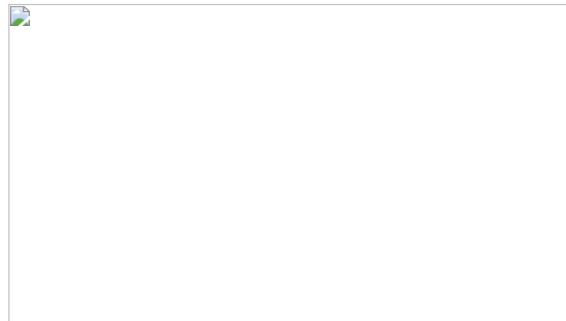




GLOBAL IMPACT MINISTRIES

A Defense of the Apostolic
Christian Faith

The Theology of the Shepherd of Hermas



The Theology of Hermas: Modalism

Introduction to the Shepherd of Hermas

The book is entitled, "The Shepherd of Hermas" because an angel appeared to Hermas dressed like a Shepherd to command him to write an inspired book to deliver to God's Church. The contents of the Shepherd of Hermas affirm that Hermas was a Prophet who ministered in the city of Rome from about 60 to 90 A.D. Therefore, if we are to believe the contents of The Shepherd of Hermas, the book itself was intended to be a part of the body of New Testament inspired Scripture.

The apostle Paul knew both Hermas and Clement of Rome, as Hermas is listed in Romans 16:14 and Clement in Philippians 4:3. In Hermas Vision 2:4, Hermas lists Clement as a contemporary leader of the church in Rome who sent copies of "The Shepherd of Hermas" throughout the known world. Since the historical data proves that Clement was a leader in the Church in Rome at the same time as Hermas, and since the apostle Paul personally knew both Clement and Hermas within the first century, it is clear that Hermas wrote "The Shepherd" during the first century.

Hermas Vision 3:5 describes Hermas' Vision of the holy angels placing the foundational white stones for the building of a Tower which the angel described as being symbolic of the New Testament Church. The angel stated that the foundational white stones used for the building of the tower are - and I quote, "The APOSTLES, bishops, teachers, and deacons, who have walked in godly gravity, and who have discharged their duties as bishops, teachers, and deacons for the good of God's elect. Some of these have fallen asleep, SOME ARE STILL WITH US (*Hermas Vision 3:5*)."

Since Hermas only saw the beginning of the construction of the church, symbolized as a tower, the large foundational white stones were symbolic of the original apostles who laid the foundation of the church. The angel said to Hermas that some of the apostles "are still with us." If Hermas was a mid-second century document, none of the original apostles would still be alive.

Scholars have pointed out that the Muratorian fragment says that Hermas wrote the Shepherd during the lifetime of bishop Pius in the mid second century. However, scholars George Edmondson and John Robinson have conclusively shown that the Muratorian fragment is, "full of errors" and that Hermas Vision 3:5 clearly states that some of the apostles were, "still alive" while the Shepherd was written. Therefore the Shepherd of Hermas had to have been written within the first century while some of the apostles were still living.

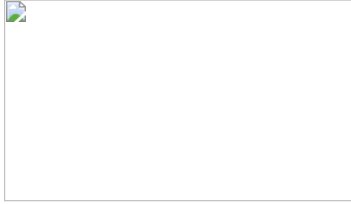
George Edmondson wrote, "It has already been suggested that the Muratorian Fragmentist blundered in his assertion that the work of Hermas was written during the episcopate of his brother Pope Pius I, because he confused the author of 'The Pastor' with a well-known brother of the bishop, who actually bore that name (*The Church in Rome in the First Century*, Pg. 215, George Edmondson, University of Oxford 1913)." Mr Edmondson continued, "... it is certainly very strange that, if Hermas wrote his book during his brother's episcopate, there should not be a single reference to that brother's existence in a work in which the author several times speaks of his family and, as has been said, repeatedly deals with the condition, organization, and affairs of the Church." (*The Church in Rome in the First Century*, Pg. 215, George Edmondson, University of Oxford 1913)

George Edmondson further pointed out that Hermas himself opened "The Shepherd" by writing that he was "sold into Rome" as a slave and that Hermas happens to be a Greek name while the Roman bishop "Pius" is a Roman name ("*Now the very first line of Hermas' book compresses into the briefest compass the life-story of the writer's youth. He who brought-me-up sold me into Rome to a certain Rhoda. This implies that Hermas had either been born a slave in the house of the vendor, who did not live at Rome, or what is from the form of the expression--ho threpsas--quite probable, that he had been a castaway child whom the above-mentioned master had taken care of and brought up as a slave. In the last case his parentage would be unknown and he would have no brother. If, however, he were born a slave, three things must be postulated before the Muratorian statement can be accepted: (1) that in this slave household relationships were recognized; (2) that both Hermas and his brother must have been sold in Rome and afterwards became freedmen; (3) that the brother laid aside his original Greek slave name for that of Pius. Negative evidence is never conclusive, but it is certainly very strange that, if Hermas wrote his book during his brother's episcopate, there should not be a single reference to that brother's existence in a work in which the author several times speaks of his family and, as has been said, repeatedly deals with the condition, organization, and affairs of the Church.*" *The Church In Rome*, Lecture 8, George Edmondson). Hence, it is very unlikely that a Greek slave who was sold into Rome with a Greek name could have been the brother of bishop Pius who had a Roman name. Yet in spite of the clear historical evidence proving that the Shepherd of Hermas was a first century document, the preponderance of Trinitarian scholarship has failed to point out the obvious evidence supporting the Shepherd of Hermas as a first century document which was written while some of the apostles were "still alive (*Hermas Vision 3:5*)."

Scholars have further pointed out that many of the earliest Christian writers revered and cited The Shepherd of Hermas as scripture. It seems very unlikely that second and third century Christian writers such as Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen would have cited Hermas as scripture if it was not written within the first century. The Shepherd of Hermas almost made its way into the New Testament but was rejected because its theology is clearly non-Trinitarian.

Even Roman Catholic scholars admit that the Shepherd of Hermas "had great authority in ancient times and was ranked with Holy Scripture."

"... 'The Shepherd' (Poimen, Pastor), a work which had great authority in ancient times and was ranked with Holy Scripture. Eusebius tells us that it was publicly read in the churches, and that while some denied it to be canonical, others "considered it most necessary. St. Athanasius speaks of it ... St. Irenaeus and Tertullian (in his Catholic days), cite the Shepherd as Scripture. Clement of Alexandria constantly quotes it with reverence, and so does Origen (Chapman. J. Transcribed by Don Ross)." (*The Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume VII. Published 1910. New York: Robert Appleton Company. Nihil Obstat, June 1, 1910. Remy Lafort, S.T.D., Censor. Imprimatur. +John Cardinal Farley, Archbishop of New York.*)



Above: The Shepherd of Hermas appears bound together with the New Testament in the Codex Sinaiticus (dated to the fourth century).

The preponderance of Trinitarian scholars have tried to claim that The Shepherd of Hermas was written in the second century because they do not want to admit that the earliest first century Roman Church that the apostles themselves founded baptized in Jesus Name (*Romans 6:1-7*) and believed that the Spirit of the Son of God is the Holy Spirit (*Romans 8:9*). Since the Shepherd of Hermas was quoted as inspired scripture by many of the earliest Christian writers (including Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Origen), the Shepherd of Hermas must have originated during the first century A.D. For why would the second and third century Christians accept it as scripture if it was not written during the first century?

The Shepherd of Hermas was bound with the New Testament in the Codex Sinaiticus and the Codex Claromontanus but was rejected by the later Catholic Church. Trinitarian translator Jack N. Sparks wrote in his preface to his translation of The Shepherd of Hermas: "You wouldn't call Hermas a precise theologian. His terminology in speaking of the Son and the Holy Spirit is so confusing that he seems to IDENTIFY THE TWO AS THE SAME PERSON." Hermas wrote concerning the deity of Jesus, "The pre-existent Holy Spirit which created all things did God make to dwell in a body of flesh chosen by Himself (*Hermas Parable 5:6*)."

If Hermas and the first century Roman Church believed in a trinity, Hermas Parable 5:6 should have stated that the "pre-existent Son did God make to dwell in a body of flesh." Yet Hermas declared that the Holy Spirit of God incarnated Himself "in a body of flesh chosen by Himself." Hermas clearly believed that the deity of Jesus is the Holy Spirit in Parable 9:1, "The angel of repentance, he came to me and said to me, I want to show you what THE HOLY SPIRIT which spoke with you in the form of the church, showed you; for THAT SPIRIT IS THE SON OF GOD" (*Hermas Parable 9:1 - See Romans 8:9 / 2 Corinthians 3:17 / Ephesians 4:6*).

Since the annals of church history prove that the Shepherd [Angel] of Hermas was widely received and accepted by the earliest Christians, it is clear that the majority of the earliest Christians also believed that the Holy Spirit of God is the Spirit that became the Son of God by incarnating Himself as baby Jesus. Hence, the earliest Christian writers (who lived while some of the apostles were still alive) believed that Jesus is the Holy Spirit of God incarnated in a body rather than an alleged second divine person called "God the Son."

Since the apostles themselves founded the first century Roman Church, it is hard to believe that the theology of the first century Roman Church differed from the theology of the original apostles. The teachings of the Shepherd of Hermas are identical with the Bible. Luke 1:35 states: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you. So the baby to be born will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God (*Luke 1:35 NIV*)." Luke 1:35 informs us that the Holy Spirit came upon Mary to supernaturally conceive baby Jesus, but if the trinity were true, then it should read that an eternal divine person called God the Son came over Mary to sire the Christ child. Therefore the theology of the earliest Roman Christian Church is identical with the Bibles' teaching.

Hermas Taught Water Baptism in the Name of Jesus For Salvation

Trinitarians hate to admit that Hermas taught Oneness Theology and water baptism in Jesus Name in Rome while some of the apostles were still alive. Like modern day Oneness Pentecostals, the early first century Roman Church believed that water baptism into the name of the Son of God alone is necessary for salvation. Hermas wrote in book 2, Command 4:3,

"I have heard, Sir," say I, "from certain teachers, that there is no other repentance than that which took place when **we went down into the water and received remission of our former sins.**" He said to me; "You have well heard; for so it is. For he who has received remission of his sins ought not to sin any more, but to live in purity."

Here we find evidence proving that the first century Roman church taught that water baptism is for receiving the "remission of our former sins." Hermas further wrote the angel's instructions in Parable 9:12, "Did you see the stones which were entered through the portico [doorway] were placed in the structure of the tower (the Church) but the ones that did not so enter were returned to their own place? No one will enter the Kingdom of God unless HE TAKES HIS HOLY NAME. For if you want to enter a city and that particular city has been walled around and has one entrance, could you possibly enter that city except by the gateway, so, a man cannot enter the Kingdom of God other than by the name of the Son ... The portico [doorway] is the Son of God; this is the only entrance to the Lord ... Whoever does not receive his name cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." (*See John 3:3-5 / John 10:1-9 - words in parenthesis and brackets were added for clarity*)

In the context of water baptism, Parable 9:13 goes on to state, "These all," he said, "received the name of God." Hence, we can clearly see that the Son's name is the name of God. Parable 9:14 goes on to say, "The name of the Son of God is great, and cannot be contained, and supports the whole world." Hermas Vision 4:2 says, "... you can be saved by no other than by His great and glorious name."

In the context of water baptism, Parable 9:16 further explains the necessity of water baptism into the name of the Son of God, "It was necessary," he answered, "to ascend through water (immersion and ascending) in order that they might be made alive; for, unless they laid aside the deadness of their life, they could not in any other way enter into the kingdom of God." Accordingly, those also who fell asleep received the seal of the Son of God. For, he continued, "before a man bears the name of the Son of God he is dead; but when he receives the seal he lays aside the deadness and obtains life. The seal, then, is the water: they descend into the water dead, and they arise alive. And to them, accordingly, was this seal preached, and they made use of it that they might enter into the kingdom of God." (*See Romans 6:1-7; Colossians 2:8-12; 1 Peter 3:20-21; John 3:3-5*)

The Shepherd [Angel] of Hermas clearly said that no one can enter into the Kingdom of God unless he or she received the name of the Son of God in water baptism. Here we have plain evidence proving that the earliest Christian Church in Rome believed that water baptism must be conducted by full body immersion ("they descend into the water") into the name of the Son of God [Jesus]. This is exactly what modern Apostolic Faith Christians believe even though we are condemned as heretics for doing so.

In The Shepherd of Hermas Vision 3:3 we read that Hermas asks, "Why was the tower (symbolic of the church) built upon the water, O Lady?" She answered, "I told you before, and you still inquire carefully: therefore inquiring you shall find the truth. Hear then why the tower is built upon the water. It is because your life has been, and will be, saved through water. For the tower was founded on the word of the almighty and glorious Name and it is kept together by the invisible power of the Lord" (*1 Peter 3:20-21 / Mark 16:16*).

Hermas Vision 3, chapter 7 continues, "Do you wish to know who are the others that fell near the water, but could not be rolled into the water? These are they who have heard the word, and wish to be baptized in the name of the Lord; but when the chastity demanded by the truth comes into their recollection, they draw back, and again walk after their own wicked desires."

Hermas' teaching on water baptism which was accepted by the majority of believers in the first few centuries is in harmony with the commands of our current canon of New Testament Scripture. New believers are commanded to repent and be baptized into the Name of Jesus Christ for the remission of their sins (*Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16*). Since the Shepherd of Hermas was received by the first century Roman Church and the majority of churches throughout the Roman Empire, the majority of the earliest Christians must have embraced Oneness Theology and the essentiality of water baptism into the Name of the Son of God rather than the later Trine baptism.

The First Century Roman Church Taught The Oneness of God

Hermas, book 2, Commandment 1, "FIRST Of all, believe that there is one God who created and finished all things, and made all things out of nothing. He alone is able to contain the whole, but Himself cannot be contained." The angel commanded Hermas to believe in only One God who created and finished all things as a single "He" who "ALONE is able to CONTAIN THE WHOLE, but Himself cannot be contained." This is another way of saying that there is only One Omnipresent God who fills heaven and earth (*Jer. 23:24*).

The context of many passages in the Shepherd of Hermas affirms that the Son of God is the Holy Spirit who fills all things. That makes Jesus the Spirit of the only true God who incarnated Himself to become a true man for our salvation. Hermas Vision 3:9 states that the Holy Spirit who is "that Spirit" called "the Son of God," spoke to Hermas saying, "Instruct each other therefore, and be at peace among yourselves, that I also, standing joyful before your Father (the Son), may give an account of you all to your Lord."

The context of Hermas Vision 3:9 proves that the old woman who symbolized the church was speaking to Hermas. Similitude 9:1 says, "I wish to explain to you what the Holy Spirit that spoke with you in the form of the Church showed you, for that Spirit is the Son of God." Therefore the Holy Spirit who overshadowed the virgin in Luke 1:35 is that Spirit who became the Son of God in the incarnation. Wherefore, according to the first century Roman Church, Jesus is the Holy Spirit who gives an account to God as our mediator, advocate, and intercessor to God the Father (*1 Tim. 2:5; John 14:26; John 14:16-18; 1 John 2:1*). Hermas book 2, Commandment 10:2 states that the Holy Spirit is "the Spirit of God" Himself, "... grieve not the Holy Spirit which dwells in you, lest he entreat God against you, and he withdraw from you. For the Spirit of God which has been granted to us to dwell in this body does not endure grief."

Notice that the Holy Spirit can "entreat God" while still being called "the Spirit of God." It is impossible for an alleged non-incarnate coequal God the Holy Spirit to "entreat God" while being coequal with Him. Also notice that the text says "the Spirit of God" which means that the Spirit of Christ is the Spirit of "the only true God" who is our Heavenly Father. Here we can clearly see that the Holy Spirit of God the Father also became the Son in the incarnation. This explains why the Holy Spirit is the indwelling "Spirit of Christ" throughout New Testament Scripture (*Romans 8:9; 2 Corinthians 3:17; Colossians 1:27*). Furthermore, the context of Parable 9 addresses baptism in the name of the Son of God, but Parable 9:13 goes on to say, "These all," he said, "received the name of God." Hence, we can clearly see that the Son's name is the name of God. Isaiah 64:8, Exodus 3:14-15, and Zechariah 14:9 proves that God has only One Name and that Name was given to Jesus which means "Yahweh Saves" (*Jeremiah 23:6; John 5:43, 17:11; Philippians 2:9; Hebrews 1:4*). Hence, Yahshua (Hebrew for Jesus) is the Name of "Yahweh" our "Saviour."

Hermas book 2, Commandment 5:1, "Be patient," said he, "and of good understanding, and you will rule over every wicked work, and you will work all righteousness. For if you be patient, **the Holy Spirit** that dwells in you will be pure. He will not be darkened by any evil spirit, but, dwelling in a broad region, he will rejoice and be glad; and with the vessel in which he dwells **he will serve God in gladness**, having great peace within himself."

How can an alleged non-incarnate God the Holy Spirit Person be said to "serve God with gladness" while remaining coequal with God the Father? Similitude 9 states that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Son of God. Hence, the only viable way to make sense of this passage is if the Holy Spirit is "the Spirit of the Son of God" as the Spirit of the risen Christ (God as man) who serves God as the indwelling Spirit of truth (*See Ephesians 4:10; 1 Corinthians 15:45; Galatians 4:6; Romans 8:26-27*).

Hermas book 2, Commandment 5:1 goes on to say, "But if any outburst of anger take place, forthwith the Holy Spirit, who is tender, is straitened, not having a pure place, and He seeks to depart. For he is choked by the vile spirit, and cannot attend on the Lord as he wishes ..."

Again, how can an alleged non-incarnate coequal God the Holy Spirit Person be said to "attend on the Lord (the Father)" as "he wishes" while remaining coequal with the "LORD?"

The Shepherd of Hermas, Parable 5:6 says, "You see," he said, "that He is the Lord of the people, having received all authority from His Father. And why the Lord took His Son as councillor, and the glorious angels, regarding the heirship of the slave, listen. The pre-existent Holy Spirit which created all things did God make to dwell in a body of flesh chosen by Himself ... For this conduct of the flesh pleased Him, because it was not defiled on the earth while having the Holy Spirit. He took (after pleasing the Father on the earth), therefore, as fellow-councillors His Son and the glorious angels (*See John 16:14-15*)..." How is it possible that "the Lord TOOK HIS SON AS A COUNCILOR" if the Son was always a coequal councillor as a God the Son throughout eternity past to begin with? Likewise, it is impossible for the Son of God to serve as the Father's councillor while being truly coequal with Him. Therefore the first century Roman Church clearly taught that the human son of God was taken as the Father's councillor only after the Son's resurrection and ascension into heaven.

Rather than an alleged "pre-existent Son" creating all things, the text states that "The pre-existent Holy Spirit which created all things did God make to dwell in a body of flesh chosen by Himself." We know that the scriptures teach that there is only One Heavenly Father who created all things alone and by Himself (*Isaiah 44:24*). Since the Scriptures repeatedly state that the Father created everything by His own Hands (*Isaiah 64:8; Psalm 8:5-7; Hebrews 2:7; Malachi 2:10*), we know that the Holy Spirit of God must be the Holy Spirit of the only true God the Father who later incarnated Himself "in a body of flesh chosen by Himself." According to Hermas, our Heavenly Father took the Son as His councillor along with the glorious angels because the Son's flesh pleased the Father by not being "defiled on the earth." If the Father took the Son as His councillor after dwelling on the earth as a man in the flesh, then it makes no sense to believe that the Son pre-existed as a literal councillor with the Father before the Son's birth on the earth.

Furthermore, the above passage says, "The pre-existent Holy Spirit which created all things did God make to dwell in a body of flesh chosen by Himself." Here we find that the Son was not literally a Son until the Holy Spirit incarnated Himself to dwell in the flesh of the man Christ Jesus. For the text does not say "the pre-existent Son", it says, "the pre-existent Holy Spirit." Therefore the early Roman Church never believed in the later timeless Eternal Son view that first began with Origen in the third century. The Shepherd of Hermas, Parable 9:1 says, "After I had written down the commandments and similitudes of the Shepherd, the Angel of repentance, he came to me and said, 'I wish to explain to you what the Holy Spirit that spoke with you in the form of the Church showed you, for that Spirit is the Son of God.'"

Trinitarian theology teaches that the Son is not the Holy Spirit and that the Holy Spirit is not the Son. Yet the first century Roman Church taught that "the Holy Spirit ... is the Son of God." The only theological view compatible to the first century Roman teaching is Oneness Modalism. For all three remaining views (Trinitarianism, Arianism, and Unitarian Socinianism) do not affirm that the Holy Spirit is the Son of God. Thus we can see that the first century Roman Church could not have been Trinitarian, Arian, or Socinian. For Trinitarian theology believes that the Son is not the Holy Spirit, while Arian theology believes that the Son is an angelic creation who could not be the indwelling Holy Spirit, while Socinian theology believes that the son is just a special man who could not be the Holy Spirit of God. Therefore, all theological views except Modalism, teach that the Holy Spirit is not the same person as Jesus Christ the Son of God. Wherefore, the only remaining theological view left that fits with the contents of The Shepherd of Hermas is Modalistic Monarchianism which was still the most prominent view held by the early Christians in the early to mid-third century (*See Origen's Commentary on the Gospel of John, book 1, chapter 23 and Tertullian Against Praxeus chapter 3*).

How The Son is Older than all of His Creatures

Trinitarians and Arians often cite The Shepherd of Hermas Parable 9:12 in their attempt to show that Jesus as a Son literally pre-existed his birth as a Son rather than as the Holy Spirit of God. Since Hermas affirmed that the pre-existent Holy Spirit became the Son of God in the incarnation, we know that Hermas could not have believed that the Son literally pre-existed as a Son before being given that title at his birth (*Luke 1:35*). According to Hermas Parable 9:12, "the Son of God is OLDER THAN ALL HIS CREATURES" - because the Son as the Son of God is himself a part of the creation.

Hermas Parable 9:12 says, "This rock," he answered, "and this gate are the Son of God." "How, sir?" I said; "the rock is old, and the gate is new." "Listen," he said, "and understand, O ignorant man. The Son of God is **older than all His creatures**, so that He was a fellow-councillor with the Father in His work of creation: for this reason is He old." "And why is the gate new, sir?" I said. "Because," he answered, "He became manifest in the last days of the dispensation: for this reason the gate was made new, that they who are to be saved by it might enter into the kingdom of God."

Just as the Shepherd of Hermas speaks of the church as an old woman who "was created first of all," so the Son of God is already spoken of as being "older than all His creation."

Hermas Vision 2:4 says, "It is the Church. And I said to him, Why then is she an old woman? Because, said he, she was created first of all. On this account is she old. And for her sake was the world made."

Clement was a first century bishop of Rome who personally knew Hermas and made copies of The Shepherd of Hermas to send to foreign cities throughout the world. Clement wrote that "the first Church" "was created before the sun and moon."

"Therefore, brothers, if we do the will of God our Father, we shall be of **the first Church, the one that is spiritual, that was created before the sun and moon** ... And the Books and the Apostles plainly declare that **the Church is not of the present, but from the beginning**. For she (the church) **was spiritual, as our Jesus also was, but was revealed in the last days that he might save us.**" (2 Clement 14)

Notice that Clement of Rome actually used the word "created" in relation to the spiritual church (God's elect) being created before the sun and moon were literally created. Also notice that the Church as God's called out people "was spiritual, **as our Jesus also was**." Since God's elect people did not literally exist "before the sun and moon," we know that the Son of God did not literally exist as a Son because God's elect Church "was spiritual, as our Jesus also was" before the literal creation. Therefore, we know that the Son and God's elect could not have literally existed "before the sun and moon" except in the mind, planning, and utterances of the Father (the meaning of *logos* in John 1:1).

In order to find the proper meaning of the Parables, Visions, and Similitudes in the Shepherd of Hermas, we must understand that Hermas often spoke allegorically rather than literally. We know that Hermas saw a vision of an old woman which clearly represented God's Church as the whole the bride of Christ rather than a literal woman as a single individual. The beginning of Similitude 9 first states that the Holy Spirit is the Son of God. Then in Similitude 9:12 we find that the "Son of God is **older than all His creatures**, so that he was a fellow councillor with the Father in His work of creation." Notice that the text states that the Son of God is **OLDER THAN ALL HIS CREATURES**. Why would the Son of God be included in the same sentence as the Father's creatures ("OLDER THAN all His creatures") if the Son of God was not also a part of the Father's creation? The words "older than," implies that the Son is older than all of the rest of God's creation in the sense of the Son being "the beginning of the creation of God" according to Revelation 3:14. Therefore, there is a definitive connection between the Son of God and all the rest of God the Father's creation.

Also notice that Parable 5:6 and Similitude 9:1 state that the Holy Spirit is that Spirit which later became the Son of God. "The pre-existent Holy Spirit which created all things did God make to dwell in a body of flesh chosen by himself." The Shepherd of Hermas, Parable 5:6 is obviously talking about the pre-existent Holy Spirit being the Spirit who incarnated Himself in the body of Jesus Christ (*Matthew 1:20; Luke 1:35*). "... the Holy Spirit that spoke with you in the form of the Church showed you, for that Spirit is the Son of God" (*Shepherd of Hermas, Similitude 9:1*).

It is hard to imagine that the Holy Spirit who "created all things" could be a part of the creation itself, but it makes sense to believe that the Son of God is older than all of the Father's creation in the sense of being "the beginning of the creation of God" (*Rev. 3:14*) and "the firstborn of all creation" (*Col. 1:15*) in the Father's prophetic expressed thought (*logos*) before the creation actually took place. Hence, the Son of God is **OLDER THAN ALL HIS CREATURES** because he was firstborn or first created in God's prophetic mind and plan before the literal creation actually took place. Therefore, the only plausible understanding of Hermas Parable 9:12 is that God the Father used His own word (the *logos* of John 1:1 – as His own expressed plan) as "the council of His own will (*Ephesians 1:11*)" in Christ to create all things in His own mind and heart before God actually created all things.

Theophilus of Antioch (169-183 A.D.) who first used the word "Triad" in the East, wrote in his Apology to Autolytus (Book 2, 22), "... as truth expounds, the Word, that always exists, residing WITHIN THE HEART OF GOD. For before anything came into being HE HAD HIM AS A COUNSELOR, BEING HIS OWN MIND AND THOUGHT. But when God wished to make all that he determined on, he begot His Word, uttered the firstborn of all creation ..."

Even this Semi-Arian founding father of the Catholic Church believed that it was possible for the Father to have His Son "as a counsellor" within His "mind and thought" before the Son actually came into existence. Hence, in the mid to late second century, Theophilus taught that the Father already "had him (His Son) as a counsellor, being His own Mind and Thought" before actually being begotten. However, like Arius, Theophilus taught that the Son was actually begotten in heaven before his birth in Bethlehem to create "all that he determined." Hence, Theophilus taught Arian rather than Trinitarian theology. For Trinitarian theology teaches that the Son always actually existed with no beginning while Modalism teaches that the Son was the Father's own "counsel" as His "own mind and thought" (the meaning of *logos*) before being literally begotten as a human child born and son given.

Proverbs 8:22-31 states that God first made WISDOM. James Pate wrote, "What was God like before he made wisdom? Was he unwise? Or maybe Proverbs is saying that wisdom was an emanation from God, who already is wise. The rabbis [in Genesis Rabbah] treat wisdom AS GOD'S PLAN FOR THE UNIVERSE: when an architect designs a house, he draws up a plan, and that's what wisdom was for God. God was already wise when he drew up the plan, but the plan (wisdom) was a concrete expression of God's intended order for the universe. The rabbis equated wisdom, as God's blueprint for the universe ..." (*James Pate, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion*)

Wherefore, early Judaism affirms that the Word and Wisdom of God was never a distinct God Person from God (the Father). Oneness Pentecostals also affirm that God's Word and Wisdom are the emanations from God the Father's own mouth rather than a distinct "coequal divine Person" beside Himself. For "Yahweh gives wisdom, FROM HIS MOUTH comes knowledge and understanding (*Proverbs 2:6*)." Can a coequal God Person have come forth or emanated from the anthropomorphic mouth of the only true God the Father while still being coequal with Him? Certainly not!

Wherefore, Hermas addressed the Son in a prophetic anticipatory sense just as he addressed God's elect as "a woman" who was "created first" in God's mind and plan (his *logos*) before the world was actually created (*Jeremiah 1:5; Isaiah 41:4; Romans 8:29-30; Ephesians 1:4-5*). Therefore the angel who spoke to Hermas addressed the Word and Wisdom (*logos*) of God as the "foreknown" Son just as Wisdom was already personified in Proverbs 8:22-30 without actually existing yet as the human child born and son that would be given (*Isaiah 9:6; Hebrews 1:5; Psalm 2:7*).

Hermas Parable 9:1 says, "After I had written down the commandments and similitudes of the Shepherd, the Angel of repentance, he came to me and said, 'I wish to explain to you what **the Holy Spirit that spoke with you in the form of the Church showed you, for that Spirit is the Son of God.**'"

In Hermas Vision 2:4, the same angel explained to Hermas that the old woman was the form of the Church:

"**Who do you think that old woman** is from whom you received the book?" And I said, "The Sibyl." "You are in a mistake," says he; "it is not the Sibyl." "Who is it then?" say I. And he said, "**It is the Church.**" And I said to him, "**Why then is she an old woman?**" "**Because,**" said he, "**she was created first of all. On this account is she old. And for her sake was the world made.**" (*The Shepherd of Hermas Vision 2:4*)

Hermas Parable 9:1 states that Hermas' vision of the old woman represented the form of the Church and that "the Spirit" that addressed Hermas within the women is "that Spirit" who "is the Son of God. Then Hermas Vision 2:4 states that the "old woman" which symbolized God's elect Church and the son of God, "... was created first of all. On this account is she old. And for her sake was the world made." In the same way that the Church "was created first of all," the Son as "the man Christ Jesus" was created first of all. Hence, "the rock is old" (*Hermas Parable 9:12*) because the Son was "the beginning of the creation of God (*Rev. 3:14*)" and "the firstborn of all creation (*Col. 1:15*)" before actually existing as a Son of God. Since God's elect

church was not literally created “first of all” as living people before the earth was created, we know that the Son of God was not literally created first of all as a living son person before the earth was created either.

“The pre-existent Holy Spirit which created all things did God make to dwell in a body of flesh chosen by himself.” The Shepherd of Hermas, Parable 5:6 is obviously talking about the pre-existent Holy Spirit being the Spirit who incarnated Himself in the body of Jesus Christ (*Matthew 1:20; Luke 1:35*). “... the Holy Spirit that spoke with you in the form of the Church showed you, for that Spirit is the Son of God” (*Shepherd of Hermas, Similitude 9:1*). Since no Trinitarian believes that the Holy Spirit is the Son of God, we know that Hermas taught that the Son pre-existed as the Holy Spirit of God before becoming the child that would be born and the son that would be given (*Isaiah 9:6*).

There are only two plausible explanations that can bring harmony to The Shepherd of Hermas; but the first explanation contradicts our current canon of inspired scripture.

1) The Holy Spirit literally counselled the Father as a lesser god person who “created all things.” Yet this first explanation clearly violates Isaiah 44:24, Isaiah 64:8, Hebrews 2:7, and Psalm 8:5-6 because these texts of scripture prove that the Father alone created all things by His own Hands. Therefore the Holy Spirit must be the Spirit of the Father who created all things before becoming incarnate as the Christ child.

2) God used the counsel of His own will (*Ephesians 1:11*) which was already foreknown in Christ (*in His expressed thought “logos” – John 1:1, 1 Peter 1:20, Ephesians 1:4-5, Colossians 1:16, Heb. 1:2*) to create all things before the Son literally existed. In Similitude 9:1, Hermas identified the woman who spoke “in the form of the church” as the “Spirit of the Son of God.” “I wish to explain to you what the Holy Spirit that spoke with you in the form of the Church showed you, for that Spirit is the Son of God.” Since the woman is symbolic of both the church and the Son of God (*Similitude 9:1*), Similitude 9:12 proves that the Son could not have literally existed as a Son because the woman spoken in Similitude 9:12 was created before the physical creation actually took place. Hermas’ Vision 2:4 also explains that the woman which is symbolic of both the church and the Son of God “was created first of all.” “Who do you think that old woman is from whom you received the book?” And I said, “The Sibyl.” “You are in a mistake,” says he; “it is not the Sibyl.” “Who is it then?” say I. And he said, “It is the Church.” And I said to him, “Why then is she an old woman?” “Because,” said he, “she was created first of all. On this account is she old. And for her sake was the world made.” (*The Shepherd of Hermas Vision 2:4*)

The Shepherd of Hermas speaks of the church as an old woman who was created first, so the Son of God is already spoken of as being “older than all His creation.” In Similitude 5:6 we read, “For this conduct of the flesh pleased Him [God], because it was not defiled on the earth while having the Holy Spirit. He took, therefore, as fellow-councillors His Son and the glorious angels” (*Sim. 5:6*). Similitude 5:6 proves that the Son was actually taken by God to become His counsellor after the incarnation, and not before it! Therefore the Son could not have been a literal living counsellor before His birth at Bethlehem.

Since Hermas wrote that “the Holy Spirit” is the “the Son of God” (*Similitude 9:1*), Trinitarians must admit that this passage either speaks of a binitarian Godhead of only the Father and the Holy Spirit as two divine Persons, or something else is meant for Jesus being called “a fellow counsellor with the Father in His work of creation.” Similitude 5:6 says, “He Himself purged away their sins, having suffered many trials and undergone many labours, for no one is able to dig without labour and toil. He Himself, then, having purged away the sins of the people, showed them the paths of life by giving them the law which He received from His Father (“You see,” he said, “that He is the Lord of the people, having received all authority from His Father”). And why the Lord took His Son as counsellor, and the glorious angels, regarding the heirship of the slave, listen. The holy, pre-existent Spirit that created every creature, God made to dwell in flesh, which He chose. This flesh, accordingly, in which the Holy Spirit dwelt, was nobly subject to that Spirit, walking religiously and chastely, in no respect defiling the Spirit; and accordingly, after living excellently and purely, and after labouring and cooperating with the Spirit, and having in everything acted vigorously and courageously along with the Holy Spirit, He assumed it as a partner with it. For this conduct of the flesh pleased Him, because it was not defiled on the earth while having the Holy Spirit. He took, therefore, as fellow-councillors His Son and the glorious angels (*Similitude 5:6*).” Similitude 5:6 states that God the Father did not actually take His Son as His counsellor until after Christ “purged away our sins” which clearly occurred after the incarnation; yet Similitude 9:12 states that Jesus “was a fellow counsellor with the Father in His work of creation.”

Either the angel that spoke to Hermas contradicted himself, or Jesus was already the Father’s council in His work of creation in the Father’s mind and planning before God literally took His Son as a “fellow counsellor.” If the Son was literally the Father’s counsellor in God’s physical creation, then how is it that the Father “took His Son as counsellor” after the Son’s “flesh pleased Him (the Father)?” For if the Son was already a living counsellor before the incarnation, then why would God literally take the Son as His counsellor again? Hence, it is probable that God considered the Son’s foreknown words and deeds in planning His creation as His Council (just as wisdom is personified in Proverbs 8), before the Son actually became His actual counsellor. For only God, “calls the things which be not as though they were” (*Romans 4:17*).

This understanding is hard for us finites to conceive, but it is certainly possible for the infinite God to speak of Christ and His elect as if they already existed before creation. Jeremiah 1:5 says, “Before I formed you in your mother’s womb, I knew you, and ordained you to be a prophet to the nations.” In this light we can understand why inspired scripture states that the Son of God was “foreknown before the creation of the world” (*1 Peter 1:20*) and why the Son of God is called, “the firstborn of all creation” (*Col. 1:15*) and “the beginning of the creation OF God” (*Rev. 3:14*). For Christ is older than all God the Father’s creatures because he was first created (before God’s elect were created) as the beginning of the creation of God and as wisdom personified in Proverbs 8:22-30. Trinitarian scholars admit that the Son was not literally “made, acquired, or created” in Proverbs 8:22. The Hebrew text from the Tanakh says, “The LORD MADE ME as the beginning of His way, the first of His works of old.” The Septuagint says, “The LORD created me.”

The most literal translation of Proverbs 8:22 in the Hebrew is “the LORD ACQUIRED me.” To acquire something implies that God made it. So what did God acquire or make in Proverbs 8? God created the Son in His mind and planning as His firstborn before the Son was literally born just as Psalm 2:7 says, “You are My Son, this day have I begotten you.” For in God’s prophetic mind, the Son was already firstborn in God’s prophetic plan just as God’s elect were born after the firstborn according to Hermas Vision 2:4. The LORD (YHWH) did not literally “make” or “acquire” Jesus as “the firstborn of all creation”, just like the LORD did not literally make His elect when He “foreknew” and “predestines us” in Jesus Christ before the creation of the world (*Ephes. 1:4-5; Romans 8:29-30*). Just like a human architect first creates a detailed blueprint before actually building something, so our Heavenly Father pre-created all things in and through Christ as His foreknown plan. Since the Son of God spoke with Hermas in “the form of the church” as the old woman, the Son also represents the woman being first created just as in Proverbs 8, Revelation 3:14, and Colossians 1:15. Since we know that God’s elect were not literally “created first of all” “before the creation of the world” (*Ephesians 1:4*), we know that Jesus as a child born and Son given was not literally created either.

Now lets us look at Similitude 9:12 with the understanding that the Son was “acquired” or “created” as God’s wisdom personified in Proverbs chapter eight.

“The Son of God is older than all his creatures, so that he was a fellow counsellor with the Father in his work of creation” (*Shepherd of Hermas Book 3 Similitude 9:12*). Notice the word “creatures” in the above text. Why would the angel compare God’s Son to God’s creation by saying, “The Son of God is **OLDER THAN ALL HIS CREATURES**” if the Son was not also a part of the creation itself? When we compare Proverbs 8:22-31 with Revelation 3:14, we find that Jesus pre-existed as “the beginning of the creation OF God” in the same sense that God’s elect were created through God’s expressed plan (His logos) before the literal creation actually took place. Since God’s elect were not literally alive when we were “foreknown” and “predestined” (*Ephesians 1:4-5; Romans 8:29-30*), neither was the Son as a Son literally alive when he was “foreknown” and “predestined” (*1 Peter 1:20; Heb. 1:5*). Thus, it is apparent that Hermas did not believe that Jesus pre-existed as a God the Son (Trinitarianism), or as an angelic son (Arianism), or just as a created man (Socinianism).

According to Hermas (*Similitude 9:1 and Parable 5:6-7*), Jesus pre-existed his birth as the Holy Spirit of God Himself before becoming the child born and son given. Since no text in the Shepherd of Hermas ever says that “the Holy Spirit” was created, Hermas could not have denied Christ’s everlasting pre-existence as the Spirit of the “Mighty God” and “Everlasting Father” (*Isaiah 9:6*). Therefore the theology of Hermas was clearly Modalistic rather than Arian, Trinitarian, or Socinian.

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