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The identity of the Διψυχος in *The Shepherd of Hermas*

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Introduction

One of the most frequent phrases in *The Shepherd of Hermas* is the Greek adjective διψυχος (“doublemindedness”). While the adjective occurs nineteen times, its cognate verb διψυχεῖν (“to be doubleminded”) occurs twenty times and the substantive διψυχια (“doubleminded”) occurs in as many as sixteen times.² Indeed, the number of the occurrences of this term in *The Shepherd* is staggering, given the fact that the term occurs only ten times in all the other early Christian writings combined up to this time (that is, in Jas 1:8; 4:8, *Did.* 4.4; *Bar.* 19.5; *1 Clem.* 11.2; 23.2-3, *2 Clem.* 11:2; 23.5; 19.2).³

Because of its centrality in *The Shepherd*, a number of key studies have been done pertaining to the meaning of the term διψυχος and its accompanying cognates.⁴ However, these studies have been somehow a lone ranger approach with most of the work having been done by Oscar Seitz, with his last word on the subject appearing close to fivescore years ago. Indeed, even in these studies, Seitz was not particularly concerned with the identity of the referents on this term in *The Shepherd* (that is, whether it is referring to believers or not). Rather, he was

¹ This article was originally submitted to the Department of Theological Studies, Dallas Theological Seminary for an Independent Study on Second Century Christianity in Fall 2009.

² Carolyn Osiek, *The Shepherd of Hermas: A Commentary*, Hermeneia, ed. Helmut Koester (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 30.

³ *Ibid.*, note 232.

⁴ Among the leading studies done on this subject are Oscar J. F. Seitz, “Relationship of The Shepherd of Hermas to the Epistle of James,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 63 (1944); Oscar J. F. Seitz, “Antecedents and Signification of the Term διψυχος,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 66 (1947); O. J. F. Seitz, “Afterthoughts on the Term 'Dipsychos',” *New Testament Studies* 4 (1957-58); Oscar J. F. Seitz, “Two Spirits in Man: An Essay in Biblical Exegesis,” *New Testament Studies* 6 (1958-60). See also Calum Gilmour, “Religious Vascillation and Indecision: Doublemindedness as the Opposite of Faith: A Study of *Dipsychos* and Its Cognates in the *Shepherd of Hermas* and Other Early Christian Literature,” *Prudentia* 16 (1984).

concerned with the term's lexicographical issues. For example, in his initial study which was published in *Journal of Biblical Literature* in 1944 and was entitled "Relationship of the Shepherd of Hermas to the Epistle of James,"⁵ Seitz sought to deal with the "unresolved problems"⁶ pertaining to the relationship of *The Shepherd* and James. Particularly, he argued that the word διψυχος, which occurs twice in James and fifty-five times in *The Shepherd*, originated from an unknown scripture referred to in *1 and 2 Clement* simply as "prophetic message."⁷ Thus, he was not concerned with the question of the referents of the term per se. Rather he was interested in the term's possible origins. In his second study on this term in *Hermas*, Seitz, once again, revisited the question of the origin of the term διψυχος. Rejecting his earlier held position that the term is derived from the Hebraic idiom כִּלְבָב וְכִלְבָב which is found in 1 Chron 12:33 and Ps 12:2 and literally means "double heart," he argued that, instead, the term is more closely related to the Hebrew notion of inner disunity, "a notion which...is probably the antecedent and the key to the meaning of the word διψυχος and its cognates."⁸ Once again, he did not clearly identify the referent of this term (that is, whether it refers to Christians or non-Christians). Rather, he only moved his cards around as far as the question of the origin of the term is concerned.

In his final rejoinder to his discussion on the meaning of the term διψυχος, Seitz attempted to tie the antecedent of the adjective to Qumran beliefs. Once again, adding to his earlier held conclusions on the subject, thanks to newly discovered documents "which might

⁵ Seitz, "Relationship of The Shepherd of Hermas."

⁶ Ibid., 131.

⁷ Ibid., 139-40.

⁸ Seitz, "Antecedents and Signification," 218.

require reconsideration”⁹ of his position, Seitz, drawing from an article by Wallace I.

Wolverston,¹⁰ concluded that although the term διψυχος had its origins in the Hebrew of the “two hearts” that are in fight (*daras beleb waleb*), its immediate connection with *The Shepherd* and the Clements is the Qumran document known as the *Manual of Discipline*.¹¹ Once again, there is no clear identity of the referent of the term. Hence, the question still remains: does the term διψυχος refer to Christians or non-Christians in *The Shepherd*?

The latest study on the meaning of the adjective διψυχος in *The Shepherd* was done by Calum Gilmour in 1984. In his study, Gilmour focused a lot on the characteristics of the διψυχος in *The Shepherd*, coming very close to identifying the referents of the term. According to him, the διψυχος is “the man who wants the best of both worlds...” He “lacks any real sense of direction...he ‘leaves the true way; thinking he can find a better way, he wanders and becomes wretched (παλαιπωρεῖν), walking in pathless way’ (H. *Vis.* 3.7.1).”¹² Indeed, he goes ahead and identifies the διψυχος with the apostates, whose practice is the opposite of faith in James and the sub-Apostolic writings. “Thus,” he writes, “in setting δίψυχία over and against πίστις, the sub-Apostolic fathers and James take over a long established idea of religious vacillation and indecision which in late Jewish circles has been enshrined in the word διψυχος and its cognates.”¹³ Again, although this is perhaps the most articulate study on the meaning of

⁹ Seitz, “Afterthoughts on the Term 'Dipsychos,’” 327.

¹⁰ See Wallace I. Wolverston, “The Double-Minded Man in the Light of Essene Psychology,” *Anglican Theological Review* 38 (1956).

¹¹ Seitz, “Afterthoughts on the Term 'Dipsychos,’” 330-31. For further discussion on the Jewish origin of διψυχος and its usage in the Qumran community, see Sophie Laws, *The Epistle of James*, Harper's New Testament Commentaries, ed. Henry Chadwick (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980), 58-61.

¹² Gilmour, “Religious Vascillation and Indecision.”, 34.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 42.

this term specifically in *The Shepherd* still, it leaves the reader unclear on whether the referent is a believer who is wavering in his faith or an unbeliever who hasn't made up his mind on God. The closest that Gilmour comes to answering this question is to tell his reader that δῖψυχος is “‘Mr. Facing-both-ways,’ who cannot really make up his mind between God and the world, and whose soul is divided between right and wrong.”¹⁴ Thus, still the question of whether or not δῖψυχος refers to a believer in *The Shepherd* is still unanswered.

The Identity of the δῖψυχος in *Hermas*

My thesis in this paper is that there is a threefold referent of the term δῖψυχος in *The Shepherd*. These are, first, believers who are standing in the Lord but need some kind of warning, second, apostates, and, third, a group of individuals who, at best, can be said to be nondescript in their nature. Rather, instead of seeing one unchanging referent of this term in *The Shepherd*, I will argue that the term refers to all of these groups in its numerous usages in *The Shepherd*. Thus, instead of granting it an umbrella referent, I will argue that the context is actually the main determining factor in understanding its specific referent in its key occurrences in this work.

Δῖψυχος Used for Believers in *Hermas*

In a number of places in *The Shepherd*, the term δῖψυχος is actually used to refer to the person of Hermas himself. For example, in *Similitude* 6, Hermas tells us that as he was sitting in his house and glorifying Him for all the things that he had shown him, the Lord appeared to him and questioned him about his double-mindedness concerning the commandments that He had already given him (*Sim* 6.2). Here, the term appears in its verbal form, δῖψυχεῖς, which,

¹⁴ Ibid.

according to BDAG, refers to being “**uncertain about the truth of someth[ing]., to be undecided, be changeable, doubt** (of indecision about becoming a Christian or believing in specif[ic] Christian teachings or hopes, etc).”¹⁵

Obviously, since the context here is that of Hermas being doubtful about certain commands that the Lord had given him, the term here can be understood as referring to a Christian who is undecided on believing certain aspects of Christianity that have been revealed to him by the Lord. Indeed, this is emphasized by the fact that no commentator doubts that Hermas was himself a believer. For example, although Osiek notes that we do not know a lot about Hermas except the fact that he was a freeman who was a small craftsman and/or businessman, she sees his difference with other rich people in Rome during his time as being that “he is a Christian who believes he has received a revelation to communicate to his church.”¹⁶ The same sentiment is expressed by Clark who sees Hermas as a “typical Christian sinner” struggling with post-baptismal guilt.¹⁷ Even more forceful, H. P. V. Nunn concludes his study of the Shepherd of Hermas by arguing that Hermas can hardly “be regarded as an average member of the Church...”¹⁸ In other words, he is not just an ordinary believer, but a skilled Christian.¹⁹

By far, however, the largest number of references to Hermas’ double-mindedness is found in *Mandate 9*. Starting with a command of the Lord to Hermas to “Ἄρον ἀπό σεαυτοῦ τὴν

¹⁵ Walter Bauer et al., eds., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 253., s.v. *διψυχέω*.

¹⁶ Osiek, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, 22. For a thorough introduction of the sketch of Hermas’ life, see William J. Wilson, “The Career of the Prophet Hermas,” *Harvard Theological Review* 20 (1927): 21-27.

¹⁷ Kenneth Willis Clark, “The Sins of Hermas,” in *Early Christian Origins: Studies in Honor of Harold R. Willoughby*, ed. Allen Wikgrer (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1961), 104.

¹⁸ H. P. V. Nunn, “The Shepherd of Hermas,” *The Evangelical Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (1946): 121.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

διψοχίαν (‘Rid yourself of double-mindedness’)²⁰ in *Mand.* 9.1, the text goes on to mention the term διψυχος or its cognates twelve more times! The emphasis here is for Hermas not to be double-minded in his prayers and petitions to God. Hermas, of course, doubts whether God can hear his petitions and grant him his wishes when he has sinned so often against Him (*Mand.* 9.1). The implication is that Hermas has committed many sins even after becoming a believer. Indeed, this reading is understandable since one of the themes of this book is how to deal with “postbaptismal sin and repentance.”²¹ In *Mand.* 9.5, the Lord, encouraging Hermas to present his requests to Him without hesitation, tells him that those who hesitate in asking from the Lord are the “double-minded” (οἱ δίψυχοι), declaring that οὐδέν ὄλως ἐπιτυγαχάουσι τῶν αἰτημάτων αὐτῶν (‘they never obtain any of their requests’).²² Clearly, this message is meant for the Christian, who is invited to “purify the heart from the madness of the world and the words previously spoken”²³ so that his requests can be heard by the Lord.

There seems to be a slight change in the way that *The Shepherd* uses the term in verse 6 from its usage in verse 5. After reiterating that those who ask from the Lord without any double-mindedness (διψυχοῦντες) receive since they ask unhesitatingly, the Lord goes on to declare to Hermas that the double-minded person who does not repent will scarcely be saved (δυσκόλως σωθήσεται). What does he mean by the words “scarcely be saved?” Is he, for

²⁰ Michael W. Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1992), 531.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 442.

²² *Ibid.*, 533.

²³ Osiek, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, 133.

example, talking about the saved person or the unsaved? Does it refer to a person who is already a believer or not? In other words, what does the term “saved” mean here?

The adverb *δυσκόλως* means that which is hardly or attained with difficulty.²⁴ But this does not mean that it is impossible. Indeed, since the whole context here all the way from *Mand. 8* is to exhort Christians to be wholly turned to God and not to be sidetracked by their desire for other things such as wealth,²⁵ it seems that the most plausible way to take this phrase is to understand it simply as an exhortation and not stereological *per se*. Thus, as Hermas argues, when a sidetracked Christian approaches God, his heart is turned onto other things. This is why, in verse 7, the Lord begins by exhorting Hermas to cleanse himself of double-mindedness (καθάρισον οὖν τὴν καρδίαν σου ἀπὸ τῆς διψυχίας).²⁶ Indeed, this exhortation in which the Lord, according to *The Shepherd*, gives the reason as to why Christians’ petitions are not always granted, that is “the (unacknowledged) sin of the petitioner [or] temptation yielded to,”²⁷ is used in a manner that is reminiscent to the way the author of *Clement* uses the term *δίψυχος* in *1 Clem* 11.1. and 19.1.

In the *Clement* passages, the writer purports to quote from a prophet who exhorts his readers with to remember the words of the prophecy that denounce “the distrustful” and “compares the fulfillment of God’s purpose to the gradual ripening of the fruit on the vine,”²⁸

²⁴ Bauer et al., eds., *BDAG*, 265., s. v., *δυσκόλως*.

²⁵ Seitz, “Antecedents and Signification,” 214.

²⁶ Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 532.

²⁷ Seitz, “Antecedents and Significance,” 214.

²⁸ J. B. Lightfoot, ed. *The Apostolic Fathers: Part 1 Clement*, 2nd ed., vol. 2 (London: Macmillan, 1889; reprint, 1981, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House), 234-35.

promising blessings upon God’s people.²⁹ Although there are unresolved issues concerning where this quotation is taken from, it is clear that in both writers the concern for believers whose petitions the Lord does not answer because of their double-mindedness is overriding here. Thus, taking the whole context as it develops from *Mand. 8* of the *The Shepherd*, we see a seeming vicious cycle that the believer must be watchful of: “the double-minded [Christians] will not receive what they ask (v. 5), but not receiving leads to the temptation to be double-minded (v. 7); in any shape or for whatever reason, doublemindedness must be resisted.”³⁰

In a number of the Visions of *The Shepherd*, Hermas is also accused of being double-minded concerning persecution. For example, in *Vis. 4*, Hermas starts by reporting his vision concerning an upcoming persecution of the church (v. 1). As he explains, the vision started while he took his walk on the Campanian Way. After enquiring from the Lord concerning some earlier visions that He had shown him through the holy church, Hermas hears a voice telling him not to be doubleminded. He protests that he cannot be doubleminded because he is so firmly established in the Lord and he has seen glorious things (v. 4). However, as the vision of the dust and the monstrous beast³¹ (v. 6) unfolds to him, Hermas is afraid of the beast and begins to cry to the Lord, asking Him to rescue him from it. It is at that juncture that Hermas hears the Lord tell him not to be doubleminded (Μὴ δυσηχῆσαις). He concludes the section by informing his brothers and sisters that he was able to stand strong, “having put his faith in the Lord and

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Osiek, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, 133.

³¹ Ibid., 91-92. According to her, this beast is a “τύπος (“type,” “figure,” or “model”) of the coming θλίψις (“tribulation,” “suffering,” “trouble”).

remembering the great things he had taught me”³² (v. 9). Thus, this chapter is an exhortation to Christians on how they are to overcome persecution and all kinds of tribulations. According to it, this is done through faith and lack of doublemindedness. As the woman, otherwise identified as the church, explains to Hermas in *Vis.* 4.2.4-6, the Lord send his angel, Thegri, to shut the mouth of the beast “because of your faith and because you were not doubleminded.”³³ Indeed, the same formula for overcoming tribulations is prescribed to the community of believers in vv. 5b and 6, where the plural address is given.

Not only is the term διψυχος used for the Christian Hermas himself, but, also, in a number of places in *The Shepherd*, the term is used to refer to a group of Christians that are variously referred to as the “children” of Hermas (τὰ τέκνα), the “household” (ὁ οἶκος) or, occasionally, the “offspring” (τὸ σπέρμα) of Hermas.³⁴ But who are these people? According to Clark, these were actually numerous children of Hermas himself by birth.³⁵ According to him, they were born by his unnamed wife who is referred to in *Vis.* 2.2.3 as συμβίω, and variously translated as “your wife”³⁶ or “your companion.”³⁷ Osiek concurs that the reference to both Hermas’ wife and children is a reference to his actual family. She sees the instructions to Hermas

³² Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 497.

³³ *Ibid.*, 499.

³⁴ Clark, “The Sins of Hermas,” 108.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 109.

³⁶ Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 465.

³⁷ Clark, “The Sins of Hermas,” 109.

to, from the moment of the vision, be seeing his wife as his “sister,” (ἀδελφῆ), as referring to “sexual abstinence.”³⁸

There is no reason as to why we should not take these to be indeed members of Hermas’ own household. According to the Lord, these children have committed multiple sins. These sins include rejecting God and blaspheming the Lord (*Vis.* 2.3.2). By so doing, they have betrayed their parents (ἤκοθσαν προδόται γονέων). It is possible that the betrayal in question here is that those children did not prove faithful at the face of persecution “because of their material interests.”³⁹ In any case, Hermas is “called upon to ‘convert’ (ἐπιστρέφειν) his family or household.”⁴⁰ The Lord promises that if they repent, then the Lord will forgive them (*Vis.* 2.2.4). Indeed, it is very important to notice how the Lord applies this general principle to “all the saints” (πᾶσιν τοῖς ἁγίοις). Thus, as the Lord is quoted as saying, “all the saints who have sinned up to this day will be forgiven, if they repent with all their hearts and drive away double-mindedness (διψυχίας) from their heart”⁴¹ (*Vis.* 2.2.4). This parallelism between Hermas’ household and “all the saints” is very important in this context because it militates against the thought that Hermas’ household is of unbelievers. Hence, as Clark explains,

[Although] the English term ‘convert’ conveys the thought that his [Hermas’] family still are heathen and that he is to make them Christians...the context of the apocalypse shows that this is not the case, but rather the reference is to the need for post-baptismal

³⁸ Osiek, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, 54.

³⁹ Ibid. Indeed, as Bauchkam notes, “It may be noted that in Vision IV δίψυχος is closer to its meaning in Jas 1,8 and in the prophetic sayings quoted in 1 Clem 23.2 and 2 Clem 11.2 than is usual in Hermas: the danger of becoming doubleminded, i.e. of wavering in faith under the threat of persecution,” R. J. Bauckham, “The Great Tribulation in the Shepherd of Hermas,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 25 (1974): 32.

⁴⁰ Clark, “The Sins of Hermas,” 108.

⁴¹ Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 465.

correction and reform. [Therefore], their reform is the personalizing of the universal message of the book.⁴²

Therefore, although at first sight there can be an impression that Hermas' family is unsaved, a closer observation reveals that they are indeed Christians struggling with post-baptismal sins. And the Lord applies the term δίψυχος on them.

A final group of Christians to whom the term δίψυχος is applied in *The Shepherd* is that of Christian leaders. Again, in *Vis.* 2.2.6, the Lord instructs Hermas to speak with the officials of the church (προηγούμενοις τῆς ἐκκλησίας) in order that “they may direct their ways in righteousness, in order that they may receive the promises in full with much glory.”⁴³ The implication of the plural here is that of a collegial form of church leadership of which Hermas does not appear to be part, yet is given a vision to exhort them against double-mindedness. They are, instead, exhorted to “patiently endure” (ἄσοι ὑπομένετε), because, if they do so without being double-minded, they will “gain entrance with the holy angels.”⁴⁴

In conclusion, I have argued that the first referent of the term δίψυχος in *Hermas* is that of Christians of various categories. I have argued that in a number of places, it refers to

⁴² Clark, “The Sins of Hermas,” 108.

⁴³ Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 465. The term προηγούμενοις, according to BDAG, means “to be in a position of leadership, *preside*.” (Bauer et al., eds., *BDAG*, 869., s. v., προήεομαι. Furthermore, as Osiek elucidates, “the plural term for church leaders [here], probably synonymous with earlier προῖστάμενοι (‘presiders’ or ‘leaders,’ Rom 12:8; 1 Thess 5:12) and πρεσβύτεροι (‘elders’), appears again in *Vis.* 3.9.7 linked and perhaps synonymous with πρωτοκαθεδρῖται (‘those who hold the first place’)” (Osiek, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, 55; Carolyn Osiek, “The Second Century Through the Eyes of Hermas: Continuity and Change,” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 20 (1990).

⁴⁴ Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 465. There is some discussion concerning the meaning of the phrase ἡ πάροδος μετὰ τῶν ἀγγέλων τῶν ἁγίων (“gain entrance with the holy angels”). For example, while Jardine sees it as referring to the journey of their souls after their death, and, thus, translates it as “their departure may be handed up by the holy angels,” (William Jardine, *Shepherd of Hermas: The Gentle Apocalypse: A Vision of Millennial Hope From Ancient Christianity* (Redwood City, CA: Proteus 1992), 33., Osiek understands it as the company that they will enjoy at the completion of their spiritual journey, translating it as “their heavenly destiny...assured in company with angels” (Osiek, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, 55. Whichever way we take it, Hermas' point is the same: there are immense rewards for Christian leaders who quit being double-minded.

Hermas himself, a Roman Christian living in the Second Century A.D. I have also argued that the term is used in other places to refer to actual members of Hermas' own household. These include his wife and children who are struggling with post-baptismal sins. Finally, I have argued that The *Shepherd* also uses the term δίψυχος to refer to church leaders, of whom Hermas is not a member. These are most likely the elders who presided over the church at Rome, whom the Lord, through Hermas, encourages to be faithful and quit being double-minded, promising great rewards. Thus, for all those groups, the exhortation is the same, albeit stated using various phraseology such as; καθάρισον οὖν τὴν καρδίαν σου ἀπὸ τῆς διψυχίας (“cleanse your heart of double-mindedness”) (*Man.* 9.2.7), ἐξ ὅλης τῆς καρδίας μετανοεῖν καὶ αἴρειν ἀπὸ τῆς καρδίας αὐτῶν τὰς διψυχίας (“if they repent with all their heart and drive away double-mindedness from their heart”) (*Vis.* 2.2.4).⁴⁵

Δίψυχος Used for Apostates in *Hermas*

The second category of the referent of δίψυχος in *The Shepherd* is the apostates. The most explicit example of this is the Lady's explanation of Hermas' vision of the Tower (*Vis.* 3.3-7). Particularly, in *Vis.* 3.7.1-6, the Lady explains the different groupings of the stones that Hermas saw either being used to build the tower or being rejected by the builder of the tower.⁴⁶ First, there are those kinds of stones that fit easily into the tower. These ones the Lady identifies as the “apostles” and “bishops” and “teachers” and “deacons” (ἀποστόλοι καὶ ἐπίσκοποι καὶ διδάσκαλοι καὶ διάκονοι), some of whom have fallen asleep (*Vis.* 3.5.1).⁴⁷ These, as the Lady

⁴⁵ Seitz, “Antecedents and Signification,” 214.

⁴⁶ For a structural analysis of the grouping of these stones, see Osiek, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, 70.

⁴⁷ Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 483.

explains, fit into the tower easily. The second group comprises of many other kinds of stones that “are not immediately acceptable.”⁴⁸ Again, this group consists of two subcategories. First, there are those stones which represent Christians who have committed postbaptismal sins and who are “aware of their sins and wish to change their life, but have not yet done so, or have not yet completed the process.”⁴⁹ Definitely, there is hope for the usability of these stones, depending on whether they repent or not.

The second subcategory in this group consists of stones that, due to their actions, are rejected by God. Of particular interest to us here are those in this subcategory who are identified as “apostates” who have “rebelled against the living God” (ἀποστάντες τες τοῦ θεοῦ ζῶντος)⁵⁰ in *Vis.* 3.7.2. The term ἀποσπάω, from where we derive the verb ἀποστάντες, when used in the middle voice, means to “tear oneself away...withdraw.”⁵¹ Thus, as the Lady explains to Hermas, these kinds of people, because of being doubleminded (διψυχίας), have been thrown far from the tower and are falling onto the road and “rolling off to wastelands” (*Vis.* 3.7.1).

Therefore, in addition to the term δίψυχος being used in reference to Christians, whether strong or sinning, it is also used to refer to the apostates. Indeed, depending on how the phrase εἰς τέλος is translated (translated variously as “completely” or “finally” rebelled against the living God), there is possibly no chance of these kind of double-minded people ever coming back to the Lord. This seems to be the thought of next line, in which *The Shepherd* declares in *Vis.* 3.7.2, that “the thought no longer enters their heart to repent on account of their licentious

⁴⁸ Osiek, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, 71.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 71-72.

⁵⁰ Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 483.

⁵¹ Bauer et al., eds., *BDAG*, 120., s. v., ἀποσπάω.

desires and the evil deeds they do.”⁵² According to Brox, these kinds of people also the same as the ones mentioned in *Sim* 8.6.4 and 9.19.1.⁵³

Δίψυχος Used to Refer to a Nondescript Group in *Hermas*

Finally, it seems that there are some cases in *Hermas* whereby the term δίψυχος is also used to refer to a nondescript group in *The Shepherd*. Not picked by many commentators, this is the rarest usage of this phrase in *The Shepherd*. As it is used in this manner, it seems unclear on whether it is referring to believers or unbelievers. It is these double-minded people that seem to be the kind that *Hermas* is talking about in *Mand.* 11.⁵⁴

As the Mandate opens, the Shepherd appears to *Hermas* and shows him what looks like a bench. He explains to him that the people who are seated on the bench are “faithful” (πιστοί). However, these are contrasted with the one seated on the chair, who is described as the “false prophet” (ψευδοπροφήτης). In other words, the scene is presented in such a way to imply some form of a classroom instruction whereby the false prophet instructs the faithful.⁵⁵ The false prophet is presented as attempting to destroy the “mind of God’s servants, that is...the mind of

⁵² Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 483. Of course, apostasy was a major problem in the early church, especially in the face of persecution or, as this verse seems to imply, because of materialism for the rich Christians. For a discussion of biblical views on apostasy, see Robert A. Peterson, “Apostasy,” *Presbyterion* 19, no. 1 (1993); Robert A. Peterson, “Apostasy in the Hebrews Warning Passages,” *Presbyterion* 34, no. 1 (2008). For a discussion of the concept of wealth in *The Shepherd of Hermas*, see Carolyn Osiek, *Rich and Poor in The Shepherd of Hermas: An Exegetical-Social Investigation*, The Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series, vol. 15 (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1983).

⁵³ Norbert Brox, *Der Hirt des Hermas*, vol. 7, Kommentar zu den Apostolischen Vätern (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1991), 137.

⁵⁴ For a thorough discussion of this Mandate, see J. Reiling, *Hermas and Christian Prophecy: A Study of the Eleventh Mandate*, NovTSup 37 (Leiden: Brill, 1973).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 31.

the double-minded, not believers.”⁵⁶ The question is, are the ‘servants of God,’ (τῶν δούλων τοῦ θεοῦ) the same as the ‘faithful’ ones already mentioned? According to Reiling, there is a progression of thought here with the terminology. “The first time,” he writes, πιστοί refers to Christian believers in general; but it is replaced by δούλων τοῦ θεοῦ, and this gives the author an opportunity to use πιστοί a second time, but now a more specific sense which is dearer to him, namely that of faithful Christians with whom the double-minded believers are contrasted.”⁵⁷

In verse 2, the Shepherd explains to Hermas further the behavior of these double-minded without disclosing whether they are believers or not. They are said to be coming to the false prophet as though they are coming to a fortune teller (μάντιν).⁵⁸ But he is not directly called a soothsayer. Indeed, it is the double-minded themselves who are condemned for this practice in verse 2. Thus, as they approach him, and because he does not have the power of the divine spirit in himself, he “answers them in accordance with their questions and their wicked desires, and fills their souls just as they themselves wish.”⁵⁹ The implication here is that since the false prophet has an evil spirit in him, the result of their visit to him is that the evil spirit in him succeeds in converting them. Thus, he succeeds with the double-minded in destroying their δίανοια, something he had failed to do with those who are strong in their faith.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 539-41.

⁵⁷ Reiling, *Hermas and Christian Prophecy*, 31-32.

⁵⁸ There is a lot of discussion concerning the meaning of the term μάντιν. As Holmes notes, there is a textual issue here. While A reads μάντιν (“diviner”), L2 (E) read “divination spirit” and L1 reads μαγον (“magician”). However, the critical reading of A seems appropriate. Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 142, footnote. This is in contrast to Dibelius’ efforts to identify the false prophet as a soothsayer (see M. Dibelius, *Der Hirt des Hermas*, vol. 4, Handbuch zum Neuen Testament: Die Apostolischen Väter (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1923).

⁵⁹ Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 541.

⁶⁰ Reiling, *Hermas and Christian Prophecy*, 23.

As more characteristics are revealed concerning the double-minded here, the reader is left wondering whether they are weak believers who are being led astray by the false prophet or they are his evil followers who are not believers at all. They are said to be, in contrast to those “who are strong in the faith of the Lord,” practicing fortune telling and committing the sin of idolatry (*Mand.* 11.4). The term idolatry (εἰδωλολατροῦντες) means “**image worship** [or] **idolatry**.”⁶¹ Indeed, this is one of the most serious sins that a human being can ever be accused of, Christian or not. In this situation, these nondescript double-minded individuals are described as practicing idolatry by consulting a false prophet. In so doing, they are described as lacking the truth and being senseless (*Mand.* 11.4). Indeed, very importantly, these people are described as frequently changing their minds (πυκνῶς μετανοοῦσι) in their response to the enticement of the false prophet. But since this is their ongoing lifestyle, it makes it hard to classify them. Thus, as Osiek notes, “The doubleminded do so (πυκνῶς μετανοοῦσι): either they go through the actions of true conversion without lasting results (as in *Vis.* 1.1.9), or else the verb occurs here in one of its rare appearances with the more general meaning of changing one’s mind, being changeable.”⁶² In short, the doubleminded people described in this Mandate are nondescript. They defy classifications either as believers or as non-believers.

Conclusion

I have argued in this paper that although there has been a tendency to treat the referent of the term δῆψυχος monolithically (that is, solely to Christians who are weak in their faith) in *The Shepherd of Hermas*, other referents of this term are also evident. I have argued that

⁶¹ Bauer et al., eds., *BDAG*, 280., s. v., εἰδωλολατρία.

⁶² Osiek, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, 143.

in addition to referring to Christians of different levels of spiritual growth, the term also clearly refers to people who are considered apostates, and, therefore, some without the hope of redemption in *The Shepherd*. Finally, I have also contended that the term refers to another group of individuals who are nondescript. They are neither seen as clear believers or not. They just defy classification. But they also are treated as δίψυχος. Thus, instead of treating this term monolithically, it will be helpful to remember that its referents are various in *The Shepherd of Hermas*.

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