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Chance E. Bonar
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Introduction

> I said: "Master, would I have been able to understand these things? Nor could some other person, even if they were extremely intelligent, be able to understand them."
>
> —*Shepherd of Hermas*, *Similitude* 5.5.4 (58.4)

An enslaved person, living in Rome in the fourth century CE, was punished by their enslaver for attempting to flee from their involuntary bondage and exploitation of labor. In order to prevent this from happening again, the enslaver forced the enslaved person to wear a metal collar with a bronze tag. The collar and tag had already been used once before – likely for a different enslaved person. On the already inscribed side of the tag, probably used during the reign of Constantine, it reads: "Detain me because I fled, and return me to Victor the acolyte at the *dominicum* of Clement ☧."[1] Newly engraved on the other side for this enslaved person was: "I fled from Euplogius, from the office of the prefects of the city ☧."[2] Given the size and

[1] *CIL* 15.7192: *tene me quia fug(i) et reboca me Victori acolito a(d) dominicu(m) Clementis* ☧. The symbol ☧ is known as the chi-rho, and represents the first two letters of the Greek term Χριστός ("Christ"). It became a popular Christian symbol in the fourth century. On this inscription, see Henricus Dressel, *Inscriptiones Urbis Romae Latinae: Instrumentum Domesticum,* CIL 15.2 (Berlin: Georgium Reimerum, 1899), 901; D. L. Thurmond, "Some Roman Slave Collars in *CIL,*" *Athenaeum* 82 (1994): 480–81. Giovanni Battista di Rossi (*Bullettino della Archeologia Cristiana*, Vol. 1.4 [Rome: Tipi del Salviucci, 1863]: 25–31) demonstrates that the *dominicum* refers to the Basilica of St. Clement/Basilica di San Clemente al Laterano. We have around 45 examples of such collars from the fourth and fifth centuries, mostly found in central Italy and North Africa.

[2] *CIL* 15.7192: *fugi Euplogio ex o(fficio) pr(ae)f(ecti) urb(i)* ☧.

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location of the collar and tag, the enslaved person themselves could hardly see it, since it was meant to function as "a visual act . . . to permanently mark the slave in a certain way for all others to see."[3] This enslaved person, whose name is lost to us, was hardly alone in experiencing this practice of marking-via-collar well attested by Italian Christians, which emerged as a substitute for tattooing criminalized and enslaved persons under Constantine.[4]

Enslaved persons such as the unnamed bearer of this collar – willingly or not – likely participated in Christian practices, went to Christian spaces, or heard readings of Christian texts. As scholars like Sandra Joshel, Lauren Hackworth Petersen, and Katherine Shaner have argued in depth, enslaved persons were ubiquitous in the Roman world and are made invisible to scholars by the lack of material evidence they left behind – that "city spaces are rhetorical spaces that attempt to persuade viewers and dwellers alike of enslaved invisibility and compliance with kyriarchial expectations."[5] The same holds true for deathscapes, cemeteries, and catacombs where inhabitants of the Roman Empire gathered to bury, mourn, and perform ritual practices for, with, and through enslaved persons.[6]

One of the spaces some enslaved or formerly enslaved persons likely spent time in the Italian landscape is the Catacomb of San Gennaro in Neapolis (modern day Naples), roughly a two-day travel south of the

[3] Jennifer Trimble, "The Zoninus Collar and the Archaeology of Roman Slavery," *AJA* 120.3 (2016): 462.

[4] *Cod. Theod.* 9.40.2. On tattooing and collaring enslaved persons who attempted self-emancipation, see Julia Hillner, "Die Berufsangaben und Adressen auf den stadtrömischen Sklavenhalsbändern," *Historia* 50.2 (2001): 193–216, esp. 196–205; Y. Rivière, "Recherche et identification des esclaves fugitifs dans l'Empire romain," in *L'information et la mer dans le monde antique*, ed. J. Andraeu and C. Virlouvet, CÉFR 297 (Rome: École Française de Rome, 2002), 115–96, esp. 160–61; Christopher P. Jones, "*Stigma:* Tattooing and Branding in Graeco–Roman Antiquity," *JRS* 77 (1987): 139–55. On the tattooing of persons enslaved to deities, see Herodotus, *Hist.* 2.113.1; Lucian, *Syr. d.* 59; Rev 13: 16–17.

[5] Sandra R. Joshel and Lauren Hackworth Petersen, *The Material Life of Roman Slaves* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 3; Katherine Shaner, *Enslaved Leadership in Early Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 1–22, quote on 3. See also Page DuBois, *Slaves and Other Objects* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 6 on how "invisibility and ubiguity are mutually constitutive" for the traditional lack of understanding of enslavement by both ancient and modern thinkers.

[6] On enslaved and freedperson burials in Roman catacombs, see Michael Flexsenhar III, *Christians in Caesar's Household: The Emperors' Slaves in the Makings of Christianity* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2019), 103–20.

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imperial capital of Rome.[7] While the Neapolitan tomb space was used by others in the early Roman imperial era, by the third century Christians were expanding the catacombs, burying their dead, and decorating their tombs here. By the fourth century, an underground church was constructed in the catacomb complex just a few meters away from the first Christian catacomb space in the complex. In that room, one of the oldest rooms of the catacomb, was a fresco of three women building a tower out of quarried stones. The fresco – alongside others in the room depicting Adam and Eve or David and Goliath – has often been believed to be a scene from the *Shepherd of Hermas*, a popular early Christian text in which there are two visionary scenes of women involved in the construction of a tower that represents the Assembly (Ἐκκλησία, often translated as "Church").[8] While not exactly representative of either scene, the depiction seems closer to the narrative provided by an angelic interlocutor called the Shepherd that occurs near the end of the text. In this visionary experience, the Shepherd explains to an enslaved man named Hermas how the tower represents the assembly of believers – built by women who represent various virtues that one must acquire to enter the tower – and that the tower is constructed from the stones of twelve mountains that represent various types of people. An enslaved or formerly enslaved

[7] Calculated via ORBIS, Stanford's geospatial network model of the Roman world (https://orbis.stanford.edu/), based on the fastest mode of travel (via boat) in the summer, using the nearby ports of Ostia and Puteoli to cover roughly 270km. On the presence of enslaved persons around Campania, see Joshel and Petersen, *The Material Life*, 60–64, 162–66.

[8] Carolyn Osiek, *The Shepherd of Hermas,* Hermeneia (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1999), 7–8 discusses the fresco and notes that "no one has raised any serious doubts that the painting does indeed depict the building of the tower from *Hermas*." Robert D. Heaton, *The Shepherd of Hermas as* Scriptura Non Grata: *From Popularity in Early Christianity to Exclusion from the New Testament Canon* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2023), 55–68 suggests that the painters may not have had a specific scene in mind from the *Shepherd,* but produced something freestyle that pulled imagery from the text. On the catacomb and its fresco, see Hans Achelis, *Die Katakomben von Neapel* (Leipzig: Verlag Karl W. Hieremann, 1936), 54–56, Tafeln 8–10; Umberto M. Fasola, *Le Catacombe di S. Gennaro a Capodimonte* (Rome: Banco di Santo Spirito, 1974), 26, 29, Tav. 2; Antonio Bellucci, "La notizia a Napoli del ΠΟΙΜΗΝ di Erma e la datazione delle piu antiche pitture del cimitero di S. Gennaro," *Atti del IV Congresso Nazionale di Studi Romani* (Rome: Instituto di Studi Romani, 1938), 111. Fasola dates the room in which the fresco is painted (A1) to the date second or early third century CE (18). For the tower scene, see *Vis.* 3.2.4–3.8.11 (10.4–16.11); *Sim.* 9.1.1–9.32.5 (78.1–109.5). All uses of the Greek text of the *Shepherd* in this book come from the most recent critical edition: Emanuela Prinzivalli and Manliio Simonetii, *Seguendo Gesù: Testi Cristiani delle Origini,* Vol. 2 (Mondadori: Fondazione Lorenzo Valla, 2015), 220–448. English translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

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person, like the unnamed collar-bearer in fourth-century Rome, and other early Jesus adherents entering this catacomb room likely heard the *Shepherd* recited for moral exhortation and catechetical education in a local Neapolitan church.[9] Some who heard the story and associated the Neapolitan fresco with the *Shepherd* may have puzzled over which of the stone's virtues they embodied, as well as how they could best live their lives in order to be incorporated into the tower and accomplish the *Shepherd*'s common refrain: to "live to God" (ζῆν τῷ θεῷ).

An enslaved or formerly enslaved person – or even those more cognizant of the pervasiveness of enslavement in the Roman imperial world – might have had other phrases from recitations of the *Shepherd* come to mind when they encountered this fresco.[10] From the tower vision itself, they might recall how the Shepherd "explains and speaks to God's enslaved persons" (ἔδειξα καὶ ἐλάλησα τοῖς δούλοις τοῦ θεοῦ) so that they might live.[11] They might remember how the Shepherd claimed that the stones from the eleventh mountain – people who suffered for the name of the Son of God – are superior to others because they refused to deny God the enslaver (κύριος), because "the very thought that an enslaved person might deny their own enslaver is evil" (πονηρὰ γὰρ ἡ βουλὴ αὕτη, ἵνα δοῦλος κύριον ἴδιον ἀρνήσηται).[12] They might think of the twelve women dressed in black from the tower vision, counterparts of the virtuous women who represent various vices, and how the Shepherd claims that "God's enslaved persons who bear the these names [i.e., Grief, Evil, Irascibility] will see the kingdom of God but will not enter it."[13] When

[9] For examples of enslaved persons participating in household and civic *collegia* for the worship of deities across the Mediterranean, see Richard S. Ascough, Philip A. Harland, and John S. Kloppenborg, *Associations in the Greco-Roman World: A Sourcebook* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2012), 10–11, 42, 82–84, 120, 194–98, 210–11. The commonality of the *Shepherd* as a catechetical and instructive text is discussed further below in this introduction.

[10] My anecdote at the opening of this book is purposefully hypothetical because, as scholars of ancient slavery recognize, our data about the lives and thoughts of most individual enslaved persons in antiquity are lost or obscured under the textual and archaeological remains that primarily present the perspective of the enslaver. As Joseph Marchal puts it in his own scholarship on the possibility of Paul conversing with enslaved Christians at Philippi, "this study can move from the degrees of imprecision, vagueness, and uncertainty that will, by necessity, surround these exact figures toward the places scholars *can* know much more about ancient slavery" (Joseph A. Marchal, "Slaves as Wo/men and Unmen: Reflecting upon Euodia, Syntyche, and Epaphroditus at Philippi," in *The People beside Paul: The Philippian Assembly from Below*, ed. Joseph A. Marchal [Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2015], 146).

[11] *Sim.* 9.33.1 (110.1).

[12] *Sim.* 9.28.4 (105.4). See also *Vis.* 2.2.8 (6.8).

[13] *Sim.* 9.15.4 (92.4).

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they hear that God's enslaved persons can only live if they "bear the names" (φορεῖν τὰ ὀνόματα) of the virtuous women, they might consider the experience of bearing the name of their own enslaver upon their body by means of collars and wonder what makes "bearing the name" salvific.[14] While for some the narrative of the *Shepherd of Hermas* may represent something worth surrounding oneself with images of at one's death and asking visitors to reflect upon, for others the text may be a constant reminder of their lived realities of enslavement, oppression, and exclusion. Enslavement to God and the mechanisms by which that enslavement was depicted in early Christian literature worked to normalize the ideologies and practices of enslavement.

GOALS AND THESIS OF THE BOOK

The *Shepherd of Hermas*, a first- or second-century Christian text written in Greek and purportedly from Rome, is a text that tends to confuse and frustrate historians of early Christian history. This 114-chapter collection of visionary and revelatory experiences by an enslaved man named Hermas is one of the most well-read early Christian texts not to have made it into the 27-book New Testament canon as it stands today, leaving scholars to ask: for what purposes did early Christians read and disseminate this text?[15] Who had interest in Hermas's extensive visions and dialogues with various divine beings about topics as disparate as the construction of a stone tower, the impact of anger on the body, which types of fear are acceptable or not, and how the archangel Michael used sticks from a willow tree to determine the ethical purity of believers?

Many academic readers of the *Shepherd* over the last century have expressed their own distaste in the text's length, lack of theological sophistication, and dearth of stories about Jesus and his apostles. Such critiques claimed that Hermas and his text would have led to the dissolution of the church worldwide because of Hermas's lack of "intellectual quality,"[16] that Hermas "is a dilettante author who is simply unable to

[14] E.g., *CIL* 15.7179: *servus sum domni mei Scholastici v(iri) sp(ectabilis). Tene me ne fugiam de Domo Pulverata.* ("I am an enslaved person of my enslaver Scholasticus, a remarkable man. Detain me lest I flee from the Pulverata household").

[15] I will explore the *Shepherd*'s popularity below, but for now see Osiek, *Shepherd*, 1: "No other noncanonical writing was as popular before the fourth century as the *Shepherd of Hermas*. It is the most frequently attested postcanonical text in the surviving Christian manuscripts of Egypt well into the fifth century."

[16] William Jerome Wilson, "The Career of the Prophet Hermas," *HTR* 20.1 (1927): 35.

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compose a balanced work of literature,"[17] that the *Shepherd* is nothing more than "pottering mediocrity,"[18] is a "rambling prophetic work which cannot easily be systematized,"[19] "often appears confused and obscure,"[20] "cumbersome texts by any account,"[21] and that "its length, monotony, and the pedantic style of large sections of it pose serious obstacles to all but the most devoted reader."[22] Such scholarly boredom and frustration with the *Shepherd*'s contents and its author have often stood in the way of robust academic interest in a text written contemporaneously to literature that ended up in the New Testament and that, as I will show below, was heavily used by late ancient Christians.

Despite confusion about how to make sense of the *Shepherd*, some scholars have offered in-depth analyses of the text in order to understand its message. Many scholars have found repentance (μετάνοια) to be the key theme of the *Shepherd* (with 156 total uses of the term throughout the text), and have suggested that the text is meant to urge other Christians to repent before the end times.[23] Others, like Norbert Brox, see repentance

[17] Antonius Hilhorst, "Erotic Elements in the *Shepherd of Hermas*," in *Groningen Colloquia on the Novel IX*, ed. H. Hofmann and M. Zimmerman (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1998), 193.

[18] Burnett H. Streeter, *The Primitive Church, Studies with Special Reference to the Origins of the Christian Ministry: The Hewett Lectures, 1928* (London: Macmillan, 1929), 203; see also Martin Dibelius, *Der Hirt des Hermas*, Die apostolischen Väter 4 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1923), esp. 423–35; Christoph Markschies, *Christian Theology and Its Institutions in the Early Roman Empire: Prolegomena to a History of Early Christian Theology*, BMSSEC (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2015), 216 for similar claims that link the simplicity of the *Shepherd*'s message to its theme of repentance.

[19] Leslie W. Barnard, "The Shepherd of Hermas in Recent Study," *HeytJ* 9 (1968): 32.

[20] Philippe Henne, "La polysémie allégorique dans le *Pasteur* d'Hermas," *ETL* 65.1 (1989): 131: "Le *Pasteur* d'Hermas paraît souvent confus et obscur." All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

[21] David E. Aune, "The Apocalypse of John and the Problem of Genre," *Semeia* 36 (1986): 78.

[22] Carolyn Osiek, "The Genre and Function of the *Shepherd of Hermas*," *Semeia* 36 (1986): 113.

[23] For a summary of many of these points, see Osiek, *Shepherd*, 28–30, 37. For examples of repentance treated as the *Shepherd*'s core message, see Robert Joly, *Le Pasteur: Introduction, Text Critique, Traduction et Notes*, 2nd ed., SC 53 (Paris: Cerf, 1997), 22; Diane B. Wudel, "The Seduction of Self-Control: Hermas and the Problem of Desire," *R & T* 11.1 (2004): 39–49; Filipe N. Silve and Pedro Paulo A. Funari, "Aspectos Apocalípticos e Sociais n'O Pastor' de Hermas," *Revista Est. Fil. e Hist. da Antiguidade, Campinas* 31 (2017): 111–31, esp. 112; Andrew Crislip, "*The Shepherd of Hermas* and Early Christian Emotional Formation," in *Studia Patristica* 83, ed. Markus Vincent. Vol. 9: Emotions; ed. Yannis Papadogiannakis. (Leuven: Peeters, 2017), 231; Jörg Rüpke, "Der Hirte des Hermas: Autorenprofil und Textstrategien eines Visionärs des zweiten Jahrhunderts n. Chr.," in *Autoren in religiösen literarischen Texten*

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as central but not the only theme present: "The subject of sin – repentance – improvement has clearly dominated up to this point, but the statements on this are sometimes vague, and other times inconsistent and weak."[24] Still others have treated repentance in the *Shepherd* as the beginnings of formal ecclesiastical procedures of rituals of penitence and reincorporation into a Christian community, although such readings remain in the minority and are often based upon how one early Christian writer in particular (Tertullian of Carthage) attacked the *Shepherd*'s use in his own North African community.[25] Mark Grundeken, in his examination of community building in the *Shepherd*, has taken one more step in line with the history of scholarship on the *Shepherd*'s penitential focus and suggested that baptism is central to the text's concept of repentance.[26] As with the idea of ritual penitence, however, its applicability to the entirety of the *Shepherd* is both shaped by Tertullian's third-century debates over the acceptability of post-baptismal repentance in North African congregations and stems from a single passage of the *Shepherd*: *Mandate* 4.3 (31).[27] Still others, like Lage Pernveden, have pushed against the dominance of the repentance reading of the *Shepherd* by suggesting that participation in the ecclesial structure is the true goal of the text.[28]

Along with highlighting the themes of repentance, baptism, and ritual penance, two other substantial interpretative directions have been taken.

der späthellenistischen und der frühkaiserzeitlichen Welt: Zwölf Fallstudien, ed. Eve-Marie Becker and Jörg Rüpke (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 181–97. For a fuller treatment of repentance in the *Shepherd*, see Jonathon Lookadoo, *The Shepherd of Hermas: A Literary, Historical, and Theological Handbook* (London: T&T Clark, 2021), 167–86.

[24] Norbert Brox, *Der Hirt des Hermas: Übersetzt und erklärt*, Kommentar zu den Apostolischen Vätern (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), 89: "Das Thema Sünde – Buße – Besserung dominiert bis hierher zwar schon deutlich, die Aussagen dazu sind aber teils vage, teils uneinheitlich und schwach profiliert."

[25] Bernhard Poschmann, *Paenitentia Secunda: Die kirchliche Busse im ältesten Christentum bis Cyprian und Origenes*, Theophania 1 (Bonn: Hanstein, 1940), 134–204; Karl Rahner, 'The Penitential Teaching of the Shepherd of Hermas," *Theological Investigations* 15 (1982): 57–113. See esp. Tertullian, *On Modesty* 10 and 20. On Tertullian's use of and response to the *Shepherd*, see Lookadoo, *The Shepherd,* 38–40.

[26] Mark Grundeken, *Community Building in the* Shepherd of Hermas: *A Critical Study of Some Key Aspects*, VCSup 131 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 128–40.

[27] On Tertullian's stance on post-baptismal forgiveness, see Geoffrey Dunn, *Tertullian*, The Early Church Father Series (London: Routledge, 2004), 38.

[28] Lage Pernveden, *The Concept of the Church in the Shepherd of Hermas* (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1966), 298, whose claims are important for my argument at the end of Chapter 4.

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The first explores the socioeconomic history underlying the *Shepherd* with particular interest in its treatment of the rich and poor. For example, scholars like Carolyn Osiek and Jörg Rüpke find Hermas condemning how the wealthy in his Roman community treat the poor. Rüpke in particular begins to map out how Hermas's visions might stem from local Italian topography and occupations, highlighting agricultural and salt mining contexts.[29] Jonathon Lookadoo builds upon these arguments and suggests that agricultural tenants were likely among the *Shepherd*'s original audience, given the types of imagery that Hermas used when recording and transmitting his visionary experiences and divinely given commandments.[30]

Another approach builds upon the prominence of repentance in the *Shepherd* and asks: What is repentance aiming toward? In his recent book on the *Shepherd*'s transformation from a popular to an excluded text in late antiquity, Robert Heaton suggests scholars pay attention to how the *Shepherd* urges readers to inculcate particular virtues. As he puts it: "It [i.e., the *Shepherd*] was *the* book of practical salvation" and was "a paraenetic roadmap for the believer and a powerful fantasy-image through which to conceptualize the soteriological end-game."[31] Repentance aims at doing, thinking, and feeling differently than before; it is the *process* but not the *end goal* for the text, as it has so often been treated. Heaton especially builds upon Patricia Cox Miller's psychological reading based upon the dreams in the *Shepherd*, in which she foregrounds salvation as Hermas's central concern and the thematic fountain from which the rest of the text flows.[32]

Both of these approaches contribute substantially to our understanding of the *Shepherd* in two ways: they take into account the social context in which the *Shepherd* may have been written, and urge scholars to consider the types of subjects that the *Shepherd*'s exhortatory ethical material

[29] Carolyn Osiek, *Rich and Poor in the* Shepherd of Hermas: *An Exegetical-Social Investigation*, CBQMS 15 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1983); Jörg Rüpke, "Apokalyptische Salzberge: Zum sozialen Ort und zur literarischen Strategie des 'Hirten des Hermas,'" *ARG* 1 (1999): 148–60.

[30] Lookadoo, *Shepherd*, 60–61.

[31] Heaton, *Shepherd*, xxxi and 21, respectively.

[32] Patricia Cox Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity: Studies in the Imagination of a Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 131–47, esp. 132 on Hermas's question of how to be saved as the prompt for the entire *Shepherd*; Patricia Cox Miller, "'All the Words Were Frightful': Salvation by Dreams in the Shepherd of Hermas," *VC* 42 (1988): 327–38.

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hopes to mold. Such scholarship has pointed to the inculcation of virtue, the distribution of material wealth and treatment of the poor, and a concern for achieving salvation before the eschaton.

In this book, I build upon such scholarship and put forward two additional points that I think are central for understanding not only the *Shepherd*, but early Christianity more broadly. Ancient Mediterranean slavery is a significant sociohistorical context for the *Shepherd*'s composition and literary content, and enslavement to God is central to the *Shepherd*'s crafting of Christian subjects as virtuous believers. This focus on enslavement does not negate the arguments of other scholars, but demonstrates that slavery is a key component that ought to be accounted for when analyzing the *Shepherd*'s treatment of God and believers. As a text that depicts itself as a set of revelatory instructions that late ancient Christians treated as a catechetical text and guide for Christian living, understanding how the *Shepherd* urges Christians to see communal and individual life as discursively built upon enslavement is all the more important to investigate.

My central thesis is that the *Shepherd of Hermas* crafts the ideal Christian subject within the discursive context of ancient Mediterranean slavery. I suggest that the *Shepherd* participates in contemporaneous Greek and Roman practices, discourses, and logics of enslavement through how it portrays the relationship between God and believers as that of enslaver and enslaved persons. In doing so, I read the *Shepherd* in a way that foregrounds and makes explicit language of enslavement, as well as interrogates how the *Shepherd* conceptualizes obedient enslavement to God as a goal worth achieving. My approach to translation makes this foregrounding visible. The *Shepherd* calls God a κύριος (*kurios*), a term that I will primarily define and translate throughout as "enslaver" or "master," and refers to believers as "God's enslaved persons" (οἱ δοῦλοι τοῦ θεοῦ).

The *Shepherd* makes three moves within the discourse of Mediterranean slavery that I will explore throughout the following chapters: (1) the *what* of enslavement; (2) the *how* of enslavement; and (3) the *effects* of enslavement. By "the *what* of enslavement," I mean the characteristics of enslaved persons that are disseminated and perpetuated within a particular field of discourse – characteristics that often become stereotypical of the enslaved in ancient literature. "The *how* of enslavement" refers to the means by which people become enslaved and the mechanisms by which they are subjected and oppressed. Finally, "the *effects* of enslavement" refers to some of the consequences of existing as an

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enslaved person in a world populated by the enslaved and the free, and how enslaved persons navigate and negotiate within such a space.

The *Shepherd*'s crafting of Christian subjects through the discourse of enslavement is expressed extensively in how the text describes how God's enslaved persons are supposed to behave and relate to God. The writer of the *Shepherd* participates in a broader Mediterranean discourse of enslavement to clarify what God's "good slaves" ought to be like, as well as uses the revelatory narrative structure of the *Shepherd* itself to portray certain enslaved characteristics and behaviors as desirable. Since the *Shepherd*'s primary status marker for God's people is as enslaved persons (δοῦλοι), what is at stake in reading the *Shepherd* as a text shaped by and deeply indebted to the institution of enslavement and its manifestations in the ancient Mediterranean? What might we notice or treat differently in this early Christian text (and others beyond it) when characterization as an enslaved person is foregrounded as the scaffolding upon which the ideal believer is constructed? The discourse of enslavement and its effects on the production of believers' ethics and subjectivities may not always be equally salient in every verse or chapter of the *Shepherd*, but nonetheless shapes much of the text.

Such an examination of the *Shepherd* as one example of the effects of the discursive context of ancient Mediterranean slavery on early Christian literature is critical because of the millennia-long history of Christian institutional support for and normalization of enslavement. As Ulrike Roth powerfully argues in her work on enslavement in Paul's letter to Philemon: "How the early Christians approached slavery is critical for our understanding of the wider issue of the relationship between the peculiar institution and the Church."[33] Particularly since New Testament and early Christian literature are often turned to in modernity as a source of "original" or "essential" Christianity – despite the fact that multiplicity and diversity defines early Christian practices and writings – it is all the more important to elucidate how early Christians and their literature participated in practices, discourses, and logics of enslavement.[34] Texts like the *Shepherd*, which were popular among Christian

[33] Ulrike Roth, "Paul, Philemon, Onesimus: A Christian Design for Mastery," *ZNW* 105.1 (2014): 103.

[34] On the lack of a stable, essential core within early Christian thought, see Karen L. King, "Factions, Variety, Diversity, Multiplicity: Representing Early Christian Differences for the 21st Century," *MTSR* 23.3–4 (2011): 216–37; Karen L. King, "Which Early Christianity?" in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*, ed. Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David Hunter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 66–84.

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