

# Repentance in the Apostolic Fathers

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This is the second of a two-part series studying the meaning of the terms “repent/repentance” as used in the New Testament in salvation contexts.<sup>1</sup> The thesis of this series is that a key factor involved in the debate between “Lordship Salvation” vs. “Free Grace Salvation” is the definition of the word “repentance.” On the assumption that “repentance” (Greek *μετάνοια/μετανοῶ metania/metano*) is a legitimate part of the gospel message (based on Acts 2:38; 3:19; 11:18; 17:30; 20:20-21; 26:18-20; 2Cor. 7:10; 2Pet. 3:9), I have argued that the Greek terms *μετανοῶ/μετάνοια (metano/metania)* carry a significantly different semantic weight than do the English “repent/repentance.” This semantic difference has led to serious error in the teaching of salvation by many. The two elements in the definition of the English terms “repent/repentance” that are unsuitable to the definition of the Greek terms *μετανοῶ/μετάνοια (metano/metania)* are:

1. The feeling or expression of sorrow and remorse over sin.
2. Turning from sin.

Part one established that in Modern Greek, *μετανοῶ (metano)* simply means “change one’s mind.”<sup>2</sup> Similarly, in Classical Greek, *μετανοῶ (metano)* meant, “perceive afterwards, change one’s mind or purpose.”<sup>3</sup> The focus on the “mind” in these definitions comes from the element *νοῦς/νοῶ (nous/no)*. By “mind” the ancient Greeks often meant more than just intellectual reflection. It could be a matter purely academic, but often one that included activity by other features of the inner man, such as the emotions, and the will. By “change of mind” we are to understand an inward change of “sight, perception, thought, reflection, apprehension, and comprehension.” But there is no necessary implication of either turning from sin (change of conduct) or of a feeling or expression of sorrow and remorse over sin in these Greek terms.

Part one focused primarily on a diachronic survey of the use of *μετανοῶ/μετάνοια (metano/metania)* in Greek from the early classical era (ca. 480 BC) through the late 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD. In this installment, I would like to focus more particularly on a synchronic study of Christian Greek usage much closer to the New Testament era. For this purpose, I have chosen to examine the usage of *μετανοῶ/μετάνοια (metano/metania)* in the Apostolic Fathers.

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<sup>1</sup> My thanks to Dr. Michael Stallard for recommending this study in the Apostolic Fathers. It turned out to be a most rewarding study.

<sup>2</sup> George A. Magazis, ed., *Langenscheidt’s Standard Greek Dictionary*, (Athens: Langenscheidt, 1989), *sub* μετανοέω.

<sup>3</sup> Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 1115.

The so-called “Apostolic Fathers” are Christian authors who lived shortly after the apostles. Typically dated between ad 80–220.<sup>4</sup> The moniker is a bit of a misnomer, since these authors were not “apostles” themselves, but rather “may be supposed to have had personal knowledge of some of the Apostles.”<sup>5</sup> As such, their writings may provide significant insights into the way the apostles used Koine Greek. In this study of the terms *μετάνοια/μετανοῶ* (“repent/repentance”), we indeed find numerous important uses of these terms in the Apostolic Fathers, helping us to ascertain the semantic freight carried by these terms in New Testament times. The authors surveyed for this study are:

- 1 Clement (ca. AD 75-110)
- 2 Clement (ca. AD 120-170)
- Ignatius (ca. AD108)
- Didache of the Apostles, (ca. AD 80-120)
- Epistle of Barnabas (ca. late 1<sup>st</sup>-early 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.)
- Shepherd of Hermas, (ca. AD 150)
- Martyrdom of Polycarp, (ca. AD 155-156)

There are 186 occurrences of either *μετάνοια* or *μετανοῶ* in Kirsopp Lake’s Loeb Classic Library edition of the Apostolic Church Fathers:<sup>6</sup> 1 Clement 11x; 2 Clement 12x; Ignatius to the Ephesians 1x; Ignatius to the Philadelphians 3x; Ignatius to the Smyrnians 3x; Didache of the Apostles, 2x; Epistle of Barnabas 1x; Shepherd of Hermas, 144x; Polycarp, 5x. The largest number of these occurrences, obviously, occurs in Hermas, a significant portion of which consists of Hermas’ discussions with the “Angel of Repentance.”

### **Apostolic Fathers Repentance: Text and commentary**

#### *1 Clement (ca. AD 75-110) 11x*

1 Clement was a letter sent by the church of Rome to the church of Corinth in consequence of trouble in the latter community which had led to the deposition of certain Presbyters. The church of Rome writes protesting against this deposition, and the partisanship which has caused it.<sup>7</sup> It is likely dated to sometime after the Neronian persecutions, and references to persecution in chapter

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<sup>4</sup> Rick Brannan, “Apostolic Fathers,” ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

<sup>5</sup> Kirsopp Lake, *The Apostolic Fathers*, Edited by Kirsopp Lake (Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 1912–1913), vii.

<sup>6</sup> Lake, *The Apostolic Fathers*.

<sup>7</sup> Pope Clement I et al., *The Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Kirsopp Lake, vol. 1, The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 1912–1913), 3.

1 likely refer to the persecution under Domitian, ca. AD 96. Thus, this letter illustrates late first century Christian use of the Greek language.<sup>8</sup>

- 1 Clement, ch. 7.4-7, 4x

4 Let us fix our gaze on the Blood of Christ, and let us know that it is precious to his Father, because it was poured out for our salvation, and brought the grace of repentance (μετανοίας) to all the world. 5 Let us review all the generations, and let us learn that in generation after generation the Master has given a place of repentance (μετανοίας) to those who will turn to him. 6 Noah preached repentance (μετάνοιαν) and those who obeyed were saved. 7 Jonah foretold destruction to the men of Nineveh, but when they repented (μετανοήσαντες) they received forgiveness of their sins from God in answer to their prayer, and gained salvation, though they were aliens to God.<sup>9</sup>

Clearly, Clement connects μετάνοια/μετανοῶ with salvation. But there is nothing in this passage that necessitates reading in the ideas of sorrow or turning. True enough, μετάνοια (*metania*) is given to “those who will turn to him,” but the “turning” (μεταστρέφω, *metastrepho*, similar to ἐπιστρέφω *epistrepho* as is found in 1 Thess. 1:9) is an action that is separate from μετάνοια, not an indispensable component of it. There is no reason to suppose that μετάνοια here means anything other than what it meant throughout ancient Greek history (or Modern Greek).

- 1 Clement, ch. 8.1-3,5, 5x

1 The ministers of the grace of God spoke through the Holy Spirit concerning repentance (μετανοίας), 2 and even the Master of the universe himself spoke with an oath concerning repentance (μετανοίας); “For as I live, said the Lord, I do not desire the death of the sinner so much as his repentance (μετάνοιαν),” and he added a gracious declaration, 3 “Repent (μετανοήσατε), O house of Israel, from your iniquity. Say to the sons of my people, If your sins reach from the earth to Heaven, and if they be redder than scarlet, and blacker than sackcloth, and ye turn (ἐπιστρέφω/αψ) to me with all your hearts and say ‘Father,’ I will listen to you as a holy people.” ... 5 Thus desiring to give to all his beloved a share in repentance, he established it by his Almighty will.

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<sup>8</sup> In addition to the passages discussed below, see also 62.1-2.

<sup>9</sup> Translations of the Apostolic Fathers taken from Pope *Clement I et al.*, *The Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Kirsopp Lake, vol. 1, The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 1912–1913).

Clement's quote in verse 3 appears to be from Ezekiel 33.<sup>10</sup> Consider a comparison between the two:

Clement: “Repent (μετανοήσατε), O house of Israel, from your iniquity. Say to the sons of my people, If your sins reach from the earth to Heaven, and if they be redder than scarlet, and blacker than sackcloth, and ye turn (ἐπιστρέφω/ἔψ) to me with all your hearts and say ‘Father,’ I will listen to you as a holy people.”

Ezekiel: “Say to them, ‘As I live!’ declares the Lord God, ‘I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways! Why then will you die, O house of Israel?’

However, the quote appears to be a paraphrase, and there is no corresponding word in the Hebrew text for Clement's “Repent.” The Hebrew text does use the term *שׁוּב* (*shuv*) “turn” later in the verse. Clement's verse 4 goes on to describe a dramatic change of lifestyle, but it appears to be describing the notion involved with *שׁוּב* (*shuv*), rather than with *מֵתָנִיָּה/מֵתָנוֹּה* (*metania/metano*). There appears to be no sound reason for importing the notions of sorrow or turning into the meaning of *מֵתָנִיָּה/מֵתָנוֹּה*.

It might be argued that Clement's use of the prepositional phrase “from your iniquity” (8.1.3) implies the notion of turning, due to the meaning of the preposition *ἀπό* (*apo*) as “from.” Grudem uses this very argument in attempting to explain “repentance from dead works” in Hebrews 6:1. He says, “In this verse, the ‘from’ (Greek *apo*) is important: it shows that repentance here is not merely a ‘change of mind’ about one's accountability before God ... but includes a conscious turning *away from* dead works.”<sup>11</sup> But Grudem engages in something of a circular argument here. *Ἀπό* (*apo*) may mean “from,” but it can mean quite a few different things, depending on the context.<sup>12</sup> If one begins with the assumption that *μετανοῶ* (*metano*) means “to turn,” then, of course the preposition would be understood to mean “from.” However, if one begins with the assumption that *μετανοῶ* means “to change one's mind,” a meaning like “because” might make better sense. In fact, the causal sense of *ἀπό* (*apo*) is well attested in Greek,<sup>13</sup> and may be the best way to understand it both in Hebrews 6:1 and in 1 Clement 8.1.3. So, rather than translating,

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<sup>10</sup> Lake, 22.

<sup>11</sup> Wayne Grudem, “Free Grace” *Theology: 5 Ways it Diminishes the Gospel* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2016), 41-42.

<sup>12</sup> BDAG Lexicon lists 6 major classifications of meaning to this preposition, and devote two and a half pages to the elucidation of its meaning. William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, Walter Bauer, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 105-107.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, ἀπο, 5 a,c.

“Repent ... from your iniquity,” it might be better to render this as, “Have a change of mind because of your iniquity.”

- 1 Clement 57.1, 1x

1 You therefore, who laid the foundation of the sedition, submit to the presbyters, and receive the correction of (εις *eis*) repentance (μετάνοιαν *metania*), bending the knees of your hearts.

Ἦμεῖς οὖν οἱ τὴν καταβολὴν τῆς στάσεως ποιήσαντες ὑποτάγητε τοῖς πρεσβυτέροις καὶ παιδεύθητε εἰς μετάνοιαν, κάμψαντες τὰ γόνατα τῆς καρδίας ὑμῶν.

This “repentance” is the result (εις *eis*) of corrective instruction (παιδεύω *paideuo*). The force of the preposition (εις) is poorly brought out by the translation above (“correction of repentance”) and would be better translated as, “correction that leads to a change of mind.”

The expression, “bending the knees of your heart,” is an interesting one. The qualifying phrase “of your heart” makes it clear that Clement is not referring to the physical knees, or to any sort of outward conduct. Rather, the “repentance” he sees here is an internal response of the heart, a response of worship and humility, but not necessarily one of sorrow or turning.

## 2 Clement (ca. AD 120-170) 12x

The so-named letter of 2 Clement is acknowledged by most scholars as having been authored by someone other than 1 Clement. Its genre implies that it was originally a sermon (or a compilation of sermons). It is dated by most to ca. AD120-170.<sup>14</sup>

- 2 Clement 8.1-3, 4x

1 Let us repent (μετανοήσωμεν) then while we are on the earth. 2 For we are clay in the hand of the workman; for just as the potter, if he make a vessel, and it be bent or broken in his hand, models it afresh, but if he has come so far as to put it into the fiery oven, he can do nothing to mend it any more; so also let us, so long as we are in this world, repent (μετανοήσωμεν) with all our heart of the wicked deeds which we have done in the flesh, that we may be saved by the Lord, while we have a time for repentance (μετανοίας). 3 For after we have departed from this world, we can no longer make confession, or repent (μετανοεῖν) any more in that place.

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<sup>14</sup> In addition to the passages discussed below, see also 16.1,4.

This exhortation is based on the preceding passage which discusses Christian rewards (incorruptible crowns). In 8.1-3 these believers are urged to have a change of mind (μετάνοια *metania*) with reference to their conduct. The action of μετανοῶ (*metano*) is specifically referred to as that which takes place internally (“with all our heart”), not externally. The action of μετανοῶ is also distinguished in the third sentence from “confession” (ἐξομολοῶ). There is no obvious reason to read into the term the notions of either sorrow or turning.

The translation “let us repent of the wicked deeds which we have done” (8.1.2) is roughly similar to 1 Clement 8.1.3 (see above), and may suggest to some the this use of μετανοῶ (*metano*) implies a turning from sin. However, Kirsopp Lake’s translation is less than ideal. The expression “of wicked deeds” looks like it is a translation of a genitive case, which could possibly justify the implication of turning *from* something; however, the noun for “deeds” (πονηρὰ *ponera*) is actually an accusative, neuter, plural. If taken as an accusative of respect or (general) reference, this phrase might well be translated as, “Let us have a change of mind with reference to the wicked deeds which we have done.” There is no need to read into this any reference to either sorrow or turning from sin.

- 2 Clement 9.7-10, 1x

7 While we have opportunity to be healed let us give ourselves to God, who heals us, giving him his recompense (ἀντιμισθίαν *antimisthian*). 8 What recompense? Repentance (μετανοῆσαι) from a sincere heart. 9 For he has knowledge of all things beforehand, and knows the things in our hearts. 10 Let us then give him praise, not only with our mouth, but also from our heart, that he may receive us as sons.

Here, μετανοῆσαι is seen as something that we give to God as an exchange (ἀντιμισθίαν *antimisthian*) for His blessing us with good health. Sentences 9 and 10 appear to focus the activity of this μετανοῶ (*metano*) in the heart. This is an internal response of a Christian to God’s physical blessing. There is no need to understand any notions of sorrow or turning in this usage of μετανοῶ.

- 2 Clement 13.1, 2x

1 Therefore, brethren, let us at last repent (μετανοήσωμεν) forthwith, and be sober for our good, for we are full of much folly and wickedness; let us wipe off from ourselves our former sins, and let us gain salvation by repenting (μετανοήσαντες) with all our souls. Let us not be men-pleasers, and let us wish to please by our righteousness not ourselves alone, but also those who are without, that the name be not blasphemed on our account.

For those wanting to link μετάνοια/μετανοῶ (*metania/metano*) more closely with outward action (turning from sin), it may be tempting to see here the close proximity of “let us repent” (μετανοήσομεν) with “let us wipe off ... our former sins” as signifying some degree of synonymy. However, this entire passage consists of a series of six hortatory subjunctives: “let us repent” (μετανοήσομεν), “let us be sober” (νήψωμεν), “let us wipe away” (ἐξάλειψωμεν), “let us be saved” (σωθῶμεν), “let us not be” (μὴ γινώμεθα), “let us not wish” (μηδὲ θέλωμεν). It would be linguistically dishonest to insist that μετανοῶ (*metano*) be defined by ἐξάλειψω, unless one also insists that the other four verbs must be included in the definition. Rather, it is better methodologically, to see in these six verbs distinction of meaning between them. Nothing requires our reading into μετανοῶ (*metano*) notions of turning or sorrow here.

- 2 Clement 15.1, 1x

1 Now I think that I have given no mean advice concerning self-control, and if any man follow it, he shall have no regret (ποιήσας οὐ μετανοήσει *poiasas ou metanoesei*), but shall save both himself and me his counsellor

Here the translator has brought in the English word “regret,” but the Greek simply uses the verb μετανοῶ (*metano*). The author of 2 Clement seems to be saying nothing other than this: If you follow my advice, you will have no need of changing your mind; i.e., you will be going the right way with no reason to think any differently.

- 2 Clement 17.1, 1x

1 Let us then repent (μετανοήσομεν) with our whole heart, that none of us perish by the way.

As elsewhere in 2 Clement, μετανοῶ (*metano*) is seen as an inward activity of the heart.

- 2 Clement 19.1, 1x

1 Therefore, brothers and sisters, following the God of truth, I am reading you an exhortation to pay attention to that which is written, that you may both save yourselves and him who is the reader among you. For as a reward I beg of you that you repent (μετανοήσαι) with all your heart, and give to yourselves salvation and life.

2 Clement apparently thought that one could lose salvation, then come back into it again through “repentance.” This passage says nothing in and of itself that requires the implication of either sorrow or turning in the meaning of μετανοῶ (*metano*).

*Ignatius to the Ephesians (ca. AD108) 1x*

Written from Smyrna as Ignatius, bishop of Syrian Antioch, was on his way to Rome for martyrdom.

- IEph 10.1, 1x

1 Now for other men “pray unceasingly,” for there is in them a hope of repentance (μετανοίας), that they may find God. Suffer them therefore to become your disciples, at least through your deeds.

“Repentance” (μετάνοια *metania*), for Ignatius, is clearly the way unsaved people “find God.” Christians should pray that unsaved men come to repentance, but there is no indication in this passage hinting at anything like either sorrow or turning.

*Ignatius to the Philadelphians (ca. AD 108) 3x*

Written from Troas as Ignatius, bishop of Syrian Antioch, was on his way to Rome for martyrdom.

- IPhld 3.2-3, 1x

2 For as many as belong to God and Jesus Christ,—these are with the bishop. And as many as repent (μετανοήσαντες) and come to the unity of the Church,—these also shall be of God, to be living according to Jesus Christ. 3 “Be not deceived,” my brethren, if any one follow a maker of schism, “he does not inherit the kingdom of God.”

Written in a context of schism and false doctrine that had threatened the church in Philadelphia, Ignatius exhorts submission to the bishop. He envisions those who had departed to a faction and given into false doctrine as “repenting” and returning to the bishop. This “repenting” would amount to having a change of mind regarding doctrine. As a consequence of this change of mind, there is an implied corresponding change of commitment (to the bishop) that might be envisioned as “turning.” However, the turning is a *consequence* of the change of mind. This passage cannot be adduced as requiring one to see turning as inherent to the idea of μετανοῶ (*metano*).

- IPhld 8.1, 2x

1 I then did my best as a man who was set on unity. But where there is division and anger God does not dwell. The Lord then forgives all who repent (μετανοοῦσιν), if their repentance (μετανοήσωσιν) lead to the unity of God and the council of the bishop.

As with 3.2-3, the topic is still the attempt to unite the church under the guidance of the bishop. Those who “repent” (*metano*) are those who have a change of mind/opinion about



the false doctrine they had come to accept. There is a slight translation difficulty in the final conditional clause here. The phrase, “If their repentance [may] lead to...” (ἐὰν μετανοήσωσιν εἰς, *ean metanoesosin*) has no corresponding Greek term for “lead.” This was probably added by the translator to help understand the following εἰς (*eis*, “to”). However, the preposition εἰς frequently signifies the idea of result,<sup>15</sup> and so the phrase might be translated, “If they have a change of mind resulting in godly unity and the council of the bishop.”

*Ignatius to the Smyrnians (ca. AD 108) 3x*

Written from Troas as Ignatius, bishop of Syrian Antioch, was on his way to Rome for martyrdom.

- ISmyr 4.1, 1x

1 Now I warn you of these things, beloved, knowing that you also are so minded. But I guard you in advance against beasts in the form of men, whom you must not only not receive, but if it is possible not even meet, but only pray for them, if perchance they may repent (μετνοήσωσιν), difficult though that be, —but Jesus Christ who is our true life has the power over this.

As with the Philadelphians, the church at Smyrna was also being threatened by false doctrine. The particular false doctrine appears to have been a denial that Christ actually suffered, died and rose in the flesh – “merely in semblance ... without body and phantasmal” (ISmyr 2.1). The members of the church were to pray for those teaching such false doctrine, that they may have a change of mind and come to a correct doctrinal position regarding the physical suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ. There is no necessity here to see either sorrow or turning as semantic content in μετανοῶ (*metano*).

- ISmyr 5.2-3, 1x

For what does anyone profit me if he praise me but blaspheme my Lord, and do not confess that he was clothed in flesh? But he who says this has denied him absolutely and is clothed with a corpse. 3 Now I have not thought right to put into writing their unbelieving names; but would that I might not even remember them, until they repent (μετνοήσωσιν) concerning the Passion, which is our resurrection.

In this passage, Ignatius continues to confront the false teaching that Christ was not “clothed in flesh.” From this false doctrinal position, such men are urged to have a

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<sup>15</sup> “... the result of an action or condition,” William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 290.

change of mind/opinion regarding “the Passion.” This is quite similar to the quote in 4.1 (above).

- ISmyr 9.1, 1x

1 Moreover it is reasonable for us to return to soberness, while we still have time to repent (μετανοεῖν) towards God. It is good to know God and the bishop. He who honours the bishop has been honoured by God; he who does anything without the knowledge of the bishop is serving the devil.

In 8.1-2 Ignatius had opposed the conducting of church ordinances without the bishop and other church leaders. Apparently, some had been conducting such unofficial rites. In 9.1 Ignatius urges those who had been persuaded by such false teaching to have a change of mind/opinion with a view to (εἰς *eis*) God. Here μετανοῶ (*metano*) is likened to “being sober” (ἀνανήψαι *ananepsai*), an activity that takes place in the mind. There is no implication of either sorrow or turning in this use of μετανοῶ (*metano*).

*Didache of the Apostles, (ca. AD 80-120) 2x*

This late first through early second century manual of church instruction is of anonymous authorship.

- Did 10.6, 1x

6 Let grace come and let this world pass away. Hosannah to the God of David. If any man be holy, let him come! if any man be not, let him repent (μετανοεῖτω): Maranatha, Amen.”

Almost the entirety of the tenth chapter of the Didache is devoted to the wording of a prayer which is to be recited at the Eucharist (Lord’s Supper). In the previous chapter it was clearly stated that no unbaptized individual should be admitted to the Eucharist. This final petition of the prayer invites anyone who is “holy” (ἅγιος, *hagios*, but in context this likely refers to those who are baptized) to come to the Eucharist. If someone is not “holy” he should “repent.” In this context, “being baptized,” and “being holy,” are probably considered by the author of the Didache as equivalent to “being saved.” As in many other Christian uses of μετανοῶ (*metano*), here it is seen as the means of obtaining salvation; it is that change of mind/opinion that consists of one believing the gospel. There is no necessary implication of either sorrow or turning here.

- Did 15.3, 1x

3 And reprove one another not in wrath but in peace as you find in the Gospel, and let none speak with any who has done a wrong to his neighbour, nor let him hear a word from you until he repents (μετανοήσῃ).

The context of the fifteenth chapter of the Didache is one of proper submission and honor that is to be given to church leaders (bishops, deacons, prophets, and teachers). This third sentence appears perhaps to broaden the subject matter to all members of the congregation (“one another”). Those who have done wrong (ἀστοχέω *astochō*, gone astray, behaved immorally, or deviated doctrinally) are to be shunned, not even spoken to, until they “repent.” If the character of their ἀστοχῶν (*astochon*) consists of some behavioral misconduct, then this μετανοῶ (*metano*) might indeed imply a change of conduct. But ἀστοχέω (*astochō*) can be used to describe doctrinal departure, as in 2 Timothy 2:18. In fact the other occurrences of ἀστοχέω (*astochō*) in the Pastoral Epistles (1 Tim. 1:6; 6:21), also have more to do with thought and speech than with actual conduct. Thus, while μετανοῶ (*metano*) in Didache 15.3 may imply a turning in conduct, it does not necessarily imply this, and may well involve only a change of mind and profession of doctrine.

*Epistle of Barnabas (ca. late 1<sup>st</sup>-early 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) 1x*

This anonymous letter of the late first or early second century was traditionally attributed to the same Barnabas who accompanied Paul on his missionary journey. The author of this letter warns Christians against a Judaistic conception of the Old Testament. He employs an allegorical exegesis similar to Philo.

- Barn 16.9, 1x

9 How? His word of faith, the calling of his promise, the wisdom of the ordinances, the commands of the teaching, himself prophesying in us, himself dwelling in us, by opening the door of the temple (that is the mouth) to us, giving repentance (μετάνοιαν) to us, and thus he leads us, who have been enslaved to death into the incorruptible temple.

The author in this chapter is critical of an effort being made to rebuild the [Jerusalem] temple. He speaks of the inferiority of the physical temple to the spiritual temple of God’s Spirit. He sees the Jerusalem temple as having been superseded by the Holy Spirit’s coming upon believers. In this ninth section of the chapter, the “giving ‘repentance’ (*metania*) to us” probably refers to the fact that the author and intended readers are in fact believers, and their “repentance” is viewed as equivalent to “salvation.” There is nothing here implying anything reminiscent of either sorrow or turning.

*Shepherd of Hermas, (ca. AD 150) 144x (Visions, 22; Mandates, 31; Similitudes, 91)*

By far, the vast majority of references to μετάνοια/μετανοῶ (*metania/metano*) in the apostolic fathers are to be found in the Shepherd of Hermas. These were important words in the

Shepherd's theology. Lake summarizes the form and message of the Shepherd of Hermas in the following words:

The form of the book is apocalyptic and visionary, [but] its object is practical and ethical. The main problem, which constantly recurs, is that of sin after baptism. In the circle to which Hermas belonged the belief obtained that Christians after baptism were capable of leading sinless lives, and that if they fell, they could not again obtain forgiveness. Experience, however, had shown that in this case few indeed would be saved, and the message of Hermas was that for sin after baptism there was still the possibility of forgiveness for those who repented, though this repentance would not avail more than once. A great part of the book is taken up in developing the details of this doctrine of repentance, which is entrusted to an angel called the Shepherd, who gives his name to the book, and it is obvious that we have here the beginning of the Catholic doctrine of penance.<sup>16</sup>

Due to the massive number of occurrences of *μετάνοια/μετανοῶ* (*metania/metano*) in this document, I can comment on only a limited number of the most significant passages.<sup>17</sup>

- Herm M.IV.i.4-10, 7x

4 ... "Sir," said I, "if a man have a wife faithful in the Lord, and he finds her out in some adultery, does the husband sin if he lives with her?" 5 "So long as he is ignorant," said he, "he does not sin, but if the husband knows her sin, and the wife does not repent (*μετανοήση*), but remains in her fornication, and the husband go on living with her, he becomes a partaker of her sin, and shares in her adultery." 6 "What then," said I, "sir, shall the husband do if the wife remain in this disposition?" "Let him put her away," he said, "and let the husband remain by himself. But 'if he put his wife away and marry another he also commits adultery himself.'" 7 "If then," said I, "sir, after the wife be put away she repent (*μετανοήση*), and wish to return to her own husband, shall she not be received?" 8 "Yes," said he; "if the husband do not receive her he sins and covers himself with great sin; but it is necessary to receive the sinner who repents (*μετανοοῦντα*), but not often, for the servants of God have but one repentance (*μετάνοια*). Therefore, for the sake of repentance (*μετάνοιαν*) the husband ought not to marry. This is the course of action for wife and husband. 9 Not only," said he, "is it adultery if a man defile his flesh, but whosoever acts as do the heathen is also guilty of adultery, so that if anyone continue in such practices, and repent

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<sup>16</sup> Pope Clement I et al., *The Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Kirsopp Lake, vol. 2, The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 1912–1913), 2.

<sup>17</sup> In addition to those passages discussed below, see also Visions I.i.8-9; I.iii.2; II.ii.4-5; III.iii.2; III. v.5; III.vii.2-5; III.xiii.4; IV.i.3; IV.ii.5; V.7; Mandates II.7; IV.iii.1-6; V.i.7; IX.6; X.ii.3-4; XII.iii.2-3; XII.iv.7; Similitudes VI.ii.3-4; VI.v.7; VIII.iii.5; VIII.vi.1-6; VIII.viii.1-5; VIII.ix.2-4; IX.i.1; IX.xix.1-3; IX.xx.4; IX.xxi.4; IX.xxii.3-4; IX.xxiv.4; IX.xxvi.5-6.

(μετανοῆ) not, depart from him and do not live with him, otherwise you are also a sharer in his sin. 10 For this reason it was enjoined on you to live by yourselves, whether husband or wife, for in such cases repentance (μετάνοια) is possible.

This mandate forbids adultery in act or thought. It also discusses the issue of how a husband should treat a wife who is discovered to be in an adulterous relationship. Under this circumstance, the husband is to continue in the marriage only if the wife “repents.” If she does not “repent,” the husband is to put her away (ἀπολύω *apolyo*, divorce her), but remain unmarried. If the wife later “repents” the marriage may be renewed. Here, the change of mind/opinion of the wife vis-à-vis adultery would almost certainly expect a corresponding change of conduct, but the μετάνοια (*metania*) itself need not imply anything more than a change of will or desire. Naturally, the Christian husband would expect there to be a corresponding change of conduct, but this would be a desired *result* of the μετάνοια (*metania*), not the μετάνοια itself. If this passage were all the data we had available to ascertain the meaning of μετάνοια (*metania*), we might indeed conclude that this word necessarily involved a change of conduct. But since there are so many other passages upholding the notion that μετάνοια is an internal feature of the mind/heart, it is best to see it in that same way in this passage. Once again, we recall Lake’s comment that in Hermas we find “here the beginning of the Catholic doctrine of penance.” It should also be noted that this passage uses μετάνοια (*metania*) in a sense that is not quite soteriological; it is more of a sociological context than a soteriological one.

- Herm M.IV.ii.2, 6x

2 He answered me and said, “I am set over repentance (μετανοίας), and I give understanding to all those who repent (τοῖς μετανοοῦσιν). Or do you not think,” said he, “that this very repentance (τὸ μετανοῆσαι) is itself understanding? To repent (τὸ μετανοῆσαι),” said he, “is great understanding. For the sinner understands that he ‘has done wickedly before the Lord,’ and the deed which he wrought comes into his heart, and he repents (μετανοεῖ) and no longer does wickedly, but does good abundantly, and humbles his soul and punishes it because he sinned. You see, therefore, that repentance (μετάνοια) is great understanding.”

In this passage, Hermas asked the shepherd for greater understanding about his message. The shepherd replies that his message is all about “repentance,” and continues to provide what amounts to a definition of “repentance” (μετάνοια *metania*). In this definition, the shepherd affirms that “repentance” is an internal feature of the mind. He says, “To repent is understanding (σύνεσις *synesis*) itself.” Σύνεσις (*synesis*) is defined as, “the faculty of

comprehension, intelligence, acuteness, shrewdness.”<sup>18</sup> To ensure that Hermas really understands this definition, the shepherd asks a rhetorical question using the negative οὐ, thus strongly implying that he expects an affirmative answer. This rhetorical question might be translated, “You do think, don’t you, that this repentance is itself understanding?” Then, just in case Hermas hasn’t quite gotten it yet, the shepherd repeats once again, “To repent is great understanding.” Finally, he summarizes and states, for a fourth time, “You see, therefore, that repentance is great understanding.” In light of the shepherd’s definition, it would seem to be completely out of the question to define μετάνοια (*metania*) in terms of conduct (i.e. turning from sin), or even to add the emotional quality of sorrow.

The shepherd does, however, speak of an attendant change of conduct that should accompany μετάνοια (*metania*). He says, “he repents (μετανοεῖ *metanoi*) and no longer does wickedly, but does good abundantly, and humbles his soul and punishes it because he sinned.” But this outward action is not the μετάνοια (*metania*) itself, but rather a result of it, a separate action, an expected end.

- Herm M.XI.4, 1x

4 Therefore, as many as are strong in the faith of the Lord, and have put on the truth, do not cleave to such spirits, but refrain from them. But as many as are double-minded, and constantly repent (μετανοοῦσι), practice soothsaying, like the heathen, and bring greater shame upon themselves by their idolatry. For he who asks a false prophet concerning any act is an idolator, and empty of the truth and foolish.

In the eleventh mandate, the shepherd cautions Hermas about the threat of false prophets. These false prophets are described by two characteristics: They are “double-minded” (δίψυχος *dipsichos*), and they “constantly repent” (πυκνῶς μετανοοῦσι *pyknos metanoousi*). Later in this mandate the lifestyle of these false prophets is described as follows: “[He] wishes to have the first place, and he is instantly impudent and shameless and talkative, and lives in great luxury and in many other deceits, and accepts rewards for his prophecy, and if he does not receive them, he does not prophesy.... on no account does he come near to an assembly of righteous men, but shuns them. But he cleaves to the double-minded and empty, and prophesies to them in a corner, and deceives them by empty speech about everything according to their lusts. (M.XI.4.12,13). Clearly, then, μετανοῶ (*metano*) does not necessarily connote a change of conduct, for these false prophets “constantly repent” but they have a conduct that is entirely worldly.

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<sup>18</sup> William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 970.

- Herm M.XII.vi.1, 2x

1 “But I, the angel of repentance (μετανοίας), say to you, Do not fear the devil. For I was sent,” said he, “to be with you who repent (ὁμῶν τῶν μετανοούντων) with all your heart, and to strengthen you in the faith. 2 Believe, therefore, in God, though you have renounced your life through your sins, and have added to your sins, and have made your life heavy, that if you ‘turn (ἐπισταφῆτε) to the Lord with all your heart, and do righteousness’ for the rest of the days of your life, and serve him in uprightness, according to his will, he will heal your former sins, and you shall have power to master the works of the devil.

In this close to the Mandates, the shepherd broadens his address and speaks to a wider audience than just Hermas. He addresses them in the second person plural and refers to them as “you who repent with all your heart.” These, he admonishes, “if you turn (ἐπιστρέφω *epistrepho*) to the Lord with all your heart ... he will heal your former sins, and you shall have power to master the works of the devil.” It appears that turning (ἐπιστρέφω *epistrepho*) is an action that is perceived by the shepherd as distinct from μετανοῶ (*metano*).

- Herm S.IV.4, 1x

For the sinners shall be burnt, because they sinned and did not repent (οὐ μετενόησαν), and the heathen shall be burnt, because they did not know (οὐκ ἔγνωσαν) their Creator.

Two observations can be made of this brief passage: (1) To “repent” (μετανοῶ *metano*) appears to be the equivalent of “to know” (γινώσκω *ginosko*). (2) But the broader context is perhaps even more significant. In this and the previous similitude, Hermas was shown two similar but distinct visions. In the first (S.III), he saw “many trees, without leaves, which appeared to me to be as if dry, for they were all alike” (III.1). These trees represent both the righteous and the wicked in the present world. They are said to be “alike” because “in this world, neither righteous nor sinners are apparent, but are all alike. For this world is winter for the righteous and they are not apparent, though they are living with sinners” (III.2). In the next similitude (IV) Hermas sees “many trees, some budding and some withered” (IV.1), and is told, “This represents which are budding are the righteous, who are destined to live in the world to come; for the world to come is summer for the righteous, but winter for the sinners. When therefore the mercy of the Lord shall shine, then the servants of God shall be made plain and all men shall be made apparent” (IV.2). From elsewhere in the Shepherd of Hermas it is apparent that the righteous are those who have “repented,” but in these two similitudes the actual conduct of the righteous is indistinguishable from that of the wicked until a future time – the “world to come” – described as the “summer.” So, it does not appear that the angel sees any

necessary, observable change of conduct associated with μετανοῶ/μετάνοια (*metano/metania*).

- Herm S.VI.i.3-4, 3x

3 These commandments are helpful to those who are going to repent (τοῖς μέλλουσι μετανοεῖν), for if they do not walk in them their repentance (μετάνοια) is in vain. 4 Do you, therefore, who repent (οἱ μετανοοῦντες), put away the wickednesses of this world which lead you astray, but if you put on all the virtue of righteousness, you shall be able to keep these commandments, and no longer add to your sins. Therefore walk in these commandments of mine, and you shall live to God.

The shepherd instructs Hermas that “those who repent” are to cast off the wicked deeds of the world. The casting off of the wicked deeds is tantamount to “turning from sin,” but this action is one that follows the action of μετανοῶ (*metano*), not a necessary part of it. Therefore, μετανοῶ (*metano*) is a separate action from changing one’s conduct.

- Herm S.VI.iii.6, 1x

6 When, therefore, they have been afflicted with every affliction, then they are handed over to me, for good instruction, and are made strong in the faith of the Lord, and they serve the Lord the rest of the days of their life ‘with a pure heart.’ And if they repent (μετανοήσωσι), then it enters into their hearts, that the deeds which they did were evil, and then they glorify God saying that he is ‘a righteous judge,’ and that they suffered righteously, ‘each according to his deeds,’ and for the future they serve the Lord with a pure heart, and they prosper in all their deeds, ‘receiving from the Lord all things, whatever they ask;’ and then they glorify the Lord that they were handed over to me, and they no longer suffer any of the evils.”

Yet another shepherd is shown to Hermas. This one is very stern and cruel. He is the “angel of punishment (τιμωρία *timoria*)” (VI.iii.2). This is the angel who chastises those who walk away from the Lord and His commandments. This chastisement is designed to bring about their “repentance” so that they will glorify the Lord. Their repentance is described as follows: “It enters into their hearts, that the deeds which they did were evil, and then they glorify God saying that he is ‘a righteous judge,’ and that they suffered righteously, ‘each according to his deeds.’” This is an action that takes place “in their hearts” and consists of a change of opinion about God’s chastisement. It is an internal matter of the heart/mind. However, it is further noted that “for the future (λοιπόν *loipon*) they serve the Lord with a pure heart.” That is, the repentance is conceptualized as an internal matter, while the external change of conduct is conceptualized as a separate action that occurs at a later time.



- Herm S.VII.2-6, 7x

2 “Listen,” said he, “your sins are many, but not so great as that you should be handed over to this angel; but your family has done great iniquity and sin, and the glorious angel has become enraged at their deeds, and for this reason he commanded you to be afflicted for some time, that they also may repent (μετανοήσωσι) and purify themselves from every lust of this world. When, therefore, they repent (μετανοήσωσι), and have been purified, then the angel of punishment will depart from you.” 3 I said to him: “Sir, even if they have done such things that the glorious angel is enraged, what have I done?” “They cannot,” said he, “be punished in any other way, than if you, the head of the house, be afflicted. For when you are afflicted, they also will necessarily be afflicted, but while you prosper, they cannot suffer any affliction.” 4 “But see, Sir,” said I, “they have repented (μετανενοήκασιν) with all their heart.” “I know,” said he, “myself also, that they have repented (μετανενοήκασιν) with all their heart; do you then think that the sins of those who repent (τῶν μετανοούντων) are immediately forgiven? By no means; but he who repents (τὸν μετανοούντα) must torture his own soul, and be humble in all his deeds and be afflicted with many divers afflictions. And if he endure the afflictions which come upon him he who ‘created all things’ and gave them power will have compassion in all ways upon him, and will give him some measure of healing; 5 and this in every case when he sees that the heart of the penitent (τοῦ μετανοούντος “the one who ‘repents’”) is clean from every evil deed. But it is good for you and for your house, to suffer affliction now.

In this similitude, Hermas begs the shepherd to set him free from the punishing angel, since he has “repented” with all his heart. The shepherd informs him that the punishment is not due to his own sins, but to the sins of his family. When Hermas tells the shepherd that his family has also “repented” with all their heart, the shepherd acknowledges as much, but tells him that they must still suffer some punishment so that they can be cleansed further. This shows us that even “repentance” that is acknowledged by the Lord’s servant is not the same thing as a complete turning to the Lord. According to the shepherd, even “repentance with the whole heart” requires additional purification that can only be accomplished through chastisement. Thus, μετανοῶ (*metano*) as conceptualized in this work is not a complete forsaking of sin and of turning fully to God.

- Herm S.VIII.vii.2-5, 7x

2 And those who had them half dry and with cracks, these are double-minded and evil speakers, and are never ‘at peace among themselves,’ but are always making schisms; but repentance (μετάνοια),” said he, “waits also for these. You see,” said he, “that some of them have repented (μετανενοηκότες), and there remains,” said

he, “still hope of repentance (μετανοίας) in them. 3 And as many of them,” said he, “as have repented (μετανενοήκασι), shall have their dwellings in the tower, and as many of them as have repented (βετανενοήκασιν) more slowly, shall dwell on the walls. But as many as do not repent (οὐ μετανοοῦσιν), but remain in their deeds, shall die the death. 4 And they who gave up their sticks green and with cracks, these were ever faithful and good, but had some jealousy among themselves over the first place and some question of reputation. But all these are foolish, who quarrel among themselves about the first place. 5 But these also, when they heard my commandments, because they were good, purified themselves and quickly repented (μετενόησαν); so their dwelling was in the tower. But if any of them turn again to schism he shall be cast out from the tower, and shall lose his life. 6 Life is for all those who keep the commandments of the Lord. And in the commandments there is nothing about the first place or any question of reputation, but about man’s long-suffering and humility. Among such, then, is the life of the Lord, but among the schismatic and law-breakers there is death.

This part of the eighth similitude continues the discussion of those who are double minded, evil speakers, and schismatic. With some of them there is “still hope of ‘repentance’” (VIII.vii.2). Significantly, however, the shepherd adds, “As many as do not ‘repent,’ but remain in their deeds (πράξις *praxis*), shall die the death.” This may imply that in the author’s mind, μετανοῶ/μετάνοια (*metano/metania*) is somehow linked to external actions (πράξις *praxis*), since the opposite of μετανοῶ consists of “remaining in their deeds.” Here we find one of the places in the Shepherd of Hermas suggesting what Lake described as “the beginning of the Catholic doctrine of penance.” However, this is at variance with other passages in the Shepherd of Hermas that clearly indicate only an internal function of the mind/heart. As with some of these other passages, it may be that outward deeds are expected to result from μετάνοια (*metania*), but do not necessarily so result. Interestingly, the shepherd admitted about this group of people that “some of them have repented” (VIII.vii.2), using a perfect tense of the verb (completed action), and yet holds out that “still hope of repentance is in them.” So, there is “repentance” both with and without external deeds, even in this passage that appears to imply some connection between them!

- Herm S.VIII.x.1-3, 4x

1 But those who gave up their sticks green, but the tips were dry and had cracks, these were always good and faithful and glorious before God, but they sinned a little because of small lusts, and had small quarrels with one another. But when they heard my word the greater part repented (μετενόησαν) quickly, and their dwelling was in the tower. 2 But some of them were double-minded, and some in their double-mindedness made a greater schism. For these then there is still

hope of repentance (μετανοίας), because they were always good, and not easily shall any of them die. 3 But those who gave up their sticks dry, but with a little green, these are they who had belief only but did the deeds of wickedness; but they were never apostates from God, and they bore the name gladly, and they gladly received into their houses the servants of God. When they heard, then, of this repentance (μετάνοιαν), they repented (μετενόησαν) without doubting, and are accomplishing all virtue and righteousness.

In this passage, the shepherd describes those who are saved, but through various minor sins need additional “repentance.” The worst of these are described as those who “had belief only (οἱ πιστεύσαντες μόνον *hoi pistevsantes monon*) but did the deeds of wickedness.” It is not clear what is meant by “belief only.” Belief to the exclusion of what? Is this belief without μετάνοια (*metania*)? Or is it belief without works? Or is it belief without apostasy, since “they were never apostates” (οὐδέποτε δὲ ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ἀπέστησαν *oudepote de apo tou Theou apestesan*)? In any case, since they had clearly already come to faith (for salvation), whatever additional μετάνοια (*metania*) the shepherd is referring to here has more to do with rewards than with salvation. The connection between μετάνοια (*metania*) and external deeds is brought out significantly in the final sentence of the third section: “They repented (μετενόησαν *metanoesan*) without doubting, and are accomplishing (ἐργάζονται *ergazontai*) all virtue and righteousness.” The shift in verb tense from aorist indicative to present indicative strongly suggests that the “repentance” and the subsequent external deeds are separate actions, not various aspects of the same action – likely a cause-and-effect relationship. But it is worthy of note that the shepherd found it necessary to add the clause “and are accomplishing all virtue and righteousness,” and did not assume that this would be understood by the term μετάνοια (*metania*) by itself.

- Herm S.VIII.xi.1-3, 5x

1 And after he had finished the explanations of all the sticks he said to me: “Go and tell all men to repent (μετανοήσωσιν) and live to God, for the Lord sent me in his mercy to give repentance (μετάνοιαν) to all, although some are not worthy because of their deeds. But the Lord, being long-suffering, wishes those who were called through his Son to be saved.” 2 I said to him: “Sir, I hope that all who hear them will repent (μετανονήσουσι). For I am persuaded that each one who recognizes his own deeds and fears God will repent (μετανοήσει).” 3 “And he answered me and said: “As many,” said he, “as repent (μετανοήσωσι) with all their hearts, and purify themselves from the wickednesses which have been mentioned before, and no longer add anything to their sins, shall receive healing from the Lord for their former sins, if they are not double-minded as to these commandments, and they shall live to God. But as many,” said he, “as add to their sins, and live in the lusts of this world shall condemn themselves to death.

Hermas receives the command, “Go and tell all men to “repent” and live to God” (Herm S.VIII.xi.1). What is the relationship between the two verbs “repent” (μετανοήσωσιν *metanoesoin*) and “live” (ζήσονται *zesontai*)? They are both aorist subjunctives (subjunctive because of the ἵνα *hina*) and connected by καί (*kai*). Are these two separate actions, or does the second verb describe the first? The construction used here would be the construction expected if the two verbs express two separate actions. So, it appears that μετανοῶ (*metano*) does not by itself include the external action of “living for God.” The second action would appear to be comprehended as the desired outcome of the first. In addition, we once again encounter the phrase “repent with all their hearts.” Μετανοῶ (*metano*) is an action that takes place in the heart, not through a change of action or lifestyle.

- Herm S.IX.xiv.1-3, 4x

1 “How will it then be, Sir,” said I, “if these men, such as they are, repent (μετανοήσωσι) and put away the lusts of these women, and return to the maidens and walk in their power and in their deeds? Will they not enter into the house of God?” 2 “They will enter,” said he, “if they put away the works of these women, and take back the power of the maidens and walk in their deeds. For this cause also there was a pause in the building, in order that, if they repent (ἐὰν μετανοήσωσιν), they may go away into the building of the tower. But if they do not repent (ἐὰν μὴ μετανοήσωσι) then others will enter and they will be finally rejected.” 3 I thanked the Lord for all these things, that he had mercy on all who call upon his name, and sent the angel of repentance (μετανοίας) to us who have sinned against him, and renewed our spirit, even when we were already corrupted, and restored our life, when we had no hope of living.

In Herm S.IX.xiv.1 three actions are distinguished from each other: “repent” (μετανοῶ *metano*), “put away” (ἀποβάλλω *apoballo*), “return” (ἐπανακάμπτω *epanakampto*), and “walk” (πορεύομαι *porevomai*). It is likely that these are arranged in chronological order. Μετανοῶ (*metano*) comes first, and is an inward action of thought/opinion; this is followed by “putting away” which is somewhat outward, but is a ceasing of activity; the third action would be “returning,” and this is when the “turning 180 degrees” takes place; the final action would be “walking” (πορεύομαι *porevomai*, “going,” “proceeding”).

- Herm S.IX.xxiii.2,5, 5x

1 And those of the sixth mountain which has cracks, great and small, and withered plants in the cracks, are such believers as these. 2 Those who have the small cracks are those who have quarrels with one another, and are withered in the faith from their evil speaking. But many of these repented (μετενόησαν), and the rest shall also repent (μετανοήσουσιν) when they hear my commandments, for their

evil-speaking was small and they will quickly repent. ... 5 And I, the angel of repentance (μετανοίας), say to you, do all you, who have this heresy, put it aside and repent (μετανήσατε), and the Lord will heal your former sins, if you cleanse yourselves from this demon. But if not you shall be delivered to him to death.

As is often the case in the Shepherd of Hermas, this section is describing those who are “believers” (πισεύσαντες *pistevsantes*). According to the angel of repentance, such sins as quarreling and evil speaking can threaten one’s salvation, so μετάνοια (*metania*) is required in order to regain the lost salvation. The “repentance” envisioned here is associated with “putting aside” (ἀποτίθημι *apotithemi*) something (S.IX.xxiii.5). But the thing to be put aside, is not the quarreling itself, but the “heresy” (αἵρεσις *haireisis*), so to “repent” is associated with putting aside heresy, or wrong teaching. BDAG characterize this use of αἵρεσις (*haireisis*) as signifying, “that which distinguishes a group’s thinking, opinion, dogma.”<sup>19</sup>

*Martyrdom of Polycarp, (ca. AD 155-156), 5x*

The date of Polycarp’s martyrdom is ca. 155-156. The letter documenting his martyrdom, composed by the church at Smyrna, must have been written shortly afterwards.

- MPoly 7.3, 1x

3 To this they assented, and he stood and prayed—thus filled with the grace of God—so that for two hours he could not be silent, and those who listened were astounded, and many repented (μετανοεῖν) that they had come against such a venerable old man.

At Polycarp’s arrest, he ordered that food and drink be brought for the police who had come to take him. When the food had been brought, Polycarp asked permission to pray, and having received permission, he stood and prayed for two hours. Many of those who heard this prayer “repented” (*metano*), i.e. they had a change of heart about whether they should have come to arrest him. There may have been sorrow involved, but that is not certain. What is clear is that the police did not change their intention, since they went on to arrest him and take him to his martyrdom.

- MPoly 9.2, 1x

2 Therefore when he was brought forward the Pro-Consul asked him if he were Polycarp, and when he admitted it he tried to persuade him to deny, saying:

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<sup>19</sup> William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 28.

“Respect your age,” and so forth, as they are accustomed to say: “Swear by the genius of Caesar, repent (μετανόησον), say: ‘Away with the Atheists’”

In this passage, the Pro-Consul, at the scene of Polycarp’s martyrdom, urges Polycarp to “repent” (μετανόησον *metanoeson*). To satisfy the Pro-Consul’s request, all Polycarp would have needed to do was to speak the sentence, “Away with the Atheists.” The Pro-Consul was not interested in the heart condition of Polycarp, and didn’t care whether his life showed any “fruits of repentance”; he only wanted to hear the confession. The term μετανοῶ (*metano*) does not have even a hint of any suggestion of “turning” or “sorrow” in this usage.

- MPoly 11.1-2, 3x

1 And the Pro-Consul said: “I have wild beasts, I will deliver you to them, unless you repent (μετανοήσης).” And he said: “Call for them, for repentance (μετάνοια) from better to worse is not allowed us; but it is good to change (μετατίθεσθαι) from evil to righteousness;” 2 And he said again to him: “I will cause you to be consumed by fire, if you despise the beasts, unless you repent (μετανοήσης).”

At the scene of Polycarp’s martyrdom, the Pro-Consul tries his best to persuade Polycarp to “repent.” As in 9.2, this “repentance (μετανοῶ *metano*) would have consisted of Polycarp repeating the vow that the Pro-Consul gave him to say.

In reply Polycarp provides us with a hint as to how he might have understood the term μετάνοια (*metania*). Polycarp replied to the Pro-Consul, “repentance (μετάνοια *metania*) from better to worse is not allowed us; but it is good to change (μετατίθεσθαι *metatithesthai*) from evil to righteousness.” In this compound sentence, the first clause uses the term μετάνοια (*metania*), while the corresponding term in the second sentence is μετατίθημι (*metatithemi*), defined as “to have a change of mind in allegiance, change one’s mind, turn away, desert.”<sup>20</sup> The term was used in the Classical era in reference to changing the terms of a treaty, or to changing someone’s name.<sup>21</sup> Here, μετάνοια/μετανοῶ appears to refer to words only, not to change of conduct, or even necessarily of a change of heart, only of profession.

## Conclusion

Much of the current debate between Lordship Salvation proponents and Free Grace Salvation proponents focuses on the place of repentance in salvation. Though various theories have been put forth from the Free Grace position, it is this author’s conviction, from a Free Grace perspective, that “repentance” was an integral part of the apostolic gospel and should be today.

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<sup>20</sup> BDAG, 642.

<sup>21</sup> Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 1117.

However, “repentance” is an unfortunate translation of the Greek terms used in the New Testament. In this two-part series, I have attempted to demonstrate that the terms μετανοῶ (*metano*) and μετάνοια (*metania*) do not inherently bear the semantic senses of either “turning (from sin)” or of “sorrow (for sin).” Rather, both of these terms are essentially synonyms for “believe” and “faith.” Thus, the invitation to the sinner to “repent” is not a second action that is to be added to believing, but rather is a further explication of what is involved in believing; it is a change from what one previously thought to a correct perception of who Jesus is and what He has accomplished. This view of the terms μετανοῶ/μετάνοια (*metano/metania*) is seen throughout the history of the Greek language, all the way up to modern times (part one of this series) and is confirmed by the usage roughly contemporary with the time of the New Testament (part two of this series).