

PREFACE

The Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* represent an important witness to “Jewish Christianity” during the third and fourth centuries, and they likely preserve traditions from an even earlier era. This peculiar body of writings offers a distinct approach to the interpretation of the Pentateuch. It is the goal of this study to give a detailed account of the theory of exegesis put forth by the anonymous author of the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*, whom I shall identify as “the Homilist.”

An integral component of the Homilist’s exegesis is his theory that, as it exists in its written form, the Pentateuch is contaminated with “false pericopes.” These falsehoods, enmeshed as they are throughout the Pentateuch, are not always easy to detect. But it is essential for any who would interpret the Scriptures “correctly” to be able to recognize them and then deal with them appropriately. I propose that, drawing on both “traditional” and “philosophical” resources, in an effort to attain the goal of a correct interpretation, the Homilist envisions three distinct “external criteria” to deal with the Pentateuch’s enmeshed falsehoods: (1) the True Prophet’s teaching and (2) the oral tradition, in cooperation with (3) the criterion of “harmony.” The first two criteria derive from “traditional” resources, while the third derives from “philosophy.” From the Homilist’s presentation of the True Prophet’s teaching, we learn something about the Homilist’s “Christian” leanings, whereby the words of Jesus are deemed essential for evaluating the Scriptures. His accent on the oral tradition displays something of the Homilist’s “Jewish” affinities, whereby appeal is made to emulate an oral tradition akin to that of the rabbis in order to ensure correct interpretation of the Scriptures. Finally, the “harmony” criterion—based on the idea that the Scriptures are “in harmony” with creation and with God, and are therefore to be checked against both—is an expression of the Homilist’s philosophical outlook, his cosmopolitan sensitivities, and his ethical orientation. The Homilist employs all three of these external

criteria—the True Prophet’s teaching, the oral tradition, and the harmony criterion—in his unique approach to the Pentateuch in general, and his evaluation of its falsehoods in particular. This constitutes the theory of the exegesis of the Pentateuch put forth in the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*.

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... ἢ μάλα νῶϊ
 γνωσόμεθ' ἀλλήλων καὶ λώϊον· ἔστι γὰρ ἡμῖν
 σῆμαθ', ἃ δὴ καὶ νῶϊ κεκρυμμένα ἴδμεν ἀπ' ἄλλων.