of double-mindedness and quick temper.”

Translator’s note. This is the tenth Mandate. The word for “grief” (lypē) means sadness or sorrow. Hermas goes on to say that grief harms the Holy Spirit, yet it can also lead to repentance. Compare Paul’s distinction between godly and worldly grief in [2 Corinthians 7:10](#).

Mand. 10 1.2 “How, sir,” I said, “is she their sister? It seems to me that quick temper is one thing, double-mindedness another, and grief another.” “You are senseless, man,” he said, “and do not understand that grief is more evil than all the spirits and most terrible for God’s servants. It ruins a person more than any other spirit does. It wears out the Holy Spirit, and yet it also saves.”

Mand. 10 1.3 “Sir,” I said, “I am senseless and do not understand these parables. I do not see how it can wear out the Spirit and also save.”

Mand. 10 1.4 “Listen,” he said. “Some have never inquired into the truth or sought to know about God. They have only believed, and they are mixed up with business and wealth and friendships

with unbelievers and many other affairs of this age. All who are attached to these things do not understand the parables about God. For they are darkened by these activities, and they become corrupted and turn into wasteland.”

Mand. 10 1.5 “Just as good vineyards, when they are neglected, turn to wasteland, choked by thorns and various weeds, so people who have believed, and fall into these many activities mentioned above, wander away from their understanding. They understand nothing at all about righteousness. Even when they hear about God and the truth, their mind is occupied with their business, and they understand nothing at all.”

Mand. 10 1.6 “But some have the fear of God, inquire about God and the truth, and have their heart turned to the Lord. They understand and grasp everything said to them more quickly, because they have the fear of the Lord in themselves. For where the Lord lives, there is also great understanding. So hold fast to the Lord, and you will understand and grasp everything.”

| Scripture: [Psalm 112](#)

Chapter 2

Mand. 10 2.1 “Now listen, you senseless man,” he said, “to how grief wears out the Holy Spirit and also saves.”

Mand. 10 2.2 “When the double-minded person sets out on some action and fails at it because of his double-mindedness, this grief comes into the person. It grieves the Holy Spirit and wears the Spirit out.”

Mand. 10 2.3 “Then again, when quick temper attaches itself to a person over some matter and he becomes very bitter, grief again comes into the heart of the quick-tempered person. He is sorry for the thing he did, and repents, because he did something evil.”

Mand. 10 2.4 “So this grief seems to bring salvation, because after doing evil he repented. Still, both actions grieve the Spirit. Double-mindedness grieves the Spirit because the person did not succeed in what he set out to do. Quick temper grieves the Spirit because the person did evil. So both are painful to the Holy Spirit, double-mindedness and quick temper.”

| *Translator’s note.* The phrase “grieve the Holy Spirit” echoes [Ephesians 4:30](#).

| Scripture: [Ephesians 4:30](#)

Mand. 10 2.5 “So take grief away from yourself, and do not afflict the Holy Spirit who lives in you, in case he pleads with God and leaves you.”

Mand. 10 2.6 “For the Spirit of God, given to this flesh, does not

put up with grief or distress.”

Chapter 3

Mand. 10 3.1 “So put on cheerfulness, which always has favor with God and is acceptable to him, and delight in it. For every cheerful person does good things, thinks good things, and despises grief.”

Mand. 10 3.2 “But the gloomy person always does evil. First, he does evil because he grieves the Holy Spirit, who was given to the person as a cheerful spirit. Second, by grieving the Holy Spirit he does lawless things, since he does not pray or confess to the Lord. For the prayer of a gloomy person never has the power to go up to the altar of God.”

Translator’s note. The “grief” (lypē) Hermas condemns here is gloom or sullen sadness, treated as a vice that grieves the Holy Spirit.

Mand. 10 3.3 “Why,” I said, “does the prayer of the gloomy person not go up to the altar?” “Because,” he said, “grief sits in his heart. Grief, mixed with the prayer, does not let the prayer go up pure to the altar. For just as vinegar and wine mixed together do not have the same pleasant taste, so grief mixed with the Holy Spirit does not make the same prayer.”

Mand. 10 3.4 “So cleanse yourself of this evil grief, and you will live to God. And all who throw grief off themselves and put on complete cheerfulness will live to God.”

Mandate 11

Chapter 1

Mand. 11 1.1 He showed me some people sitting on a bench and another man sitting on a chair, and said to me, “Do you see the ones sitting on the bench?” “I see them, sir,” I said. “These,” he said, “are faithful, and the one sitting on the chair is a false prophet, who destroys the minds of God’s servants. But it is the minds of the double-minded he destroys, not of the faithful.”

Translator’s note. This is the eleventh Mandate, on how to tell true and false prophets apart. Compare the Didache 11-12, [1 John 4:1](#) and [Matthew 7:15-20](#).

Mand. 11 1.2 “So these double-minded people go to him as to a fortune-teller and ask him what will happen to them. And that false prophet, having no power of the divine Spirit in himself, speaks to them according to their questions and the desires of their wickedness, and fills their souls just as they wish.”

Mand. 11 1.3 “For he himself is empty, and gives empty answers to the empty. Whatever he is asked, he answers according to the

emptiness of the person. But he also speaks some true words, for the devil fills him with his own spirit, to see if he can break any of the righteous."

Mand. 11 1.4 "So all who are strong in the faith of the Lord, clothed in truth, do not attach themselves to such spirits but keep away from them. But those who are double-minded and are always repenting consult fortune-tellers as the pagans do. They bring a greater sin on themselves by their idolatry. For whoever asks a false prophet about some action is an idolater, empty of the truth, and foolish."

Mand. 11 1.5 "For no spirit given by God is consulted with questions. Instead, having the power of God, it speaks everything of itself, because it is from above, from the power of the divine Spirit."

Mand. 11 1.6 "But the spirit that is questioned and speaks according to people's desires is earthly and lightweight, with no power. And it does not speak at all unless it is asked."

Mand. 11 1.7 "How then, sir," I said, "will a person know which of them is a prophet and which is a false prophet?" "Listen," he said, "about both prophets. And as I am going to tell you, so you will test the prophet and the false prophet. Test the person who has the divine Spirit by his life."

Mand. 11 1.8 "First, the one who has the Spirit from above is gentle, quiet, humble, and keeps away from all evil and the empty desires of this age. He makes himself poorer than all people. He gives no answer to anyone who asks him, and does not speak privately. The Holy Spirit does not speak when a person wants to speak, but speaks when God wants him to speak."

Mand. 11 1.9 "So when the person who has the divine Spirit comes into a gathering of righteous men who have faith in the divine Spirit, and prayer is made to God by the gathering of those men, then the angel of the prophetic spirit who is assigned to him fills the person. And the person, filled with the Holy Spirit, speaks to the congregation as the Lord wishes."

Translator's note. Hermas pictures Christian prophecy as happening in the gathered church, in the context of prayer. Compare [1 Corinthians 14:29-32](#).

Mand. 11 1.10 "In this way, then, the Spirit of God will be made plain. This is the power of the Lord concerning the Spirit of God."

Mand. 11 1.11 "Now listen," he said, "about the earthly spirit that is empty, has no power, and is foolish."

Mand. 11 1.12 "First, that person who seems to have a spirit exalts himself and wants to have the seat of honor. At once he is brash, shameless, and talkative. He lives in much luxury and in many other deceptions, and he takes payment for his prophecy. If

he does not get paid, he does not prophesy. Can a divine Spirit take payment and prophesy? It is not possible for a prophet of God to do this. The spirit of such prophets is earthly."

Translator's note. Compare the Didache 11.6, which says an apostle who asks for money is a false prophet, and 11.12, which says not to listen to one who says in the Spirit, "Give me money."

Mand. 11 1.13 "Next, he does not come near a gathering of righteous men at all, but avoids them. He attaches himself to the double-minded and empty. He prophesies to them in a corner and deceives them, saying empty things about everything, just as they want to hear. For he is giving answers to empty people. An empty jar placed with other empty jars does not break; they fit together."

Mand. 11 1.14 "But when he comes into a gathering full of righteous men who have the Spirit of God, and prayer is made by them, that person is emptied. The earthly spirit flees from him in fear, and that person is struck dumb and is completely broken, unable to say anything."

Mand. 11 1.15 "For if you store wine or oil in a cellar, and put an empty jar among them, and then want to clear the cellar again, you will find that jar, which you put in empty, still empty. In the same way, when empty prophets come among the spirits of righteous people, they are found to be just as they came."

Mand. 11 1.16 "Now you know how both kinds of prophet live. So test the person who claims to be spirit-filled by his deeds and his life."

Mand. 11 1.17 "But you, believe the Spirit that comes from God and has power. Do not believe the earthly, empty spirit at all, because there is no power in it, for it comes from the devil."

Mand. 11 1.18 "Now listen to the parable I am going to tell you. Take a stone and throw it up at the sky; see if you can touch it. Or take a water squirt and squirt it at the sky; see if you can make a hole in the sky."

Mand. 11 1.19 "How, sir," I said, "can these things happen? You have named two impossible things." "Just as these things are impossible," he said, "so the earthly spirits are powerless and weak."

Translator's note. There is a wordplay in the Greek. The same word, *adynata*, means "impossible" when used of the two tasks and "powerless" when used of the earthly spirits.

Mand. 11 1.20 "Now take the power that comes from above. Hail is a tiny pellet, and when it falls on a person's head, how much pain it causes. Or take a drop that falls from a roof to the ground and bores through the stone."

Mand. 11 1.21 "You see, then, that the smallest things that fall

from above onto the earth have great power. In the same way the divine Spirit coming from above is powerful. So believe this Spirit, and keep away from the other.”

Mandate 12

Chapter 1

Mand. 12 1.1 He said to me, “Take every evil desire away from yourself, and put on the good and holy desire. For clothed with this desire, you will hate the evil desire and rein it in as you wish.”

Translator’s note. This is the twelfth Mandate. Compare [Romans 13:14](#) and [Galatians 5:16](#).

Mand. 12 1.2 “For evil desire is wild and hard to tame. It is fearsome, and in its wildness it devours people. This is especially true if a servant of God falls into it and is not wise: he is terribly consumed by it. It consumes those who do not have the clothing of good desire but are mixed up with this age. It hands these over to death.”

Mand. 12 1.3 “What are the works of evil desire, sir,” I said, “that hand people over to death? Show me so that I can keep away from them.” “Listen,” he said, “to the works through which evil desire kills the servants of God.”

Chapter 2

Mand. 12 2.1 “Above all is desire for another man’s wife or another woman’s husband. Then comes desire for extravagant wealth, for many useless foods and strong drinks, and for many other foolish luxuries. For every luxury is foolish and empty for God’s servants.”

Mand. 12 2.2 “These desires are evil, and they kill God’s servants. For this evil desire is a daughter of the devil. So you must keep away from the evil desires, so that by keeping away you may live to God.”

Mand. 12 2.3 “But all who are overpowered by them and do not resist them will die completely. For these desires are deadly.”

Mand. 12 2.4 “But you, put on the desire for righteousness, and armed with the fear of the Lord, stand against them. For the fear of God lives in good desire. If evil desire sees you armed with the fear of God and standing against it, it will run far away from you, afraid of your weapons, and you will not see it again.”

Translator’s note. Compare [Ephesians 6:11–17](#) and [James 4:7](#).

Mand. 12 2.5 “So when you have defeated it and won the crown of

victory over it, go to the desire for righteousness. Hand over to her the victory you won, and serve her as she wishes. If you serve the good desire and submit to her, you will be able to master the evil desire and subdue it as you wish.”

Chapter 3

Mand. 12 3.1 “Sir,” I said, “I wanted to know in what ways I must serve the good desire.” “Listen,” he said. “Work righteousness and virtue, truth and the fear of the Lord, faith and gentleness, and whatever good things are like these. By doing these you will be a servant well pleasing to God and will live to him. And everyone who serves the good desire will live to God.”

Mand. 12 3.2 So he finished the twelve commandments and said to me, “You have these commandments. Walk in them and encourage those who hear, so that their repentance may be pure for the rest of the days of their life.”

Mand. 12 3.3 “Carry out this ministry that I give you with care, and you will accomplish much. For you will find favor with those who are about to repent, and they will be persuaded by your words. For I will be with you, and I will compel them to be persuaded by you.”

Mand. 12 3.4 I said to him, “Sir, these commandments are great, good, glorious, and able to gladden the heart of the person who can keep them. But I do not know whether people can keep these commandments, because they are very hard.”

Mand. 12 3.5 He answered me, “If you make up your mind that they can be kept, you will easily keep them, and they will not be hard. But if the thought has already entered your heart that they cannot be kept by a person, you will not keep them.”

Translator’s note. Compare [1 John 5:3](#): “His commandments are not burdensome.”

Mand. 12 3.6 “Now I tell you: if you do not keep these but neglect them, you will not have salvation, nor your children, nor your household. For you have already decided for yourself that these commandments cannot be kept by a person.”

Chapter 4

Mand. 12 4.1 He said this to me very angrily, so that I was confused and very afraid of him. His appearance changed, so that no human being could bear his anger.

Mand. 12 4.2 When he saw me completely shaken and confused, he began to speak to me more gently and cheerfully. He said, “Foolish, senseless, double-minded man, don’t you understand the

glory of God, how great, strong, and wonderful it is, that he created the world for the sake of man, and put all his creation under man, and gave him all authority to rule over everything under heaven?"

Translator's note. Compare [Psalm 8:6](#) and [Genesis 1:28](#).

Mand. 12 4.3 "So if man," he said, "is lord of all God's creatures and rules over everything, can he not also rule over these commandments? The person who has the Lord in his heart," he said, "can rule over everything, including all these commandments."

Mand. 12 4.4 "But those who have the Lord on their lips, while their heart is hardened and they are far from the Lord: for them these commandments are hard and difficult to walk in."

Translator's note. Compare [Isaiah 29:13](#), quoted by Jesus in [Matthew 15:8](#): "This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me."

Mand. 12 4.5 "So you who are empty and light in faith, put your Lord in your heart, and you will know that nothing is easier than these commandments, or sweeter, or gentler."

Mand. 12 4.6 "Turn back, you who walk in the commandments of the devil, which are difficult, bitter, wild, and shameless, and do not fear the devil, because there is no power in him against you."

Mand. 12 4.7 "For I, the angel of repentance who rules over him, will be with you. The devil has only fear to work with, and the fear he causes has no strength. So do not fear him, and he will run from you."

Chapter 5

Mand. 12 5.1 I said to him, "Sir, listen to a few words from me." "Say what you want," he said. "Sir," I said, "a person is eager to keep God's commandments, and there is no one who does not ask the Lord to be strengthened in his commandments and submit to them. But the devil is harsh and overpowers them."

Mand. 12 5.2 "He cannot," he said, "overpower God's servants who hope in God with their whole heart. The devil can wrestle with them, but he cannot throw them down. So if you stand against him, he will be defeated and flee from you in shame. But those who are completely empty," he said, "fear the devil as though he had power."

Translator's note. Compare [James 4:7](#): "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

Mand. 12 5.3 "When someone fills a great many jars with good wine, and among those jars a few are only half full, he comes to the jars and doesn't check the full ones, for he knows they are full. He

checks the half-empty ones, afraid they have turned to vinegar. For half-empty jars quickly turn to vinegar, and the pleasure of the wine is lost.”

Mand. 12 5.4 “In the same way the devil comes to all God’s servants to tempt them. All who are full in faith stand strongly against him, and he leaves them, because he has no place to get in. Then he goes to the half-empty ones, and finding room, he gets into them. He does what he wants in them, and they become his slaves.”

Chapter 6

Mand. 12 6.1 “But I, the angel of repentance, tell you: do not fear the devil. For I was sent,” he said, “to be with you who repent with your whole heart and to strengthen you in faith.”

Mand. 12 6.2 “So believe God, you who have given up on your life because of your sins, who keep adding to your sins and weighing down your life. Believe that if you turn to the Lord with your whole heart, and do what is right for the rest of your life, and serve him rightly according to his will, he will heal your earlier sins. Then you will have power to master the works of the devil. But do not fear the devil’s threats at all, for he has no strength, like the sinews of a dead man.”

Mand. 12 6.3 “So listen to me, and fear the one who can do all things, who is able to save and to destroy. Keep these commandments, and you will live to God.”

Translator’s note. The phrase “able to save and to destroy” echoes [James 4:12](#). Compare also [Matthew 10:28](#).

Mand. 12 6.4 I said to him, “Sir, now I have been strengthened in all the requirements of the Lord, because you are with me. I know that you will crush all the power of the devil, and we will master him and prevail over all his works. And I hope, sir, that I can keep these commandments you have given, with the Lord strengthening me.”

Mand. 12 6.5 “You will keep them,” he said, “if your heart becomes pure toward the Lord. And all will keep them who cleanse their hearts of the empty desires of this age, and they will live to God.”

Similitude 1

Chapter 1

Sim. 1 1.1 He said to me, “You know that you, God’s servants, are living in a foreign land. For your city is far from this city. So if you know your city, where you are going to live,” he said, “why are you

preparing fields, costly furnishings, buildings, and useless dwellings here?"

Translator's note. This is the first Parable (Similitude). It pictures Christians as foreigners living in this world. Compare [Philippians 3:20](#), [Hebrews 11:13-16](#), [Hebrews 13:14](#) and [1 Peter 2:11](#).

Sim. 1 1.2 "So whoever prepares these things for this city cannot return to his own city."

Sim. 1 1.3 "You foolish, double-minded, wretched person, don't you understand that all these things are foreign to you and under someone else's authority? For the lord of this city will say, 'I do not want you to live in my city. Leave this city, because you do not follow my laws.'"

Sim. 1 1.4 "So you, who have fields, houses, and many other possessions, when he throws you out, what will you do with your field, your house, and the rest of what you prepared for yourself? For the lord of this country rightly says to you, 'Either follow my laws or leave my country.'"

Sim. 1 1.5 "So what will you do, you who have a law in your own city? Will you completely deny your law because of your fields and the rest of your property, and walk by the law of this city? Be careful that denying your law does not turn out to harm you. For if you want to return to your city, you will not be received, because you denied the law of your city, and you will be shut out from it."

Sim. 1 1.6 "So watch out. Since you are living in a foreign land, prepare nothing more for yourself than what is enough for you. And be ready. Then, when the master of this city wants to throw you out for opposing his law, you can leave his city and go to your own city. There you can follow your own law with joy, and no one will mistreat you."

Sim. 1 1.7 "So watch out, you who serve the Lord and have him in your heart. Do the works of God, remembering his commandments and the promises he made. Trust him to fulfill those promises, if his commandments are kept."

Sim. 1 1.8 "So instead of fields, buy souls in distress, as each of you is able. Visit widows and orphans, and do not overlook them. Spend your wealth and all your possessions on fields and houses of this kind, which you received from God."

Translator's note. Compare [James 1:27](#). "Buying" souls in distress may mean paying to free people from slavery or captivity, or more generally spending money to relieve those in need.

Sim. 1 1.9 "For the Master made you rich for this purpose, to carry out these services for him. It is much better to buy such fields, possessions, and houses, which you will find in your own city when you arrive there."

| *Translator's note.* Compare [Matthew 6:19-20](#) and [Luke 16:9](#).

Sim. 1 1.10 "This extravagance is good and holy. It brings no grief or fear, only joy. So do not practice the extravagance of the Gentiles, for it does you no good, since you are God's servants."

Sim. 1 1.11 "But practice your own extravagance, in which you can rejoice. Do not counterfeit, and do not touch what belongs to someone else or desire it, for it is evil to desire what belongs to others. Do your own work, and you will be saved."

| *Translator's note.* The Greek word for "counterfeit" was used of forging or debasing coins. Exactly what Hermas means by it here is not clear.

Similitude 2

Chapter 1

Sim. 2 1.1 As I was walking in the field, I was looking at an elm and a vine and thinking about them and their fruit. Then the shepherd appeared to me and said, "What are you puzzling over about the elm and the vine?" "I am thinking, sir," I said, "that they suit each other very well."

| *Translator's note.* This is the second Parable. In Roman Italy, grapevines were commonly trained to grow up elm trees.

Sim. 2 1.2 "These two trees," he said, "are set up as a picture for God's servants." "I would like to know," I said, "what these trees you speak of picture." "Do you see the elm and the vine?" he said. "I see them, sir," I said.

Sim. 2 1.3 "This vine," he said, "bears fruit, but the elm is a tree without fruit. Yet if this vine does not climb up the elm, it cannot bear much fruit, because it lies sprawled on the ground. And the fruit it does bear is rotten, because it is not hanging on the elm. So when the vine is trained up onto the elm, it bears fruit both from itself and from the elm."

Sim. 2 1.4 "So you see that the elm also gives much fruit, no less than the vine, and in fact more." "How can it give more, sir?" I said. "Because," he said, "when the vine hangs on the elm it gives much good fruit, but when it lies on the ground it bears little fruit, and that rotten. So this parable applies to God's servants, to the poor and the rich."

Sim. 2 1.5 "How, sir?" I said. "Explain it to me." "Listen," he said. "The rich man has money, but toward the Lord he is poor, because he is distracted by his wealth. His prayer and confession to the Lord are very small, and what he has is weak and small and has no power. But when the rich man relies on the poor man and gives him what he needs, he believes that what he does for the poor man can find a reward with God. For the poor man is rich in prayer and

confession, and his prayer has great power with God. So the rich man supplies the poor man with everything, without hesitating.”

Translator’s note. Hermas links giving to the poor with the prayers of the poor for the giver, and speaks of the giver’s reward with God. Compare [Proverbs 19:17](#) and [Luke 14:13-14](#). In [2 Corinthians 9:12-14](#), those who receive a gift thank God and pray for the givers. The New Testament roots our standing with God in grace ([Ephesians 2:8-9](#)) and treats such giving as its fruit.

Sim. 2 1.6 “And the poor man, supplied by the rich man, prays to God for the one who gives to him, and thanks God. And the rich man becomes all the more eager to help the poor man, so that he is provided for without fail as long as he lives. For he knows that the poor man’s prayer is acceptable to the Lord and rich before him.”

Sim. 2 1.7 “So both complete the work. The poor man works with his prayer, in which he is rich and which he received from the Lord. He gives it back to the Lord, who provides for him. In the same way the rich man, without hesitating, gives the poor man the wealth he received from the Lord. This is a great work and acceptable to God. For the rich man has shown understanding about his wealth. He has worked for the poor man out of the Lord’s gifts and has carried out his service rightly.”

Sim. 2 1.8 “So in people’s eyes the elm seems to bear no fruit. They do not know or understand that in a drought the elm, which holds water, feeds the vine. And the vine, having water without interruption, gives double fruit, both for itself and for the elm. In the same way the poor, praying to the Lord for the rich, make the wealth of the rich complete. And the rich, supplying the poor with what they need, make the prayers of the poor complete.”

Sim. 2 1.9 “So both become partners in the righteous work. Whoever does these things will not be abandoned by God but will be written in the books of the living.”

Translator’s note. “The book of the living” echoes [Psalm 69:28](#). Compare the “book of life” in [Philippians 4:3](#) and [Revelation 3:5](#).

Sim. 2 1.10 “Blessed are those who have wealth and understand that they are enriched by the Lord. For whoever understands this will be able also to do some good service.”

Similitude 3

Chapter 1

Sim. 3 1.1 He showed me many trees without leaves, which seemed to me dry, for they were all alike. He said to me, “Do you see these trees?” “I see them, sir,” I said, “alike and dry.” He answered me, “These trees you see are those who live in this age.”

| *Translator's note.* This is the third Parable.

Sim. 3 1.2 "Why, sir," I said, "do they look dry and all alike?"
"Because," he said, "in this age neither the righteous nor sinners can be seen for what they are; they look alike. For this age is winter for the righteous, and since they live among sinners, they cannot be told apart."

Sim. 3 1.3 "For just as in winter trees that have shed their leaves look alike, and you can't tell which are dry and which are alive, so in this age you cannot see who are righteous and who are sinners, but all look alike."

Similitude 4

Chapter 1

Sim. 4 1.1 He showed me again many trees, some budding and some dry, and said to me, "Do you see these trees?" "I see them, sir," I said, "some budding, some dry."

| *Translator's note.* This is the fourth Parable, a companion to the third.

Sim. 4 1.2 "These trees that are budding," he said, "are the righteous who will live in the age to come. For the age to come is summer for the righteous, but winter for sinners. So when the mercy of the Lord shines, then those who serve God will be revealed, and everyone will be revealed."

Sim. 4 1.3 "For just as in summer the fruit of each tree is revealed and it is known what kind it is, so the fruit of the righteous will be plain, and they will all be known, flourishing in that age."

Sim. 4 1.4 "But the pagans and the sinners, the dry trees you saw, will be found just like them, dry and fruitless in that age. They will be burned like wood, and they will be shown for what they are, because their conduct in their lives was evil. For the sinners will be burned because they sinned and did not repent. The pagans will be burned because they did not know the one who made them."

Sim. 4 1.5 "So you, bear fruit, so that in that summer your fruit may be known. Keep away from too much business, and you will not sin at all. For those who are busy with many things also sin much. They are distracted by their affairs and do not serve their Lord at all."

Sim. 4 1.6 "How, then," he said, "can such a person ask anything from the Lord and receive it, if he does not serve the Lord? Those who serve him will receive their requests. But those who do not serve the Lord will receive nothing."

Sim. 4 1.7 "But if someone is occupied with only one business, he can serve the Lord too. For his mind will not be corrupted and

drawn away from the Lord, but he will serve him with a pure mind.”

Sim. 4 1.8 “So if you do this, you can bear fruit for the age to come. And whoever does this will bear fruit.”

Similitude 5

Chapter 1

Sim. 5 1.1 While I was fasting, sitting on a mountain and thanking the Lord for everything he had done with me, I saw the shepherd sitting beside me, saying, “Why have you come here so early?” “Because, sir,” I said, “I am keeping a station.”

Translator’s note. This is the fifth Parable, on fasting. “Station” (Greek στατίων, from Latin statio, a sentry post) is a term for a fast kept as a kind of watch. Tertullian later uses it for the Wednesday and Friday fasts, and the Didache (8.1) already commands fasting on those days. Hermas does not say which day his station was.

Sim. 5 1.2 “What is a station?” he said. “I am fasting, sir,” I said. “And what is this fast you are keeping?” he said. “I am fasting the way I usually do, sir,” I said.

Sim. 5 1.3 “You do not know how to fast to the Lord,” he said. “This useless fast you keep for him is not a fast.” “Why, sir,” I said, “do you say this?” “I tell you,” he said, “that what you think is fasting is not a fast at all. But I will teach you what fast is acceptable and complete to the Lord. Listen,” he said.

Sim. 5 1.4 “God does not want such a pointless fast. For if you fast to God in this way, you accomplish nothing for righteousness. But fast to God this kind of fast:”

Sim. 5 1.5 “Do nothing evil in your life, but serve the Lord with a pure heart. Keep his commandments, walking in his instructions, and let no evil desire come up in your heart. Trust God that if you do these things, and fear him, and keep yourself from every evil deed, you will live to God. And if you do these things, you will keep a great fast, acceptable to God.”

Translator’s note. Compare [Isaiah 58:3-7](#) on the fast God accepts. Barnabas 3 also quotes this passage from Isaiah.

Chapter 2

Sim. 5 2.1 “Listen to the parable I am going to tell you, which goes with fasting.”

Sim. 5 2.2 “A man had a field and many servants, and he planted part of the field as a vineyard. He chose one servant who was faithful, pleasing to him, and held in honor. He called him over and said to him: ‘Take this vineyard that I planted and put a fence

around it until I come. Do nothing else to the vineyard. Keep this command of mine, and I will give you your freedom.’ Then the servant’s master went away on a journey.”

Sim. 5 2.3 “After he left, the servant took the vineyard and fenced it. When he finished fencing the vineyard, he saw that it was full of weeds.”

Sim. 5 2.4 “So he thought to himself: ‘I have finished this command of my master. Next I will dig over this vineyard. It will look better once it is dug, and without weeds it will give more fruit, not being choked by the weeds.’ So he set to work, dug the vineyard, and pulled out all the weeds in it. And that vineyard became very beautiful and thriving, with no weeds to choke it.”

Sim. 5 2.5 “After some time the master of the servant and of the field came and went into the vineyard. When he saw the vineyard fenced nicely, and also dug, with all the weeds pulled out and the vines thriving, he was very pleased with what the servant had done.”

Sim. 5 2.6 “So he called his beloved son, whom he had as heir, and the friends he had as advisers, and told them what he had ordered his servant to do and what he had found done. They rejoiced with the servant for the good report the master had given him.”

Sim. 5 2.7 “And he said to them: ‘I promised this servant his freedom if he kept the command I gave him. He kept my command and added a good work to the vineyard, and it pleased me very much. So in return for this work that he did, I want to make him a co-heir with my son, because when he thought of something good, he did not neglect it but carried it out.’”

Sim. 5 2.8 “The master’s son agreed with this decision, that the servant should become co-heir with the son.”

Sim. 5 2.9 “A few days later the master gave a dinner and sent him many dishes from the dinner. The servant took the dishes that were sent him by the master, kept what was enough for himself, and gave the rest to his fellow servants.”

Sim. 5 2.10 “His fellow servants received the dishes and were glad, and began to pray for him, that he would find greater favor with the master, because he treated them this way.”

Sim. 5 2.11 “His master heard about all this and was again very glad at what he had done. The master called together his friends and his son again and told them what the servant had done with the dishes he had received. And they agreed all the more that the servant should become co-heir with his son.”

Chapter 3

Sim. 5 3.1 I said, “Sir, I do not know these parables and cannot understand them unless you explain them to me.”

Sim. 5 3.2 “I will explain everything to you,” he said, “and whatever I say to you.”

Sim. 5 3.3 “I will show you his commandments. If you do something good beyond what God commands, you will gain for yourself greater glory and will be more honored with God than you were going to be. So if, while keeping the commandments of God, you add these services also, you will rejoice, if you keep them according to my command.”

Translator’s note. Here the Shepherd teaches that doing more than God commands earns extra glory. The New Testament does not teach this. Compare [Luke 17:10](#): “We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.”

Sim. 5 3.4 I said to him, “Sir, I will keep whatever you command me, for I know that you are with me.” “I will be with you,” he said, “because you have such eagerness to do good. And I will be with all who have this eagerness.”

Sim. 5 3.5 “This fast,” he said, “is very good if the commandments of the Lord are kept. So this is how you are to keep the fast you are going to observe:”

Sim. 5 3.6 “First of all, guard yourself from every evil word and every evil desire and cleanse your heart of all the empty things of this age. If you keep these things, this fast will be complete for you.”

Sim. 5 3.7 “And you will do it like this. After you have carried out what is written, on the day you fast you will taste nothing except bread and water. Add up the cost of the foods you would have eaten that day, and give that amount to a widow, an orphan, or someone in need. In this way you will humble yourself, so that through your humility the one who receives it may fill his own soul and pray for you to the Lord.”

Sim. 5 3.8 “So if you carry out the fast this way, as I commanded you, your sacrifice will be acceptable to God, and this fast will be recorded. The service done in this way is good, cheerful, and well received by the Lord.”

Sim. 5 3.9 “You will keep these things this way with your children and your whole household. If you keep them you will be blessed. And all who hear and keep them will be blessed, and whatever they ask of the Lord they will receive.”

Chapter 4

Sim. 5 4.1 I begged him earnestly to explain to me the parable of

the field, the master, the vineyard, the servant who fenced the vineyard, the fences, the weeds pulled out of the vineyard, the son, and the friends who were his advisers. For I understood that all of this was a parable.

Sim. 5 4.2 He answered, “You are far too forward in asking questions. You ought not to ask anything at all. If something needs to be explained to you, it will be explained.” I said to him, “Sir, whatever you show me without explaining it, I will have seen for nothing, since I won’t understand what it is. In the same way, if you tell me parables and do not interpret them, I will have heard something from you for nothing.”

Sim. 5 4.3 Again he answered me, “Whoever is a servant of God and has his Lord in his heart asks him for understanding and receives it. He can interpret every parable, and the words of the Lord that were spoken in parables become clear to him. But those who are weak and lazy in prayer hesitate to ask anything of the Lord.

Sim. 5 4.4 “The Lord is full of compassion and gives without ceasing to everyone who asks him. But you have been strengthened by the holy angel and have received from him such a gift of prayer, and you are not lazy. Why, then, do you not ask the Lord for understanding and receive it from him?”

Translator’s note. The Greek word here (enteuxis) usually means a petition or prayer, and its exact sense in this passage is unclear.

Sim. 5 4.5 I said to him, “Sir, since I have you with me, I have to ask you and question you, for you show me everything and speak with me. If I had seen or heard these things without you, I would have asked the Lord to explain them to me.”

Chapter 5

Sim. 5 5.1 “I told you a moment ago,” he said, “that you are cunning and stubborn in asking for the explanations of parables. But since you are so persistent, I will explain to you the parable of the field and everything that follows from it, so that you can make it all known to everyone. Listen now and understand it.

Sim. 5 5.2 “The field is this world. The lord of the field is the one who created all things, finished them, and gave them strength. The servant is the Son of God, and the vines are this people, whom he himself planted.

Translator’s note. Here the shepherd explains the parable told earlier in this Similitude, where a master’s servant fenced and weeded a vineyard and was made co-heir with the master’s son. Identifying the servant with the Son of God raises difficulties, because the master’s son is identified with the Holy Spirit (22.5.2 onward); see the note at 22.6.5.

Sim. 5 5.3 “The fences are the holy angels of the Lord who hold his

people together. The weeds pulled out of the vineyard are the lawless acts of God's servants. The food he sent him from the dinner is the commandments that he gave to his people through his Son. The friends and advisers are the holy angels who were created first. And the master's going away is the time that remains until his coming."

Sim. 5 5.4 I said to him, "Sir, everything is great and wonderful, and everything is glorious. How could I have understood these things? Not even another person, however wise, could understand them." Then I said, "Sir, explain to me one more thing that I am about to ask you."

Sim. 5 5.5 "Say what you wish," he said. "Sir," I said, "why is the Son of God shown in the parable in the role of a servant?"

Chapter 6

Sim. 5 6.1 "Listen," he said. "The Son of God is not placed in the role of a servant. He is placed in great authority and lordship." "How, sir?" I said. "I don't understand."

Sim. 5 6.2 "Because," he said, "God planted the vineyard, that is, he created the people, and handed it over to his Son. The Son appointed the angels over them to watch over them. And he himself cleansed their sins, working hard and enduring many labors, for no vineyard can be dug without toil or effort."

Sim. 5 6.3 "So when he had cleansed the sins of the people, he showed them the paths of life by giving them the law that he received from his Father."

| Scripture: [John 12:49-50](#)

Sim. 5 6.4 "Now listen to why the Lord took his Son and the glorious angels as advisers about the servant's inheritance."

Sim. 5 6.5 "God made the Holy Spirit, who existed beforehand and who created all creation, to dwell in the flesh that he chose. This flesh, in which the Holy Spirit lived, served the Spirit well, conducting itself with dignity and purity, and never defiled the Spirit at all."

Translator's note. Many scholars read this passage as identifying the pre-existent Son of God with the Holy Spirit, who dwelt in a human body (the "servant") that God then rewarded by making it a partner. Compare Similitude 9.1.1, where the Spirit is said to be the Son of God. The exact meaning is debated. Hermas never uses the names "Jesus" or "Christ," and he is working inside a parable rather than writing a formal doctrine. His picture is still clearly different from the church's later teaching, in which the Son and the Spirit are distinct persons.

Sim. 5 6.6 "Because this flesh lived well and purely, labored together with the Spirit, worked with it in every matter, and

behaved with strength and courage, God chose it as a partner with the Holy Spirit. The conduct of this flesh pleased him, because it was not defiled on earth while it carried the Holy Spirit.

Sim. 5 6.7 “So he took the Son and the glorious angels as advisers, so that this flesh also, having served the Spirit without fault, might have some place to dwell and not appear to have lost the reward for its service. For all flesh in which the Holy Spirit has lived will receive a reward, if it is found undefiled and spotless.

Sim. 5 6.8 “Now you have the explanation of this parable as well.”

Chapter 7

Sim. 5 7.1 “Sir, I was glad to hear this explanation,” I said. “Now listen,” he said. “Keep this flesh of yours pure and undefiled, so that the spirit living in it may bear witness for it and your flesh may be declared righteous.

Sim. 5 7.2 “Be careful that it never enters your mind that this flesh of yours is perishable, and so misuse it in some defilement. If you defile your flesh, you will defile the Holy Spirit as well. And if you defile the flesh, you will not live.”

Sim. 5 7.3 “But, sir,” I said, “what if someone acted in ignorance before these words were heard? How can a person who has defiled his flesh be saved?” “For earlier acts of ignorance,” he said, “only God can give healing, for all authority is his.

Sim. 5 7.4 “He will heal them if, from now on, you defile neither your flesh nor your spirit, for the two belong together and neither can be defiled without the other. So keep both pure, and you will live to God.”

Similitude 6

Chapter 1

Sim. 6 1.1 I was sitting in my house, glorifying the Lord for everything I had seen, and thinking about the commandments: that they were good, powerful, joyful, and glorious, and able to save a person’s soul. I said to myself, “I will be blessed if I walk in these commandments, and whoever walks in them will be blessed.”

Sim. 6 1.2 While I was saying this to myself, I suddenly saw him sitting beside me. He said, “Why are you double-minded about the commandments I gave you? They are good. Do not be double-minded at all. Put on the faith of the Lord, and you will walk in them, for I will strengthen you in them.

Sim. 6 1.3 “These commandments are useful for those who are

about to repent. If they do not walk in them, their repentance is in vain.

Sim. 6 1.4 “So you who are repenting, throw off the wickedness of this age, which wears you down. Put on every virtue of righteousness, and you will be able to keep these commandments and stop adding to your sins. Walk, then, in these commandments of mine, and you will live to God. All of this has been spoken to you by me.”

Sim. 6 1.5 After he had spoken with me in this way, he said to me, “Let’s go out to the countryside, and I will show you the shepherds of the sheep.” “Let’s go, sir,” I said. We came to a plain, and he showed me a young shepherd dressed in a saffron-colored outfit.

Sim. 6 1.6 He was pasturing a great many sheep. These sheep seemed to be living in luxury and were very pampered, and they were skipping about happily here and there. The shepherd himself was very cheerful over his flock. Even his appearance was very cheerful, and he ran around among the sheep.

Chapter 2

Sim. 6 2.1 He said to me, “Do you see this shepherd?” “I see him, sir,” I said. “This,” he said, “is the angel of luxury and deceit. He wears down the souls of God’s servants and turns them away from the truth, deceiving them with evil desires that destroy them.

Sim. 6 2.2 “They forget the commandments of the living God and walk in deceit and empty pleasures, and this angel destroys them, some to death and some to ruin.”

Sim. 6 2.3 I said to him, “Sir, I don’t know what it means to be destroyed ‘to death’ and what it means ‘to ruin.’” “Listen,” he said. “The sheep you saw that were cheerful and skipping are those who have been torn away from God completely and have handed themselves over to the desires of this age. For them there is no repentance that leads to life, because they added to their sins and blasphemed the name of God. These are the ones who are headed for death.

Translator’s note. Later in the book (Parables 8 and 9), Hermas again says that there is no repentance for those who blasphemed the Lord or turned traitor and were ashamed of his name. He seems to have deliberate apostasy in view. Readers may compare [Hebrews 6:4-6](#), but Hermas does not quote it.

Sim. 6 2.4 “The sheep you saw that were not skipping but grazing in one place are those who have handed themselves over to luxury and deceit, but who have not blasphemed the Lord at all. These have been ruined and led away from the truth. For them there is still hope of repentance, by which they can live. So ruin has some hope of renewal, but death means destruction forever.”

Sim. 6 2.5 I went on a little farther, and he showed me a large shepherd who looked wild. He was wearing a white goatskin and carried a bag on his shoulders, a very hard staff with knots in it, and a large whip. His gaze was so harsh that I was afraid of him.

Sim. 6 2.6 This shepherd was taking over from the young shepherd those sheep that were pampered and living in luxury but were not skipping. He drove them into a steep place full of thorns and thistles, so that the sheep could not free themselves from the thorns and thistles but were tangled up in them.

Sim. 6 2.7 So they grazed tangled in the thorns and thistles, and they were in great misery as he beat them. He drove them here and there and gave them no rest, and those sheep had no peace at all.

Chapter 3

Sim. 6 3.1 When I saw them being whipped and suffering in this way, I felt sorry for them, because they were tormented like that and had no relief at all.

Sim. 6 3.2 I said to the shepherd who was speaking with me, "Sir, who is this shepherd who is so hard and bitter and has no pity at all for these sheep?" "This," he said, "is the angel of punishment. He is one of the righteous angels, but he is put in charge of punishment."

Sim. 6 3.3 "He takes those who have wandered away from God and followed the desires and deceits of this age, and he punishes them as they deserve, with terrible and varied punishments."

Sim. 6 3.4 "Sir," I said, "I would like to know what these various punishments are." "Listen to the various torments and punishments," he said. "These torments belong to this life. Some are punished with losses, some with want, some with all kinds of illness, some with every kind of turmoil, some by being insulted by unworthy people, and some by suffering in many other circumstances."

Translator's note. Hermas places these punishments in the present life ("belonging to this life"), not in the world to come. As the parable goes on to explain, they fall on those who still have hope of repentance, and they are meant to bring them to repent and be strengthened in faith.

Sim. 6 3.5 "Many people are restless in their plans and attempt many things, but nothing at all succeeds for them. They say they are not prospering in their business, and it never enters their minds that they have done evil. Instead they blame the Lord."

Sim. 6 3.6 "When they have been afflicted with every kind of affliction, then they are handed over to me for good discipline, and they are made strong in the faith of the Lord. For the rest of their lives they serve the Lord with a pure heart. If they repent, then it comes to their minds what evil things they did, and they glorify

God, saying that he is a righteous judge and that each one suffered justly according to his deeds. From then on they serve the Lord with a pure heart, they prosper in everything they do, and they receive from the Lord whatever they ask. Then they glorify the Lord because they were handed over to me, and they no longer suffer any of the evils.”

| Scripture: [Matthew 21:22](#)

Chapter 4

Sim. 6 4.1 I said to him, “Sir, explain this one more thing to me.” “What else do you want to know?” he said. “Sir,” I said, “are those who live in luxury and are deceived punished for the same length of time that they lived in luxury and were deceived?” He said to me, “They are punished for the same length of time.”

Sim. 6 4.2 “Sir,” I said, “that is a very short punishment. People who live in such luxury and forget God ought to be punished seven times as long.”

Sim. 6 4.3 He said to me, “You are foolish and do not understand the power of punishment.” “Sir,” I said, “if I did understand, I would not be asking you to explain.” “Listen,” he said, “to the power of both.

Sim. 6 4.4 “The time of luxury and deceit is one hour, but an hour of punishment has the force of thirty days. So if someone enjoys luxury and is deceived for one day, and is punished for one day, that day of punishment counts as a whole year. A person is punished for as many years as the days he spent in luxury. You see, then,” he said, “that the time of luxury and deceit is very short, while the time of punishment and torment is long.”

| *Translator’s note.* Compare the “year for each day” pattern in [Numbers 14:34](#), though Hermas does not cite it.

Chapter 5

Sim. 6 5.1 “Sir,” I said, “I still don’t understand at all about the time of deceit, luxury, and punishment. Explain it to me more clearly.”

Sim. 6 5.2 He answered me, “Your foolishness lingers. You do not want to purify your heart and serve God. Be careful that the time does not run out and you are found still foolish. So listen, as you wish, so that you may understand.

Sim. 6 5.3 “A person who lives in luxury and deceit for one day and does whatever he likes is clothed in great foolishness and does not understand what he is doing. By the next day he has forgotten what he did the day before, for luxury and deceit have no memory, because of the foolishness they put on. But when punishment and

torment cling to a person for a single day, he is punished and tormented for a whole year, because punishment and torment have a long memory.

Sim. 6 5.4 “So after a whole year of being tormented and punished, he remembers his luxury and deceit and recognizes that he is suffering these evils because of them. Everyone who lives in luxury and deceit is tormented in this way, because although they have life, they have handed themselves over to death.”

Sim. 6 5.5 “Sir,” I said, “which kinds of luxury are harmful?” “Every action is a luxury for a person,” he said, “if he does it with pleasure. Even the hot-tempered man lives in luxury when he satisfies his own passion. So do the adulterer, the drunkard, the slanderer, the liar, the greedy person, the swindler, and everyone who does things like these: each satisfies his own disease. He lives in luxury through his own action.

Sim. 6 5.6 “All these luxuries are harmful to God’s servants. It is because of these deceptions that those who are punished and tormented suffer.

Sim. 6 5.7 “But there are also luxuries that save people. Many who do good find luxury in it, carried along by their own pleasure. This kind of luxury is useful for God’s servants and brings life to such a person. The harmful luxuries I described before bring them torment and punishment. And if they stay in them and do not repent, they bring death on themselves.”

Translator’s note. The Greek word translated “luxury” (truphē) can also mean delight or enjoyment. Hermas uses the same word for both the harmful and the saving kind. That is why he can speak of “luxuries that save.”

Similitude 7

Chapter 1

Sim. 7 1.1 A few days later I saw him on the same plain where I had seen the shepherds. He said to me, “What are you looking for?” “I am here, sir,” I said, “so that you will order the shepherd of punishment to leave my house, because he is afflicting me severely.” “You must be afflicted,” he said. “The glorious angel gave this order about you, because he wants you to be tested.” “But sir,” I said, “what have I done that is so evil that I should be handed over to this angel?”

Translator’s note. As the Shepherd goes on to explain, Hermas is suffering because his household has sinned. The “glorious angel” appears several times in Hermas. In Similitude 8 (25.3.3) he is named as Michael, though some scholars connect the figure with the Son of God. The Shepherd himself is the angel of repentance.

Sim. 7 1.2 “Listen,” he said. “Your sins are many, but not so many that you should be handed over to this angel. But your household has committed great lawless acts and sins, and the glorious angel was embittered by what they did. For this reason he ordered you to be afflicted for a time, so that they too might repent and cleanse themselves from every desire of this age. When they repent and are cleansed, the angel of punishment will leave you.”

Sim. 7 1.3 I said to him, “Sir, if they did such things that the glorious angel was embittered, what did I do?” “There is no other way for them to be afflicted,” he said, “except for you, the head of the house, to be afflicted. When you are afflicted, they will necessarily be afflicted too. But while you are doing well, they cannot suffer any affliction.”

Sim. 7 1.4 “But look, sir,” I said, “they have repented with their whole heart.” “I too know that they have repented with their whole heart,” he said. “But do you think the sins of those who repent are forgiven immediately? Not at all. The person who repents must torment his own soul and be thoroughly humble in everything he does, and he must be afflicted with all kinds of afflictions. If he bears the troubles that come on him, then the one who created everything and gave it strength will surely have compassion and give him some healing.

Translator’s note. Hermas holds that repentance involves real hardship and self-humbling. This is part of the background to later discussions of penance in the church. Compare [2 Corinthians 7:9-11](#) for repentance that produces earnestness, and [Hebrews 12:5-11](#) for suffering as a father’s discipline.

Scripture: [Psalm 69](#)

Sim. 7 1.5 “This will surely happen if he sees that the heart of the repentant person is clean from every evil thing. It is good for you and your household to be afflicted now. Why should I say more to you? You must be afflicted, just as that angel of the Lord who handed you over to me commanded. And give thanks to the Lord that he thought you worthy to be shown the affliction ahead of time, so that, knowing it beforehand, you might bear it with strength.”

Sim. 7 1.6 I said to him, “Sir, be with me, and I will be able to bear any affliction.” “I will be with you,” he said. “I will also ask the angel of punishment to afflict you more lightly. But you will be afflicted for a short time, and then you will be restored to your house. Just stay humble and serve the Lord with a pure heart, you and your children and your household, and walk in my commandments that I am giving you. Then your repentance can be strong and pure.

Sim. 7 1.7 “If you keep these commandments with your household, all affliction will leave you. And indeed,” he said, “affliction will leave everyone who walks in these commandments of mine.”

Similitude 8

Chapter 1

Sim. 8 1.1 He showed me a great willow tree covering plains and mountains, and all who are called by the name of the Lord had come under the shelter of the willow.

Sim. 8 1.2 Beside the willow stood a very tall and glorious angel of the Lord, holding a large pruning knife. He was cutting branches from the willow and handing them to the people sheltered by the willow. The branches he handed them were little rods, about a cubit long.

Translator's note. A cubit was the length from the elbow to the fingertips, roughly a foot and a half (about 45 cm).

Sim. 8 1.3 After everyone had received a rod, the angel put down the knife, and the tree was as healthy as when I had first seen it.

Sim. 8 1.4 I was amazed and said to myself, "How can the tree be healthy when so many branches have been cut off?" The shepherd said to me, "Do not be amazed that the tree stayed healthy even though so many branches were cut. When you have seen everything, it will be made clear to you what it is."

Sim. 8 1.5 The angel who had handed out the rods asked the people for them back. In the same order in which they had received them, they were called to him, and each one returned his rod. The angel of the Lord took them and examined them.

Sim. 8 1.6 From some he received rods that were dry and, as it were, eaten by moths. The angel ordered those who handed in rods like that to stand apart.

Sim. 8 1.7 Others handed in rods that were dry but not moth-eaten. He ordered these to stand apart too.

Sim. 8 1.8 Others handed in rods that were half dry, and these stood apart.

Sim. 8 1.9 Others handed in rods that were half dry and had cracks, and these stood apart.

Sim. 8 1.10 Others handed in rods that were green but had cracks, and these stood apart.

Sim. 8 1.11 Others handed in rods that were half dry and half green, and these stood apart.

Sim. 8 1.12 Others brought rods that were two-thirds green and one-third dry, and these stood apart.

Sim. 8 1.13 Others handed in rods that were two-thirds dry and

one-third green, and these stood apart.

Sim. 8 1.14 Others handed in rods that were almost completely green, with only a very small part dry, just the tip, but with cracks in them, and these stood apart.

Sim. 8 1.15 Others had rods with very little green and the rest dry, and these stood apart.

Sim. 8 1.16 Others came carrying rods that were green, just as they had received them from the angel. Most of the crowd handed in rods like that. The angel was very glad about these people, and they stood apart.

Sim. 8 1.17 Others handed in rods that were green and had shoots. These stood apart, and the angel was very glad about them too.

Sim. 8 1.18 Others handed in rods that were green and had shoots, and the shoots had something like fruit on them. The people whose rods were found like this were very joyful. The angel rejoiced over them, and the shepherd was very joyful about them too.

Chapter 2

Sim. 8 2.1 The angel of the Lord ordered crowns to be brought. Crowns were brought that looked as if they were made from palm branches. He crowned the people who had handed in rods with shoots and some fruit, and sent them off into the tower.

Sim. 8 2.2 He also sent the others into the tower: those who had handed in rods that were green and had shoots, but whose shoots had no fruit. He gave them seals.

Sim. 8 2.3 All who went into the tower were wearing the same clothing, white as snow.

Sim. 8 2.4 He also sent away those who handed in their rods green, just as they had received them, and gave them clothing and seals.

Sim. 8 2.5 When the angel had finished this, he said to the shepherd, "I am going. You are to send these people inside the walls, each one according to where he deserves to live. Examine their rods carefully and then dismiss them. Examine them carefully. Be careful that no one gets past you. If anyone does get past you, I will test them myself at the altar." After saying this to the shepherd, he left.

Sim. 8 2.6 After the angel left, the shepherd said to me, "Let's take everyone's rods and plant them, and see whether any of them can live." I said to him, "Sir, how can these dry things live?"

Sim. 8 2.7 He answered me, "This tree is a willow, and willows are a kind that clings to life. If the rods are planted and get a little

moisture, many of them will live. Then we will also try pouring water on them. If any of them can live, I will rejoice with them. If one does not live, I will not be found negligent.”

Sim. 8 2.8 The shepherd told me to call the people, each as he had been standing. They came by groups and handed their rods to the shepherd. The shepherd took the rods and planted them group by group, and after planting them he poured so much water on them that the rods could not be seen for the water.

Sim. 8 2.9 After he had watered the rods, he said to me, “Let’s go, and come back in a few days and look at all the rods. The one who created this tree wants everyone who received branches from it to live. I also hope that most of these little rods will live, now that they have taken in moisture and been watered.”

Translator’s note. Compare [1 Timothy 2:4](#), which says God “desires all people to be saved.”

Chapter 3

Sim. 8 3.1 I said to him, “Sir, tell me what this tree is. I am puzzled about it, because although so many branches were cut, the tree is healthy and nothing seems to have been cut from it. That is what puzzles me.”

Sim. 8 3.2 “Listen,” he said. “This great tree that covers plains and mountains and the whole earth is the law of God, which was given to the whole world. This law is the Son of God, proclaimed to the ends of the earth. The peoples under its shelter are those who have heard the proclamation and believed in him.

Translator’s note. “In him” translates a Greek pronoun that could refer either to the law or to the Son. Since Hermas has just identified the two, the sense is the same either way.

Sim. 8 3.3 “The great and glorious angel is Michael, who has authority over this people and governs them. He is the one who puts the law into the hearts of those who believe. So he checks on those to whom he gave it, to see whether they have kept it.

Translator’s note. Michael appears in [Daniel 10:13](#), 10:21 and 12:1, in [Jude 9](#), and in [Revelation 12:7](#) as a leading angel and a defender of God’s people. Here Hermas gives him the role of placing the law in believers’ hearts. Scripture gives that role to God himself ([Jeremiah 31:33](#), quoted in [Hebrews 8:10](#)). Scholars debate whether Hermas’s “glorious angel” is meant to stand for the Son of God.

Sim. 8 3.4 “You see the rods of each person, for the rods are the law. So you see that many rods have been made useless, and you will know who they are: all those who have not kept the law. And you will see where each of them will live.”

Sim. 8 3.5 I said to him, “Sir, why did he send some into the tower and leave others to you?” “All who broke the law they received from

him," he said, "he left to my authority for repentance. But all who have already satisfied the law and kept it, he keeps under his own authority."

Sim. 8 3.6 "Sir," I said, "who then are the ones who were crowned and are going into the tower?" "Those who wrestled against the devil and defeated him," he said, "have been crowned. These are the ones who suffered for the law."

Sim. 8 3.7 "The others also handed in rods that were green and had shoots, but no fruit. These are those who were afflicted for the sake of the law but did not actually suffer, and did not deny their law."

Translator's note. In context, "suffer" probably means suffering to the point of martyrdom, as with the crowned group in the previous verse. These people were persecuted but did not go that far.

Sim. 8 3.8 "And those who handed in their rods green, just as they received them, are the reverent and righteous, who have walked very far with a pure heart and kept the commandments of the Lord. You will learn the rest when I examine these rods that were planted and watered."

Chapter 4

Sim. 8 4.1 A few days later we came to the place. The shepherd sat down in the angel's seat, and I stood beside him. He said to me, "Put on a linen apron and serve me." I put on a clean apron made of sackcloth.

Sim. 8 4.2 When he saw that I was dressed and ready to serve him, he said, "Call the men whose rods have been planted, in the order in which each gave in his rod." I went out to the plain and called all of them, and they all stood in their groups.

Sim. 8 4.3 He said to them, "Let each one pull up his own rod and bring it to me."

Sim. 8 4.4 First to hand them in were those whose rods had been dry and cut. When their rods were found still dry and cut, he ordered them to stand apart.

Sim. 8 4.5 Next came those whose rods had been dry but not cut. Some of them handed in rods that were now green, and some handed in rods that were dry and cut, as if by moths. He ordered those who handed in green rods to stand apart, and those who handed in dry, cut rods he ordered to stand with the first group.

Sim. 8 4.6 Then came those whose rods had been half dry and cracked. Many of them handed in rods that were green and without cracks. Some handed in rods that were green and had shoots, with fruit on the shoots, like the fruit of those who had gone into the

tower wearing crowns. Some handed in rods that were dry and eaten, some dry and not eaten, and some that were still half dry and cracked. He ordered each of them to stand apart, some with their own groups and some separately.

Chapter 5

Sim. 8 5.1 Then came those who had rods that were green but cracked. All of these handed in rods that were green, and they stood with their own group. The shepherd rejoiced over them because they had all changed and lost their cracks.

Sim. 8 5.2 Those who had rods half green and half dry also handed them in. The rods of some were found completely green, of some half dry, of some dry and eaten, and of some green with shoots. All of these were sent, each to his own group.

Sim. 8 5.3 Then came those who had rods two-thirds green and one-third dry. Many of them handed in rods that were green, many half dry, and others dry and eaten. All of these stood with their own group.

Sim. 8 5.4 Then came those who had rods two-thirds dry and one-third green. Many of them handed in rods half dry, some dry and eaten, others half dry and cracked, and a few green. All of these stood with their own group.

Sim. 8 5.5 Next came those whose rods had been green, but with a very small part dry, and with cracks. Some of these handed in rods that were green, and some green with shoots. These also went to their own group.

Sim. 8 5.6 Then came those who had only a little green, with the rest dry. Their rods were found to be mostly green, with shoots and fruit on the shoots, and others were completely green. The shepherd rejoiced very greatly over these rods, because they were found like this. They went off, each to his own group.

Chapter 6

Sim. 8 6.1 After the shepherd had examined everyone's rods, he said to me, "I told you this tree loves life. Do you see how many repented and were saved?" "I see it, sir," I said. "You see this," he said, "so that you may see the Lord's abundant compassion, how great and glorious it is. He has given the Spirit to those who are worthy of repentance."

Sim. 8 6.2 "Sir," I said, "why did they not all repent?" "He gave repentance to those whose hearts he saw were going to become pure and serve him with their whole heart," he said. "But to those whose deceit and wickedness he saw, who would repent only in hypocrisy, he did not give repentance, so that they would not defile

his name again.”

Sim. 8 6.3 I said to him, “Sir, now explain to me about those who handed in the rods: what each of them is like, and where they will live. I ask this so that those who have believed, received the seal, broken it, and not kept it whole may hear, recognize their own deeds, and repent. Then they could receive a seal from you and glorify the Lord, because he had mercy on them and sent you to renew their spirits.”

Translator’s note. “The seal” is Hermas’s regular word for baptism. The same use appears in 2 Clement (7:6, 8:6), and it became common in later writers. Here he pictures a person who has been baptized but has “broken” the seal by sinning. This is the problem the whole book tries to answer.

Sim. 8 6.4 “Listen,” he said. “Those whose rods were found dry and eaten by moths are the apostates and betrayers of the church. They blasphemed the Lord in their sins, and they were also ashamed of the name of the Lord that had been called over them. So these are lost to God for good. You see that not one of them repented, although they heard the words that you spoke to them, which I commanded you. Life has departed from such people.

Translator’s note. “The name called over them” is the name of the Lord placed on believers, most likely at baptism. [James 2:7](#) uses nearly the same Greek phrase (“the noble name that was called over you”).

Scripture: [James 2:7](#)

Sim. 8 6.5 “Those who handed in rods that were dry but not moth-eaten are close to them. They were hypocrites who brought in strange teachings and turned God’s servants aside, especially those who had sinned. They would not allow them to repent, but won them over with their foolish teachings. These still have hope of repentance.

Sim. 8 6.6 “You see that many of them have repented since I spoke my commandments to them, and more will still repent. Those who do not repent have lost their lives. But those of them who repented became good, and they were given a place to live in the first walls. Some even went up into the tower. You see, then,” he said, “that repentance from sins brings life, and not repenting brings death.

Chapter 7

Sim. 8 7.1 “Now listen about those who handed in rods that were half dry and had cracks. Those whose rods were half dry are the double-minded, for they are neither alive nor dead.

Sim. 8 7.2 “Those who had rods that were half dry and cracked are double-minded and slanderers. They are never at peace among themselves, but are always stirring up division. But repentance is waiting for these too,” he said. “You see that some of them have

repented, and there is still hope of repentance among them.

Sim. 8 7.3 “Those of them who have repented will have their place in the tower. Those who repented more slowly will live in the walls. But those who do not repent, and remain in their deeds, will surely die.

Sim. 8 7.4 “Those who handed in rods that were green but cracked were always faithful and good. But they had some rivalry among themselves about who should be first and about reputation. All of these are foolish for competing with one another about who is first.

Sim. 8 7.5 “But even these, when they heard my commandments, purified themselves and quickly repented, because they were good. So they were given a place to live in the tower. But if any of them turns back to division, he will be thrown out of the tower and lose his life.

Sim. 8 7.6 “Life belongs to everyone who keeps the commandments of the Lord. And in the commandments there is nothing about being first or about reputation, but about patience and humility. In such people is the life of the Lord, but among the divisive and lawless there is death.

Chapter 8

Sim. 8 8.1 “Those who handed in rods half green and half dry are those who are tangled up in business affairs and do not cling to the saints. This is why half of them is alive and half is dead.

Sim. 8 8.2 “Many of them, when they heard my commandments, repented. All who repented have their place in the tower. But some of them fell away for good. These have no repentance, for because of their business they blasphemed the Lord and denied him. They lost their life through the evil they did.

Sim. 8 8.3 “Many of them were double-minded. These still have repentance, if they repent quickly, and their place will be in the tower. If they repent more slowly, they will live in the walls. If they do not repent, they too have lost their life.

Sim. 8 8.4 “Those who handed in rods two-thirds green and one-third dry are those who have denied in many different ways.

Sim. 8 8.5 “Many of them repented and went to live in the tower. But many fell away from God for good, and these lost life for good. Some of them were double-minded and caused divisions. These have repentance, if they repent quickly and do not stay in their pleasures. But if they keep on in their deeds, they too are bringing death on themselves.

Chapter 9

Sim. 8 9.1 “Those who handed in rods two-thirds dry and one-third green are those who became believers, but then grew rich and gained honor among the Gentiles. They put on great arrogance and became proud. They abandoned the truth and did not stay close to the righteous, but lived together with the Gentiles, and that way of life became more pleasant to them. Yet they did not leave God; they stayed in the faith, but did not do the works of faith.

Sim. 8 9.2 “Many of them repented, and they were given a place to live in the tower.

Sim. 8 9.3 “But others lived with the Gentiles to the end, were corrupted by the empty pride of the Gentiles, left God, and did the things the Gentiles do. These were counted with the Gentiles.

Sim. 8 9.4 “Others of them were double-minded, not hoping to be saved because of the things they had done. Others were double-minded and caused divisions among themselves. For those who became double-minded because of what they had done, there is still repentance. But their repentance must be quick, so that their place may be in the tower. For those who do not repent, but stay in their pleasures, death is near.

Chapter 10

Sim. 8 10.1 “Those who handed in rods that were green, but with the very tips dry and cracked, were always good, faithful, and honored by God. They sinned only a little, through small desires and through having small grievances against one another. But when they heard my words, most of them repented quickly, and they came to dwell in the tower.

Sim. 8 10.2 “Some of them were double-minded, and some of the double-minded caused a greater division. For these there is hope of repentance, because they were always good, and hardly any of them will die.

Sim. 8 10.3 “Those who handed in rods that were dry with only a little green are those who only believed, but did the works of lawlessness. Yet they never left God. They bore his name gladly, and they gladly welcomed God’s servants into their homes. When they heard about this repentance, they repented without hesitation, and now they practice every virtue and righteousness.

Sim. 8 10.4 “Some of them are afraid, because they know what they did. All of these will have their place in the tower.”

Chapter 11

Sim. 8 11.1 When he had finished explaining all the rods, he said to me, “Go and tell everyone to repent and live to God. The Lord sent me out of compassion to give repentance to everyone, even

though some are not worthy of it because of what they have done. But the Lord is patient and wants those who were called through his Son to be saved.”

Translator’s note. Literally, “wants the calling that came about through his Son to be saved (or kept safe).” The translation takes “the calling” to mean the people who were called.

Sim. 8 11.2 I said to him, “Sir, I hope that all who hear this will repent. I am convinced that everyone who recognizes his own deeds and fears God will repent.”

Sim. 8 11.3 He answered me, “All who repent with their whole heart, cleanse themselves of the evils I listed before, and add nothing more to their sins will receive healing from the Lord for their earlier sins. They will live to God, provided they are not double-minded about these commandments. But those who add to their sins and walk in the desires of this age will condemn themselves to death.

Sim. 8 11.4 “You, though, walk in my commandments and you will live to God. All who walk in them and do what is right will live to God.”

Sim. 8 11.5 After showing me all this and telling me everything, he said to me, “I will show you the rest in a few days.”

Similitude 9

Chapter 1

Sim. 9 1.1 After I had written down the commandments and parables of the Shepherd, the angel of repentance, he came to me and said, “I want to show you everything that was shown to you by the Holy Spirit, who spoke with you in the form of the church. That Spirit is the Son of God.

Translator’s note. Hermas here says that the one who appeared to him as the church (the woman of the Visions) was the Holy Spirit, and that this Spirit is the Son of God. In Vision 2 he was told that the woman was the church, created first of all things, and that the world was made for her sake. Compare also Similitude 5, where the Son is identified with the Holy Spirit. Hermas’s language mixes these figures together and does not follow later precise teaching about the Trinity.

Sim. 9 1.2 “Since you were too weak in the flesh, it was not shown to you by an angel. But when you were strengthened by the Spirit and made strong in your own strength, so that you could even see an angel, then the building of the tower was shown to you through the church. You saw everything well and with dignity, as if from a young woman. Now you see by means of an angel, but through the same Spirit.

Sim. 9 1.3 “But you must learn everything more precisely from me. That is why I was given by the glorious angel to live in your house, so that you might see everything with strength and not be afraid, as you were before.”

Sim. 9 1.4 He took me away to Arcadia, to a mountain shaped like a breast, and set me on the summit. He showed me a great plain, and around the plain twelve mountains, each mountain with a different appearance.

Sim. 9 1.5 The first was black as soot. The second was bare, with no vegetation. The third was full of thorns and thistles.

Sim. 9 1.6 The fourth had plants that were half dried up: the tops of the plants were green, but the parts near the roots were dry. Some of the plants dried up when the sun scorched them.

Sim. 9 1.7 The fifth mountain had green plants and was rugged. The sixth mountain was completely full of cracks, some small and some large. The cracks had plants in them, but the plants were not very healthy; they looked rather as if they were withering.

Sim. 9 1.8 The seventh mountain had lush, fresh vegetation, and the whole mountain was thriving. Every kind of livestock and bird was feeding on that mountain, and the more the animals and birds ate, the more the plants on it flourished. The eighth mountain was full of springs, and every kind of creature the Lord had made drank from the springs of that mountain.

Sim. 9 1.9 The ninth mountain had no water at all and was completely desert. It had wild beasts and deadly reptiles on it that killed people. The tenth mountain had enormous trees and was shaded all over, and under the shelter of the trees sheep lay resting and chewing the cud.

Sim. 9 1.10 The eleventh mountain was thick with trees, and those trees were loaded with fruit, each decorated with different fruits, so that anyone who saw them would want to eat their fruit. The twelfth mountain was entirely white, its appearance was cheerful, and the mountain was most beautiful in itself.

Chapter 2

Sim. 9 2.1 In the middle of the plain he showed me a great white rock rising out of the plain. The rock was higher than the mountains and square, so that it could hold the whole world.

Sim. 9 2.2 The rock was old, and it had a gate cut into it. The cutting of the gate seemed to me to be recent. The gate shone brighter than the sun, so that I marveled at its brightness.

Sim. 9 2.3 Around the gate stood twelve young women. The four standing at the corners seemed to me more glorious than the

others, though the others were glorious too. They stood at the four sides of the gate, with two young women between each pair of corners.

Sim. 9 2.4 They were dressed in linen tunics and neatly belted, with their right shoulders bare, as if they were about to carry a load. That is how ready they were, for they were very cheerful and eager.

Sim. 9 2.5 After I had seen this I marveled to myself, because I was seeing great and glorious things. Again I was puzzled by the young women, because although they were so delicate, they stood there bravely, as if they were about to carry the whole sky.

Sim. 9 2.6 The shepherd said to me, “Why are you turning things over in your mind, getting puzzled and making yourself sad? Whatever you cannot understand, do not try to force it, if you are wise, but ask the Lord to give you understanding so that you can understand it.

Sim. 9 2.7 “You cannot see what is behind you, but you can see what is in front of you. Leave aside what you cannot see, and do not torment yourself over it. Master what you do see, and do not be overly curious about the rest. I will explain to you everything that I show you. So look at the rest.”

Chapter 3

Sim. 9 3.1 I saw six men come, tall, glorious, and alike in appearance. They called a large crowd of men, and those who came were also tall, handsome, and strong. The six men ordered them to build a tower on top of the rock. There was a great commotion among the men who had come to build the tower, as they ran back and forth around the gate.

Sim. 9 3.2 The young women standing around the gate told the men to hurry and build the tower. The young women held out their hands as if to take something from the men.

Sim. 9 3.3 The six men ordered stones to come up from a deep place and go into the building of the tower. Ten shining square stones came up, which had not been cut from a quarry.

Sim. 9 3.4 The six men called the young women and ordered them to carry all the stones that were to go into the building of the tower, to pass through the gate, and to hand them to the men who were going to build the tower.

Sim. 9 3.5 The young women lifted the first ten stones that came up from the deep onto one another, and they carried them together, one stone at a time.

Translator’s note. “One another” refers to the young women, not the

stones, because the Greek word is feminine. The women passed each stone among themselves and carried it together.

Chapter 4

Sim. 9 4.1 Just as they had stood together around the gate, so they carried the stones: the ones who seemed strong got under the corners of the stone, and the others got under its sides. In this way they carried all the stones. They brought them through the gate as they had been ordered and handed them to the men for the tower, and those men took the stones and built with them.

Sim. 9 4.2 The tower was built on the great rock and above the gate. Those ten stones were fitted together and filled the entire rock. They became the foundation for the building of the tower, and the rock and the gate bore the weight of the whole tower.

Sim. 9 4.3 After the ten stones, twenty more stones came up from the deep. These too were fitted into the building of the tower, carried by the young women as the earlier ones had been. After these, thirty-five more came up, and they were fitted into the tower in the same way. After these, forty other stones came up, and all of these were put into the building of the tower. So there were four rows in the foundations of the tower.

Translator's note. The Greek printed here says twenty. However, when the stones are explained later (Similitude 9.15.4), the second group numbers twenty-five. The number may have been altered in copying. I have kept what the text here says.

Sim. 9 4.4 Then the stones stopped coming up from the deep, and the builders paused for a little. Again the six men ordered the great crowd to bring stones from the mountains for the building of the tower.

Sim. 9 4.5 So stones of many different colors, cut by the men, were brought from all the mountains and handed to the young women. The young women carried them through the gate and handed them over for the building of the tower. When the multicolored stones were placed in the building, they all became alike white and lost their various colors.

Sim. 9 4.6 Some stones were handed over by the men for the building but did not become bright. They were found exactly as they had been put in, because they had not been handed over by the young women or carried in through the gate. These stones looked out of place in the building of the tower.

Sim. 9 4.7 When the six men saw the out-of-place stones in the building, they ordered them to be removed and taken down to their own place, from which they had been brought.

Sim. 9 4.8 They told the men who were bringing the stones, "Do not put any stones into the building at all. Put them beside the

tower, so that the young women can carry them in through the gate and hand them over for the building. If they are not carried through the gate by the hands of these young women, they cannot change their colors. So do not labor in vain.”

Chapter 5

Sim. 9 5.1 That day’s building work was finished, but the tower was not completed, because more was going to be built on it, and there was a pause in the work. The six men ordered all the builders to withdraw for a little while and rest, but they told the young women not to leave the tower. It seemed to me that the young women had been left behind to guard the tower.

Sim. 9 5.2 After everyone had withdrawn and was resting, I said to the shepherd, “Sir, why was the building of the tower not finished?” “The tower cannot be finished yet,” he said, “until its lord comes and inspects the building, so that if any stones are found rotten, he can replace them. The tower is being built according to his will.”

Sim. 9 5.3 “Sir,” I said, “I would like to know what this building of the tower means. I would like to know about the rock, the gate, the mountains, the young women, and the stones that came up from the deep and were not cut but went into the building just as they were.

Sim. 9 5.4 “Tell me also why ten stones were laid first for the foundation, then twenty, then thirty-five, then forty. Tell me too about the stones that went into the building and were taken out again and put back in their own place. Set my soul at rest about all these things, sir, and make them known to me.”

Sim. 9 5.5 “If you are not found to be idly curious,” he said, “you will know everything. In a few days we will come back here, and you will see the rest of what happens to this tower, and you will know all the parables accurately.”

Sim. 9 5.6 A few days later we came to the place where we had sat, and he said to me, “Let’s go to the tower, for the owner of the tower is coming to inspect it.” We went to the tower, and there was no one near it except the young women.

Sim. 9 5.7 The shepherd asked the young women whether the master of the tower had arrived. They said he was about to come to inspect the building.

Chapter 6

Sim. 9 6.1 Soon afterward I saw a procession of many men approaching. In the middle was a man so tall that he towered above the tower.

Translator’s note. Later in this same parable, the shepherd explains that

| this glorious man is the Son of God.

Sim. 9 6.2 The six men who had been in charge of the building walked with him on his right and left, and all who had worked on the building were with him, along with many other glorious figures around him. The young women who guarded the tower ran up and kissed him, and began to walk near him around the tower.

Sim. 9 6.3 That man examined the building carefully, so that he touched every stone one by one. He was holding a staff in his hand and struck each stone in the building.

Sim. 9 6.4 When he struck them, some became black as soot, some scabby, some cracked, some chipped, some neither white nor black, some rough and not matching the other stones, and some covered with many stains. These were the various kinds of rotten stones found in the building.

Sim. 9 6.5 He ordered all of these to be removed from the tower and set beside it, and other stones to be brought and put in their place.

Sim. 9 6.6 The builders asked him from which mountain he wanted stones brought to put in their place. He ordered that they not be brought from the mountains, but from a plain nearby.

Sim. 9 6.7 The plain was dug up, and shining square stones were found, and some round ones. Every stone found in that plain was brought and carried through the gate by the young women.

Sim. 9 6.8 The square stones were cut and set in the place of those that had been removed. The round stones were not put into the building, because they were hard to cut and it took a long time. They were set beside the tower, as if they would be cut later and put into the building, for they were very bright.

Chapter 7

Sim. 9 7.1 When he had finished this, the glorious man, the lord of the whole tower, called the shepherd over and handed him all the stones lying beside the tower, those that had been thrown out of the building, and said to him:

Sim. 9 7.2 “Clean these stones carefully and put into the building of the tower those that can fit with the rest. Throw far from the tower those that do not fit.”

Sim. 9 7.3 After giving these orders to the shepherd, he left the tower with everyone who had come with him. The young women stood around the tower, guarding it.

Sim. 9 7.4 I said to the shepherd, “How can these stones go into the building of the tower when they have been rejected?” He

answered, "Do you see these stones?" "I see them, sir," I said. "I will cut most of these stones," he said, "and put them into the building, and they will fit with the rest of the stones."

Sim. 9 7.5 "Sir," I said, "how can they fill the same place after being cut down?" He answered, "The ones that turn out small will be put in the middle of the building, and the larger ones will be put on the outside and hold them together."

Sim. 9 7.6 After saying this he said to me, "Let's go, and in two days we will come back and clean these stones and put them into the building. Everything around the tower must be cleaned, so that the master does not suddenly come, find the area around the tower dirty, and be angry. Then these stones would not go into the building of the tower, and I would seem negligent in the master's eyes."

Sim. 9 7.7 Two days later we came to the tower and he said to me, "Let's look at all the stones and see which can go into the building." "Sir, let's look," I said.

Chapter 8

Sim. 9 8.1 We began by examining the black stones first. They were found to be just as they were when they had been put out of the building. The shepherd ordered them to be removed from the tower and set apart.

Sim. 9 8.2 Next he examined the scabby ones. He took many of them and cut them, and ordered the young women to pick them up and put them into the building. The young women picked them up and set them in the middle of the building of the tower. The rest he ordered to be put with the black ones, since they too were found to be black.

Sim. 9 8.3 Next he examined the ones with cracks. He cut many of them and ordered the young women to carry them into the building. They were placed on the outside, because they were found to be sounder. The rest could not be cut because of the number of their cracks, and for this reason they were thrown out of the building of the tower.

Sim. 9 8.4 Next he examined the chipped ones. Many of them were found to be black, and some had large cracks, and he ordered these also to be put with the rejected stones. The rest of them he cleaned and cut and ordered to be put into the building. The young women picked them up and fitted them into the middle of the building of the tower, for these were weaker.

Sim. 9 8.5 Next he examined the ones that were half white and half black. Many of them were found to be black, and he ordered these also to be taken away with the rejected stones. The rest were

all picked up by the young women: because they were white, the young women themselves fitted them into the building. They were placed on the outside because they were found to be sound, so that they could hold the ones set in the middle, since none of them was chipped at all.

Sim. 9 8.6 Next he examined the rough and hard ones. A few of them were rejected because they could not be cut; they turned out to be very hard. The rest were cut, picked up by the young women, and fitted into the middle of the building of the tower, since they were weaker.

Sim. 9 8.7 Next he examined the ones with stains. Very few of these had turned black and were thrown out with the rest. The remainder were found to be bright and sound. These were fitted into the building by the young women, and placed on the outside because of their strength.

Chapter 9

Sim. 9 9.1 Then he came to examine the white round stones and said to me, "What should we do with these stones?" "How would I know, sir?" I said. He said, "Do you not have any idea about them?"

Sim. 9 9.2 "Sir," I said, "I don't have this skill. I am not a stonecutter, and I can't work it out." "Don't you see," he said, "that they are very round? If I want to make them square, a great deal has to be cut off them. Yet some of them must necessarily go into the building."

Sim. 9 9.3 "Sir," I said, "if it is necessary, why do you torment yourself? Why not choose the ones you want for the building and fit them in?" He chose the larger, bright ones from them and cut them, and the young women picked them up and fitted them into the outer parts of the building.

Sim. 9 9.4 The rest, the ones left over, were picked up and put back in the plain from which they had been brought. They were not thrown away, "because," he said, "there is still a little left to be built on the tower, and the master of the tower wants all these stones fitted into the building, since they are very bright."

Sim. 9 9.5 Twelve women were called, very beautiful in appearance, dressed in black, belted, with their shoulders bare and their hair loose. These women seemed wild to me. The shepherd ordered them to pick up the stones that had been thrown out of the building and carry them off to the mountains, from which they had been brought.

Sim. 9 9.6 They cheerfully picked up all the stones, carried them away, and put them back where they had been taken from. After all the stones had been removed and not a single stone was left lying

around the tower, the shepherd said to me, "Let's walk around the tower and see if there is any flaw in it." I walked around with him.

Sim. 9 9.7 When the shepherd saw that the tower was beautifully built, he was very glad. The tower was built so well that when I saw how it was built, I was filled with longing for it. It was built as if from a single stone, without a single joint in it. The stone looked as if it had been cut out of the rock; it seemed to me to be one solid piece.

Chapter 10

Sim. 9 10.1 I walked with him, and I was glad to see such good things. The shepherd said to me, "Go and bring lime and finely crushed pottery, so that I can fill in the marks left by the stones that were removed and put into the building. All the ground around the tower must be level."

Sim. 9 10.2 I did as he ordered and brought them to him. "Help me," he said, "and the work will soon be finished." He filled in the marks of the stones that had gone into the building and ordered the area around the tower to be swept and cleaned.

Sim. 9 10.3 The young women took brooms and swept, took all the rubbish away from the tower, and sprinkled water. The place around the tower became cheerful and very beautiful.

Sim. 9 10.4 The shepherd said to me, "Everything has been cleaned. If the lord comes to inspect the tower, he will have nothing to blame us for." After saying this he wanted to leave.

Sim. 9 10.5 But I took hold of his bag and began to beg him solemnly, by the Lord, to explain to me what he had shown me. He said to me, "I have something to attend to for a little while, and then I will explain everything to you. Wait for me here until I come."

Sim. 9 10.6 I said to him, "Sir, what am I to do here alone?" "You are not alone," he said. "These young women are with you." "Then put me in their care," I said. The shepherd called them and said to them, "I entrust him to you until I come." And he left.

Sim. 9 10.7 So I was alone with the young women. They were cheerful and treated me kindly, especially the four who were more glorious than the others.

Chapter 11

Sim. 9 11.1 The young women said to me, "The shepherd is not coming here today." "What should I do, then?" I said. "Wait for him until evening," they said. "If he comes, he will talk with you. If he does not come, you will stay here with us until he does."

Sim. 9 11.2 I said to them, "I will wait for him until evening. If he does not come, I will go home and come back in the morning." They answered me, "You were handed over to us. You cannot leave us."

Sim. 9 11.3 "Where, then, will I stay?" I said. "You will sleep with us," they said, "as a brother and not as a husband. You are our brother, and from now on we are going to live with you, for we love you very much." But I was embarrassed to stay with them.

Translator's note. Later in this parable the shepherd explains the young women as holy spirits, powers of the Son of God (9.13). He also names them as virtues; the first four are Faith, Self-control, Power, and Patience (9.15). The scene pictures Hermas being welcomed into their company as a brother. It is not a romantic episode, as the words "not as a husband" make plain.

Sim. 9 11.4 The one who seemed to be the first of them began to kiss and embrace me. When the others saw her embracing me, they too began to kiss me and lead me around the tower and play with me.

Sim. 9 11.5 I felt as if I had become young again, and I began to play with them myself. Some of them danced in a ring, some danced, and some sang, while I walked silently with them around the tower and was cheerful with them.

Sim. 9 11.6 When evening came, I wanted to go home, but they would not let me. They kept me with them, and I stayed with them for the night and slept by the tower.

Sim. 9 11.7 The young women spread their linen tunics on the ground and had me lie down in the middle of them. They did nothing at all except pray, and I prayed with them without stopping, no less than they did. The young women were glad to see me praying this way. I stayed there with them until the next day, until the second hour.

Sim. 9 11.8 Then the shepherd arrived and said to the young women, "You haven't done him any harm, have you?" "Ask him," they said. I said to him, "Sir, I was happy to stay with them." "What did you have for dinner?" he said. "Sir," I said, "I dined on the words of the Lord all night long." "Did they receive you well?" he said. "Yes, sir," I said.

Sim. 9 11.9 "Now," he said, "what do you want to hear first?" "Sir," I said, "in the order you showed me from the beginning. I ask you, sir, to explain things to me in the same order that I ask them." "As you wish," he said, "I will explain to you, and I will hide nothing at all from you."

Chapter 12

Sim. 9 12.1 "Sir," I said, "first of all explain this to me: what are

the rock and the gate?" "This rock and gate," he said, "is the Son of God." "Sir," I said, "how is it that the rock is old, but the gate is new?" "Listen," he said, "and understand, you slow-witted man.

Sim. 9 12.2 "The Son of God is older than all his creation, so that he became the Father's adviser in making his creation. That is why the rock is old." "But why is the gate new, sir?" I said.

Translator's note. Compare [Proverbs 8:22-31](#), where Wisdom is with God before the world is made and takes part in its making. Many early Christian writers applied that passage to Christ. [John 1:1-3](#) and [Colossians 1:15-17](#) also say the Son existed before creation and that all things were made through him. They do not call him the Father's "adviser," which is Hermas's own way of putting it.

Sim. 9 12.3 "Because," he said, "he was revealed in the last days at the end of the age. That is why the gate became new, so that those who are going to be saved may enter the kingdom of God through it.

Sim. 9 12.4 "You saw the stones that came in through the gate and were placed in the building of the tower, and the ones that did not come in were thrown back to their own place?" "I saw, sir," I said. "In the same way," he said, "no one will enter the kingdom of God unless he receives his holy name.

Sim. 9 12.5 "If you want to enter a city, and that city is walled all around and has only one gate, can you enter that city except through the gate it has?" "How could it be done any other way, sir?" I said. "So if you cannot enter the city except through its gate," he said, "in the same way a person cannot enter the kingdom of God except through the name of his Son, the one loved by him.

Translator's note. Compare [John 10:7-9](#), where Jesus calls himself the gate, and [John 14:6](#) and [Acts 4:12](#), where salvation comes only through him and his name.

Scripture: [John 3:5](#)

Sim. 9 12.6 "Did you see the crowd that was building the tower?" "I saw them, sir," I said. "They are all glorious angels," he said. "So the Lord is walled around by these. The gate is the Son of God, and this is the one entrance to the Lord. So no one will come in to him in any other way than through his Son.

Sim. 9 12.7 "You saw the six men, and in the middle of them the glorious, great man who walked around the tower and rejected the stones from the building?" "I saw them, sir," I said.

Sim. 9 12.8 "The glorious man," he said, "is the Son of God. Those six are the glorious angels who stand on his right and left, supporting him. None of these glorious angels will enter into God's presence without him. Whoever does not receive his name will not enter the kingdom of God."

Chapter 13

Sim. 9 13.1 “And the tower,” I said, “what is it?” “This tower,” he said, “is the church.”

Sim. 9 13.2 “And who are these young women?” “These are holy spirits,” he said. “A person cannot be found in the kingdom of God in any other way unless they clothe him in their clothing. If you receive only the name but do not receive the clothing from them, you gain nothing. These young women are the powers of the Son of God. If you wear his name but do not wear his power, you will be wearing his name for nothing.

Translator’s note. Hermas insists that bearing Christ’s name is worthless without a changed life. Elsewhere he links receiving the name with the “seal” of baptism (Similitude 9, chapter 16). The point is shared with [James 2:14-26](#) and [Matthew 7:21](#). The twelve young women are named in Similitude 9, chapter 15: Faith, Self-control, Power, Patience, Sincerity, Innocence, Purity, Cheerfulness, Truth, Understanding, Harmony, and Love.

Sim. 9 13.3 “The stones you saw thrown out,” he said, “are those who wore the name but did not put on the clothing of the young women.” “What is their clothing, sir?” I said. “Their very names are their clothing,” he said. “Whoever wears the name of the Son of God must also wear their names, for the Son himself wears the names of these young women.

Sim. 9 13.4 “All the stones you saw go into the building of the tower, handed in by the young women’s hands and remaining in the building, are people who have put on the power of these young women.

Sim. 9 13.5 “That is why you see the tower has become one single stone together with the rock. In the same way, those who believe in the Lord through his Son and put on these spirits will become one spirit and one body, and their clothing will all be one color. Such people, who wear the names of the young women, have their home in the tower.”

Translator’s note. Compare [Ephesians 4:4](#), “one body and one Spirit.”

Scripture: [Ephesians 4:4](#)

Sim. 9 13.6 “Sir,” I said, “then why were the rejected stones rejected? They passed through the gate and were put into the building of the tower by the hands of the young women.” “Since you care about everything and ask so precisely,” he said, “hear about the rejected stones.

Sim. 9 13.7 “All of these received the name of the Son of God, and they also received the power of these young women. Having received these spirits, they were strengthened and were with God’s servants, and they had one spirit, one body, and one garment. For

they shared the same mind and practiced righteousness.

| Scripture: [Ephesians 4:4](#)

Sim. 9 13.8 “Then after a time they were led astray by the women you saw dressed in black, with their shoulders bare, their hair loose, and beautiful to look at. When they saw these women they desired them and put on their power, and they took off the clothing and the power of the young women.

Sim. 9 13.9 “So these were thrown out of the house of God and handed over to those women. But those who were not deceived by the beauty of these women stayed in the house of God. Now you have the explanation of the rejected stones.”

Chapter 14

Sim. 9 14.1 “Sir,” I said, “what if these people, being what they are, repent and throw away the desires of those women, and return to the young women and walk in their power and in their works? Will they not enter the house of God?”

Sim. 9 14.2 “They will enter,” he said, “if they throw away the works of those women and take up again the power of the young women and walk in their works. That is why there was a pause in the building: so that, if they repent, they may go into the building of the tower. But if they do not repent, then others will enter, and these will be thrown out for good.”

Sim. 9 14.3 For all this I gave thanks to the Lord, because he had compassion on all who call on his name and sent the angel of repentance to us who had sinned against him. He renewed our spirit, and when we were already ruined and had no hope of living, he renewed our life.

Sim. 9 14.4 “Now, sir,” I said, “explain to me why the tower was not built on the ground, but on the rock and on the gate.” “Are you still foolish and slow to understand?” he said. “I have to ask you about everything, sir,” I said, “because I cannot understand anything at all. Everything is great and glorious and hard for people to understand.”

Sim. 9 14.5 “Listen,” he said. “The name of the Son of God is great and immeasurable, and it carries the whole world. If the whole creation is carried by the Son of God, what do you think of those who are called by him, who wear the name of the Son of God and walk in his commandments?

Sim. 9 14.6 “Do you see, then, whom he carries? Those who wear his name with their whole heart. He has become their foundation, and he carries them gladly, because they are not ashamed to wear his name.”

Chapter 15

Sim. 9 15.1 "Sir," I said, "tell me the names of the young women and of the women dressed in black." "Listen," he said, "to the names of the stronger young women, the ones standing at the corners.

Sim. 9 15.2 "The first is Faith, the second Self-control, the third Power, and the fourth Patience. The others standing between them have these names: Simplicity, Innocence, Purity, Cheerfulness, Truth, Understanding, Harmony, and Love. Whoever wears these names, and the name of the Son of God, will be able to enter the kingdom of God.

Sim. 9 15.3 "Now listen also to the names of the women dressed in black. Four of these are stronger too. The first is Unbelief, the second Lack of Self-control, the third Disobedience, and the fourth Deceit. Their followers are called Grief, Wickedness, Wantonness, Bad Temper, Falsehood, Foolishness, Slander, and Hatred. A servant of God who wears these names will see the kingdom of God, but will not enter it."

Sim. 9 15.4 "Sir," I said, "who are the stones from the deep that were fitted into the building?" "The first ones, the ten placed in the foundation," he said, "are the first generation. The twenty-five are the second generation of righteous men. The thirty-five are the prophets of God and his servants. And the forty are the apostles and teachers of the proclamation of the Son of God."

Sim. 9 15.5 "Sir," I said, "why then did the young women hand over these stones too for the building of the tower, carrying them through the gate?"

Sim. 9 15.6 "Because," he said, "these were the first to wear these spirits, and they never separated from each other at all, neither the spirits from the people nor the people from the spirits. The spirits stayed with them until they fell asleep. If they had not had these spirits with them, they would not have been useful for building this tower."

Chapter 16

Sim. 9 16.1 "Sir," I said, "explain still more to me." "What are you looking for?" he said. "Sir," I said, "why did the stones come up from the deep and get put into the building of the tower, when they had worn these spirits?"

Sim. 9 16.2 "They had to come up through water," he said, "in order to be made alive. For they could not enter the kingdom of God in any other way than by putting away the deadness of their former life.

Sim. 9 16.3 “So these who had fallen asleep also received the seal of the Son of God and entered the kingdom of God. Before a person wears the name of the Son of God, he is dead. But when he receives the seal, he puts aside the deadness and takes on life.

Sim. 9 16.4 “The seal, then, is the water. People go down into the water dead and come up alive. This seal was proclaimed to them too, and they used it to enter the kingdom of God.”

Translator’s note. Hermas plainly identifies “the seal” with the water of baptism. He pictures righteous people who died before Christ, such as the prophets of Similitude 9.15.4, receiving baptism after death. He tries in this way to explain how they could be saved when baptism is the entrance to the kingdom. The New Testament speaks of Christ preaching to the dead ([1 Peter 3:19](#); 4:6), but it does not say that baptism was given to them. Clement of Alexandria cited this passage of Hermas approvingly, but the wider church did not adopt the idea as teaching.

Sim. 9 16.5 “Sir,” I said, “why did the forty stones also come up from the deep with them, when they had already received the seal?” “Because,” he said, “these apostles and teachers who preached the name of the Son of God fell asleep in the power and faith of the Son of God. Then they preached also to those who had fallen asleep before them, and they themselves gave them the seal of the proclamation.

Sim. 9 16.6 “So they went down into the water with them and came up again. But the apostles and teachers went down alive and came up alive, while those who had fallen asleep earlier went down dead and came up alive.

Sim. 9 16.7 “Through the apostles and teachers, then, those people were made alive and came to know the name of the Son of God. That is why they came up with them and were fitted together into the building of the tower. They were built in without being cut, for they fell asleep in righteousness and great purity. They only lacked this seal. Now you have the explanation of these too.” “I have it, sir,” I said.

Chapter 17

Sim. 9 17.1 “Now, sir, explain to me about the mountains. Why do they look different, each in its own way?” “Listen,” he said. “These twelve mountains are the tribes that inhabit the whole world. The Son of God was proclaimed to them through the apostles.”

Sim. 9 17.2 “Explain to me, sir, why the mountains look so different, each one with its own appearance.” “Listen,” he said. “These twelve tribes that inhabit the whole world are twelve nations. They differ in their thinking and understanding. The variety you saw in the mountains is the variety in the minds and thinking of the nations. I will explain to you what each one does.”

Sim. 9 17.3 “First of all, sir,” I said, “explain this to me. Why, though the mountains were so different, did their stones become bright and all one color when they were put into the building, like the stones that came up from the deep?”

Sim. 9 17.4 “Because,” he said, “all the nations that live under heaven, having heard and believed, were called by the name of the Son of God. When they received the seal, they had one understanding and one mind. Their faith became one and their love became one, and together with the name they wore the spirits of the young women. That is why the building of the tower became bright, with one color like the sun.

Translator’s note. Compare [Ephesians 4:3-6](#), with its repeated “one,” and [Revelation 7:9](#), where people of every nation stand before the throne.

Sim. 9 17.5 “But after they had come together and become one body, some of them defiled themselves and were thrown out of the family of the righteous. They became once again what they had been before, or rather even worse.”

Chapter 18

Sim. 9 18.1 “Sir,” I said, “how did they become worse, when they had come to know God?” “Someone who does not know God and does evil,” he said, “receives some punishment for his evil. But someone who has come to know God should no longer do evil, but good.

Sim. 9 18.2 “So if a person who ought to do good does evil instead, doesn’t he seem to do more evil than the one who does not know God? That is why those who do not know God and do evil are condemned to death, but those who know God and have seen his mighty works and still do evil will be punished twice over and will die forever. This is how the church of God will be cleansed.

Translator’s note. The principle here, that more knowledge means more responsibility, matches [Luke 12:47-48](#), [Hebrews 10:26-31](#), and [2 Peter 2:20-21](#).

Sim. 9 18.3 “You saw how the stones were removed from the tower, handed over to the evil spirits, and thrown out from there. (And there will be one body of those who have been cleansed, just as the tower, after it was cleansed, became as if it were made of a single stone.) So it will be with the church of God too, after it has been cleansed and the wicked, the hypocrites, the blasphemers, the double-minded, and those who do various kinds of evil have been thrown out of it.

Sim. 9 18.4 “After these have been thrown out, the church of God will be one body, one mind, one understanding, one faith, one love. Then the Son of God will rejoice and be glad in them, having received his people pure.” “Sir,” I said, “this is all great and

glorious.”

Sim. 9 18.5 “Sir,” I said, “explain further to me the meaning and the deeds of each of the mountains, so that every soul that trusts the Lord may hear and glorify his great, wonderful, and glorious name.” “Listen,” he said, “to the variety of the mountains and of the twelve nations.

Chapter 19

Sim. 9 19.1 “Believers from the first mountain, the black one, are like this: they are apostates, blasphemers against the Lord, and betrayers of God’s servants. For these there is no repentance, but there is death. That is why they are black, for their kind is lawless.

Sim. 9 19.2 “Believers from the second mountain, the bare one, are like this: hypocrites and teachers of wickedness. These are like the first group, since they have no fruit of righteousness. Just as their mountain bears nothing, so such people have the name but are empty of faith, and there is no fruit of truth in them. For these repentance is available, if they repent quickly. But if they delay, their death will be with the first group.”

| Scripture: [James 3:18](#)

Sim. 9 19.3 “Sir,” I said, “why is there repentance for these, but not for the first group? Their actions are nearly the same.” “There is repentance for these,” he said, “because they did not blaspheme their Lord and did not betray God’s servants. But out of greed for profit they acted as hypocrites, and each one taught according to the desires of sinful people. They will pay some penalty, but repentance is open to them because they did not become blasphemers or betrayers.”

Chapter 20

Sim. 9 20.1 “Believers from the third mountain, the one with thorns and thistles, are like this. Some of them are rich, and some are tangled up in many business affairs. The thistles are the rich, and the thorns are those tangled up in various business affairs.

| *Translator’s note.* Compare [Mark 4:18-19](#), the parable of the sower, where thorns stand for the worries of the world and the deceitfulness of riches.

Sim. 9 20.2 “These people, tangled up in many and various affairs, do not stay close to God’s servants but wander off, choked by their activities. The rich find it hard to stay close to God’s servants, because they are afraid they will be asked for something. Such people will enter the kingdom of God only with difficulty.

| *Translator’s note.* Compare [Mark 10:23](#), “How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!” Hermas uses the same Greek word for “with difficulty.”

Sim. 9 20.3 “Just as it is hard to walk barefoot among thistles, so it is hard for such people to enter the kingdom of God.

Sim. 9 20.4 “Yet for all of these there is repentance, but it must be quick. That way, what they failed to do in earlier times they may now make up for in these days, and they may do some good. If they repent and do some good, they will live to God. If they stay in their deeds, they will be handed over to those women, who will put them to death.”

Translator’s note. “Those women” are the women dressed in black from earlier in this parable. Hermas explains that they stand for vices such as unbelief, disobedience, deceit, and licentiousness.

Chapter 21

Sim. 9 21.1 “Believers from the fourth mountain are like this. That mountain has many plants that are green at the top but dry near the roots, and some are dried up by the sun. Some of these believers are double-minded, and some have the Lord on their lips but not in their hearts.

Translator’s note. Compare [Isaiah 29:13](#), quoted by Jesus in [Matthew 15:8](#), about people who honor God with their lips while their hearts are far from him.

Sim. 9 21.2 “That is why their foundations are dry and have no strength, and only their words are alive, while their works are dead. Such people are neither alive nor dead. They are like the double-minded, for the double-minded are neither green nor dry, since they are neither alive nor dead.

Translator’s note. Compare [James 2:17](#), “faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.”

Sim. 9 21.3 “Just as these plants dried up when they saw the sun, so the double-minded, when they hear of affliction, worship idols out of cowardice and are ashamed of the name of their Lord.

Translator’s note. Compare the parable of the sower in [Mark 4:5-6](#), 16-17. There the plants on rocky ground are scorched by the sun, and they stand for people who fall away when affliction or persecution comes.

Sim. 9 21.4 “Such people are neither alive nor dead. But if they repent quickly, they will be able to live. If they do not repent, they have already been handed over to the women who take their life away.”

Chapter 22

Sim. 9 22.1 “Believers from the fifth mountain, the rugged one with green plants, are like this: they are faithful, but slow to learn, stubborn, and pleased with themselves. They want to know everything and yet know nothing at all.

Sim. 9 22.2 “Because of this stubbornness, understanding has left them and senseless folly has entered them. They praise themselves for having understanding and want to be self-appointed teachers, though they are foolish.

Sim. 9 22.3 “Because of this arrogance many were emptied out through exalting themselves, for stubbornness and empty self-confidence are a great demon. Many of them were thrown out, but some repented and believed and submitted themselves to those who have understanding, recognizing their own foolishness.

Translator’s note. Hermas more than once calls a vice a “demon” (Greek *daimonion*), treating it as a spiritual force that takes hold of a person. For example, in Mandate 2 he calls slander a “restless demon.”

Sim. 9 22.4 “For the rest of such people repentance is open, for they did not become evil, but rather foolish and without understanding. If these repent, they will live to God. If they do not repent, they will live with the women who do evil to them.

Chapter 23

Sim. 9 23.1 “Believers from the sixth mountain, the one with large and small cracks and withered plants in the cracks, are like this.

Sim. 9 23.2 “Those with small cracks are those who have something against one another, and who have withered in the faith because of their slanders. But many of these have repented, and the rest will repent when they hear my commandments, since their slander is small and they will repent quickly.

Sim. 9 23.3 “Those with large cracks are persistent in their slander and hold grudges, staying angry with one another. These were thrown out of the tower and rejected from its building. Such people will live only with difficulty.

Sim. 9 23.4 “If God and our Lord, who rules over all things and has authority over all his creation, does not hold a grudge against those who confess their sins but is merciful, how can a mortal human being, full of sins, hold a grudge against another human being, as if he could destroy or save him?

Translator’s note. Compare [Matthew 6:14-15](#) and 18:21-35 on forgiving others because God has forgiven us, and [James 4:12](#), where only one is lawgiver and judge, “he who is able to save and to destroy.”

Scripture: [James 4:12](#)

Sim. 9 23.5 “I, the angel of repentance, tell you: all of you who have this factious spirit, lay it aside and repent. The Lord will heal your former sins, if you cleanse yourselves of this demon. If not, you will be handed over to it to die.

Translator’s note. The Greek word here is *hairesis*, which later came to mean “heresy.” Here it refers to a party spirit or factiousness, the grudge-

| holding just described, not false doctrine.

Chapter 24

Sim. 9 24.1 “As for the seventh mountain: its plants were green and cheerful, and the whole mountain was thriving. Every kind of livestock and the birds of the sky fed on its plants, and the plants they fed on grew even more lush. The believers from this mountain are like this.

Sim. 9 24.2 “They were always sincere, innocent, and blessed, holding nothing against one another. They always rejoiced in God’s servants and were clothed in the holy spirit of these young women. They were always compassionate toward every person, and from their labors they supplied everyone without scolding and without hesitating.

| *Translator’s note.* “Without scolding” echoes the language of [James 1:5](#), where God gives to all generously “without reproaching.”

Sim. 9 24.3 “So the Lord, seeing their sincerity and complete childlike innocence, made them prosper in the work of their hands and showed them favor in everything they did.

Sim. 9 24.4 “I, the angel of repentance, tell you who are like this: stay as you are, and your descendants will never be wiped out. The Lord has tested you and written you into our number, and all your descendants will live with the Son of God, for you have received from his Spirit.”

Chapter 25

Sim. 9 25.1 “Believers from the eighth mountain, where there were many springs and all the Lord’s creation drank from the springs, are like this:

Sim. 9 25.2 “apostles and teachers who preached to the whole world and taught the word of the Lord with reverence and purity. They never kept back anything at all for themselves out of evil desire, but always walked in righteousness and truth, just as they had received the Holy Spirit. So such people have their way in with the angels.”

| *Translator’s note.* The word translated “way in” (parodos, “passage, entrance”) is unusual here. It probably means they will enter glory in the company of the angels.

Chapter 26

Sim. 9 26.1 “Believers from the ninth mountain, the desert one, with reptiles and wild animals on it that destroy people, are like this:

Sim. 9 26.2 “Those with the stains are ministers who served badly. They plundered the livelihood of widows and orphans and made a profit for themselves out of the ministry they had received. If they stay in the same greed, they are dead and have no hope of life. But if they turn around and complete their ministry in purity, they will be able to live.

Translator’s note. The word for “ministers” is diakonoi, from which we get “deacons.” In the early church deacons often handled the distribution of money and food to the poor (compare [Acts 6:1-6](#)), so Hermas’s complaint is about misusing charitable funds.

Sim. 9 26.3 “Those who were scabby are those who denied their Lord and did not turn back to him. They became barren and desolate. They do not stay close to God’s servants but keep to themselves, and so they are destroying their own souls.

Sim. 9 26.4 “A vine left in a fenced place and neglected is ruined and overrun by weeds, and in time it grows wild and is no longer any use to its master. In the same way such people have given up on themselves and become wild and useless to their Lord.

Sim. 9 26.5 “For these there is repentance, if they are not found to have denied him from the heart. But if someone is found to have denied him from the heart, I do not know whether he can live.

Sim. 9 26.6 “I do not say this for the present days, as if someone could deny him now and then receive repentance. It is impossible for anyone who denies his Lord from now on to be saved. But repentance seems to be available for those who denied him in the past. So if anyone is going to repent, let him hurry before the tower is finished. Otherwise the women will destroy him completely, to the point of death.

Translator’s note. “The women” are the women dressed in black from earlier in the parable, who stand for vices such as Unbelief, Self-indulgence, Disobedience and Deceit (Similitude 9.15.3).

Sim. 9 26.7 “The chipped ones are deceitful and slanderous people, and they are the wild animals you saw on the mountain. Just as wild animals destroy and kill a person with their venom, so the words of such people destroy and kill a person.

Sim. 9 26.8 “These are chipped away from their faith because of the way they behave within themselves. But some repented and were saved. The rest who are like this can be saved too, if they repent. But if they do not repent, they will be put to death by those women whose power they have.”

Translator’s note. “Those women” are probably the twelve women dressed in black from earlier in this parable (9.9.5; 9.15.3). They stand for vices, among them Deceit and Slander. People who take on their character share their “power,” and that power leads to death.

Chapter 27

Sim. 9 27.1 “Believers from the tenth mountain, where there were trees sheltering some sheep, are like this:

Sim. 9 27.2 “bishops and hospitable people who always gladly welcomed God’s servants into their homes without hypocrisy. The bishops always sheltered those in need and the widows by their service without ceasing, and always lived in purity.

Translator’s note. “Bishops” here translates episkopoi, “overseers.” In Hermas’s Rome the leadership seems to have been shared by a group (see Vision 2.4.3, where he speaks of “the presbyters who lead the church”). The duties stressed here are hospitality and care for the poor.

Sim. 9 27.3 “All of these will be sheltered by the Lord forever. Those who have done these things are glorious before God, and their place is already with the angels, if they continue serving the Lord to the end.”

Chapter 28

Sim. 9 28.1 “Believers from the eleventh mountain, where there were trees full of fruit, each decorated with different fruits, are like this:

Sim. 9 28.2 “those who suffered for the name of the Son of God, who suffered willingly with their whole heart and gave up their lives.”

Sim. 9 28.3 “Sir,” I said, “why do all the trees have fruit, but the fruit of some is more beautiful?” “Listen,” he said. “All who have ever suffered for the name are glorious before God, and the sins of all of them were taken away, because they suffered for the name of the Son of God. Now listen to why their fruits differ and some are better than others.

Translator’s note. Hermas says that suffering for Christ’s name took away the martyrs’ sins (see also 26.28.5–6). The New Testament teaches that sins are cleansed by Christ’s blood and sacrifice ([1 John 1:7](#); [Hebrews 9:14](#); [Revelation 1:5](#)). It also speaks of suffering for Christ as a gift and a mark of belonging to him ([Philippians 1:29](#); [1 Peter 4:14–16](#)). The idea that martyrdom cleanses sin was later developed by writers such as Tertullian, who called martyrdom a “second baptism” (On Baptism 16).

Sim. 9 28.4 “Those who were brought before authorities, questioned, and did not deny, but suffered willingly, are more glorious before the Lord. Their fruit is the finest. But those who were fearful and hesitated, who debated in their hearts whether to deny or to confess, and then suffered, have smaller fruits, because that thought came into their hearts. It is an evil thought that a slave would deny his own master.

Translator’s note. The Greek word kyrios means both “master” (of a slave)

and “Lord.” Hermas is playing on this: denying one’s master is a picture of denying the Lord.

Sim. 9 28.5 “So you who are thinking such thoughts, be careful that this thought does not remain in your hearts, or you will die to God. But you who suffer for the name ought to glorify God, because God has thought you worthy to carry this name and have all your sins healed.

Scripture: [1 Peter 4:15-16](#)

Sim. 9 28.6 “Count yourselves blessed. Yet you think you have done something great if any of you suffers for God. The Lord is giving you life, and you do not realize it. Your sins weighed you down, and if you had not suffered for the name of the Lord, you would have died to God because of your sins.

Translator’s note. The Greek verb for “you think” can also be read as a command, “think that you have done something great,” and some translators take it that way. The translation above takes it as a rebuke, which fits the following sentences: suffering is the Lord’s gift of life to them, not their own great achievement.

Sim. 9 28.7 “I am saying this to you who hesitate over denying or confessing. Confess that you have a Lord, so that you are not handed over to prison for denying him.

Translator’s note. Denying Christ was the way to be released by a Roman court. So the “prison” threatened here is probably God’s punishment, as the next verse suggests.

Sim. 9 28.8 “If the Gentiles punish their slaves when one denies his master, what do you think the Lord, who has authority over everything, will do to you? Take these thoughts out of your hearts, so that you may live to God forever.”

Chapter 29

Sim. 9 29.1 “Believers from the twelfth mountain, the white one, are like this: they are like little babies, in whose hearts no evil arises and who have never known what wickedness is, but have always stayed in innocence.

Sim. 9 29.2 “Such people will live in the kingdom of God without doubt, because in nothing did they defile the commandments of God, but stayed in innocence with the same mind all the days of their lives.

Translator’s note. Compare [Matthew 18:3](#) and [19:14](#), where Jesus says that the kingdom belongs to those who are like children.

Sim. 9 29.3 “All of you, then, who stay like this and are like babies with no wickedness will be more glorious than all those mentioned before. All babies are glorious before God and come first with him. Blessed are you who remove evil from yourselves and put on

innocence: you will be the first of all to live to God.”

Sim. 9 29.4 After he had finished explaining the parables of the mountains, I said to him, “Sir, now explain to me about the stones that were taken from the plain and put into the building in place of the stones taken from the tower, and about the round stones that were put into the building, and those that are still round.”

Chapter 30

Sim. 9 30.1 “Listen,” he said, “to all of this too. The stones taken from the plain and put into the building of the tower in place of the rejected ones are the roots of the white mountain.

Sim. 9 30.2 “Since all believers from the white mountain were found to be innocent, the lord of the tower ordered these to be taken from the roots of this mountain and put into the building of the tower. He knew that if these stones went into the building of the tower, they would stay bright and none of them would turn black.

Sim. 9 30.3 “If he had added stones from other mountains, he would have needed to visit the tower again and cleanse it. But all of these, both those who have believed and those who will believe, were found white, for they are of the same kind. Blessed is this kind, because it is innocent.

Translator’s note. Near this point the main Greek manuscript of the Shepherd breaks off. For the rest of the book the text is known mainly from ancient Latin translations, with only a few Greek fragments, such as 31.5–6 below. This version follows the Latin where the Greek is lacking, and the Greek where it survives.

Sim. 9 30.4 “Now listen about the round, bright stones. They also are all from the white mountain. Listen to why they were found round. Their riches have hidden them a little from the truth and darkened them, but they never left God, and no evil word came from their mouths, but only fairness and the virtue of truth.

Sim. 9 30.5 “When the Lord saw their mind, that they could favor the truth and stay good, he ordered their wealth to be trimmed back, but not removed entirely, so that they could do some good with what was left to them. And they will live to God, because they are of a good kind. That is why they were trimmed a little and put into the building of this tower.

Chapter 31

Sim. 9 31.1 “The others, which still remained round and were not fitted into that building because they had not yet received the seal, were put back in their place, since they were found to be very round.

Sim. 9 31.2 “This world and the empty things of their riches must be cut away from them, and then they will be fit for the kingdom of God. They must enter the kingdom of God, for the Lord has blessed this innocent kind. So not one of this kind will perish. Even if one of them is tempted by the most wicked devil and does something wrong, he will quickly return to his Lord.

Sim. 9 31.3 “I, the angel of repentance, call you all happy who are innocent like infants, for your portion is good and honored with God.

Sim. 9 31.4 “But I say to all of you who have received this seal: keep simplicity, do not hold grudges, and do not stay in your wickedness or in the bitter memory of offenses. Be of one spirit. Heal these evil divisions and remove them from among you, so that the lord of the sheep may rejoice over them.

Sim. 9 31.5 “He will rejoice if all of them are found healthy and none of them has fallen away. But if some of them are found to have fallen away, it will be woe to the shepherds.

Sim. 9 31.6 “And if the shepherds themselves are found to have fallen away, what will they say to the master of the flock? That they fell away because of the sheep? They will not be believed, for it is unbelievable that a shepherd should be harmed by the sheep. Instead they will be punished for their lie. I too am a shepherd, and I must most surely give an account for you.

Translator’s note. The idea of a shepherd who must “give an account” for those in his care recalls [Hebrews 13:17](#).

Chapter 32

Sim. 9 32.1 “Therefore, set yourselves right while the tower is still being built.

Sim. 9 32.2 “The Lord lives among people who love peace, for peace is dear to him. But he stays far from the quarrelsome and from those who have been ruined by malice. So give him back your spirit whole, just as you received it.

Sim. 9 32.3 “Suppose you gave a launderer a new, whole garment and wanted it back whole, and the launderer gave it back to you torn. Would you accept it? Wouldn’t you immediately lose your temper and chase him with abuse, saying, ‘I gave you a whole garment. Why did you tear it and give it back to me useless? Because of the tear you made in it, it can’t be used.’ Wouldn’t you say all this to the launderer about the tear he made in your garment?

Sim. 9 32.4 “If you are upset about your garment and complain that you did not get it back whole, what do you think the Lord will do to you? He gave you the spirit whole, and you have returned it

completely useless, so that it can be of no use to its master, because it has been spoiled by you. Won't the Lord of that spirit punish you with death for what you have done?"

Sim. 9 32.5 "Certainly," I said, "he will punish all those he finds holding on to the memory of wrongs." "Do not trample on his mercy," he said, "but honor him instead, because he is so patient with your offenses and is not like you. Repent, then, with the repentance that is useful for you."

Chapter 33

Sim. 9 33.1 "All these things written above, I, the shepherd, the angel of repentance, have shown and spoken to God's servants. If you believe and listen to my words, walk in them, and correct your ways, you will be able to live. But if you stay in malice and in the memory of offenses, none of that kind will live to God. Everything I had to say has been said to you."

Sim. 9 33.2 The shepherd said to me, "Have you asked me about everything?" I said, "Yes, sir." "Then why did you not ask me about the marks of the stones set in the building, why we filled in the marks?" I said, "I forgot, sir."

Sim. 9 33.3 "Listen now," he said, "about them. These are the ones who have heard my commandments and repented with their whole heart. When the Lord saw that their repentance was good and pure, and that they could remain in it, he ordered their earlier sins to be erased. Those marks were their sins, and they were smoothed over so that they would not show."

Similitude 10

Chapter 1

Sim. 10 1.1 After I had written this book, the angel who had handed me over to the shepherd came to the house where I was and sat down on the couch, and the shepherd stood at his right. Then he called me and said to me:

Sim. 10 1.2 "I have handed you and your house over to this shepherd, so that you can be protected by him." "Yes, sir," I said. "So if you want to be protected from all trouble and all cruelty," he said, "and to have success in every good work and word and in every virtue of righteousness, walk in his commandments, which I have given you, and you will be able to rule over all wickedness."

Sim. 10 1.3 "If you keep his commandments, every desire and pleasure of this age will be subject to you, and success in every good undertaking will follow you. Take on his maturity and moderation, and tell everyone that he is held in great honor and

dignity by the Lord, and that he is a ruler of great authority and powerful in his office. To him alone, in all the world, has authority over repentance been given. Doesn't he seem powerful to you? But you people despise his maturity and the modesty he shows toward you."

Chapter 2

Sim. 10 2.1 I said to him, "Sir, ask the shepherd himself whether, since he has been in my house, I have done anything out of line that might have offended him."

Sim. 10 2.2 "I know," he said, "that you have done nothing out of line, and that you will not do so. That is why I am speaking to you like this, so that you will persevere, for he has given me a good report of you. But you will tell these words to others, so that those who have repented or will repent may think as you do. Then he may give me a good report of them, and I may give one to the Lord."

Sim. 10 2.3 "Sir," I said, "I make known the mighty acts of the Lord to everyone. I hope that all who have sinned before, if they hear this, will gladly repent and recover life."

Sim. 10 2.4 "Stay, then," he said, "in this ministry and complete it. Whoever carries out his commandments will have life, and this shepherd will have great honor with the Lord. But those who do not keep his commandments are running away from their own life and setting themselves against him. They do not follow his commandments but hand themselves over to death, and each of them becomes guilty of his own blood. But I tell you to keep these commandments, and you will have a cure for your sins."

Translator's note. The Latin says literally "and this one will have great honor with the Lord." Elsewhere in this passage "this one" refers to the shepherd, but it could also mean the person who keeps the commandments.

Chapter 3

Sim. 10 3.1 "I sent these young women to you to live with you, because I saw they were friendly to you. So you have them as helpers, to be better able to keep his commandments. These commandments cannot be kept without these young women. I also see that they are with you willingly. But I will order them not to leave your house at all.

Translator's note. These young women are the twelve virgins of the ninth Parable, who are explained there as holy spirits, powers of the Son of God, and are named as virtues such as Faith, Self-control, and Love (Parable 9.13-15).

Sim. 10 3.2 "Only make your house clean. They will gladly live in a clean house, for they are pure, chaste, and hard-working, and all of

them are in favor with the Lord. So if they find your house pure, they will stay with you. But if even a little uncleanness comes into it, they will leave your house at once, for these young women love no uncleanness of any kind."

Sim. 10 3.3 I said to him, "I hope, sir, that I will please them, so that they will gladly live in my house always. And just as the one to whom you handed me over finds no fault with me, they will find no fault with me either."

Sim. 10 3.4 The angel said to the shepherd, "I know that the servant of God wants to live, that he will keep these commandments, and that he will give the young women a pure place to live."

Sim. 10 3.5 After saying this to the shepherd, he handed me over to him again. He called the young women and said to them, "Since I see that you gladly live in this man's house, I commend him and his house to you, so that you never leave his house." They were glad to hear these words.

Chapter 4

Sim. 10 4.1 Then he said to me, "Carry out this ministry with courage. Make known to everyone the mighty acts of the Lord, and you will have favor in this ministry. So whoever walks in these commandments will live and be happy in his life. But whoever neglects them will not live and will be unhappy in his life.

Sim. 10 4.2 "Tell everyone who is able to do right not to stop. Doing good works is useful to them. I say that every person ought to be rescued from distress, for the one who is in need and suffers hardship in daily life is in great torment and necessity.

Sim. 10 4.3 "Whoever rescues the soul of such a person from need gains great joy for himself. The person troubled by such distress is tortured with the same torment as someone in chains. Many people bring death on themselves because of calamities like these, when they cannot bear them. So whoever knows the distress of such a person and does not rescue him commits a great sin and becomes guilty of his blood.

Translator's note. Compare [James 2:15-16](#) and [1 John 3:17-18](#) on the sin of seeing a brother in need and doing nothing. The phrase "guilty of his blood" recalls the language of [Ezekiel 3:18](#) and 33:6, where the watchman who fails to warn is held responsible for the blood of those who die.

Sim. 10 4.4 "So do good works, all of you who have received from the Lord, so that the building of the tower is not finished while you are slow to do them. The work of building has been paused for your sake. Unless you hurry to do right, the tower will be finished and you will be shut out."

Translator's note. In Hermas the tower stands for the church (see Vision 3 and Parable 9).

Sim. 10 4.5 After he had spoken to me, he got up from the couch, took the shepherd and the young women, and left. But he told me that he would send the shepherd and the young women back to my house.

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