

Jewish-Christian
Interpretation
of the Pentateuch
in the Pseudo-Clementine Homilies



Donald H. Carlson

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OF THE PENTATEUCH**

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DONALD H. CARLSON

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

Abbreviations

ANCIENT SOURCES

ARISTOTLE

***Eth. nic.** Ethica nichomachea*

***Poet.** Poetica*

AUGUSTINE

***Civ.** De civitate Dei*

***Enarrat. Ps.** Enarrationes in Psalmos*

CICERO

***Div.** De divinatione*

***Nat. d.** De natura deorum*

***Tusc.** Tusculanae disputationes*

CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA

***Paed.** Paedagogus*

***Str.** Stromata*

CONSTITUTIONES APOSTOLICA

***Const. ap.** Constitutiones apostolica*

CORNUTUS

***Nat. de.** de Natura Deorum*

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA

Is. *Commentarius in Isaiam prophetam*

DIO CHRYSOSTOM

Dei cogn. *De dei cognitione (Or. 12)*

DIODORE OF TARSUS

Comm. in Ps. *Commentarii in Psalmos*

DIOGENES LAERTIUS

D. L. *Vitae philosophorum*

DIOGNETUS

Diogn. *Diognetus*

EPIPHANIUS

Pan. *Panarion*

EUSEBIUS

Comm. Isa. *Commentarius in Isaiam*

HE *Historia ecclesiastica*

Praep. ev. *Praeparatio evangelica*

GREGORY OF NYSSA

Hom. opif. *De hominis opificio*

HILARY OF POITIERS

Tract. in Ps. *Tractatus in Psalmos*

IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH

Smyrn. *To the Smyrnaeans*

IRENAEUS

Haer. *Adversus haereses*

JEROME

Vir. ill. *De viris illustribus*

JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

Hom. Jo. *Homiliae in Joannem*

JOSEPHUS

C. Ap. *Contra Apionem*

LACTANTIUS

Inst. *Divinarum institutionum libri VII*

LET. ARIS.

Let. Aris. *Letter of Aristeas*

LUCRETIUS

De nat. *de Rerum Natura*

MACARIUS

Hom. Homilia

OLD TESTAMENT PSEUDEPIGRAPHIA

T. Jos. Testament of Joseph

T. Lev. Testament of Levi

T. Naph. Testament of Naphtali

ORIGEN

Cels. Contra Celsum

Comm. Jo. Commentarii in evangelium Joannis

Comm. Matt. Commentarium in evangelium Matthaei

Fr. 1 Reg. Fragmenta in librum primum Regnorum

Philoc. Philocalia

Sel. Deut. Selecta in Deuteronomium

PHILO

Decal. De decalogo

Det. Quod deterius potiori insidari soleat

Gig. De gigantibus

Her. Quis rerum divinarum heres sit

Leg. Legum allegoriae

Migr. De migratione Abrahami

Mos. De vita Mosis

Mut. De mutatione nominum

Opif. De opificio mundi

Plant. De plantatione

QE Quaestiones et solutiones in Exodum

QG Quaestiones et solutiones in Genesin

Somn. De somniis

Spec. *De specialibus legibus*

PLATO

Resp. *Respublica*

Symp. *Symposium*

PLINY THE ELDER

Nat. *Naturalis historia*

PORPHYRY

Abst. *De abstinencia*

PROCOPIUS OF GAZA

Is. *Commentarii in Isaiam*

PSEUDO-CLEMENTINES

Hom. *Homilies*

Rec. *Recognitions*

PSEUDO-PHILO

L.A.B. *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum*

PTOLEMY (THE GNOSTIC)

Flor. *Epistula ad Floram*

RABBIANIC LITERATURE

'Abot R. Nat. *'Abot of Rabbi Nathan*
B. Bat. *Baba Batra*
b. Ber. *Babylonian Talmudic tractate Berakot*
b. Git. *Babylonian Talmudic tractate Gittin*
b. Hag. *Babylonian Talmudic tractate Hagigah*
b. Sanh. *Babylonian Talmudic tractate Sanhedrin*
b. Yoma *Babylonian Talmudic tractate Yoma*
m. Hag. *Mishnah tractate Hagigah*
m. Sanh. *Mishnah tractate Sanhedrin*
Pesiq. Rab. *Pesiqta Rabbati*
Rab. *Rabbah*
t. Sanh. *Tosefta Talmudic tractate Sanhedrin*
y. Meg. *Jerusalem Talmudic tractate Megillah*
y. Pe'ah *Jerusalem Talmudic tractate Pe'ah*

SENECA

Ep. *Epistulae morales*

SEXTUS EMPIRICUS

Math. *Adversus mathematicos*

SVF

SVF *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*

TARGUMS

Tg. Neof. *Targum Neofiti*
Tg. Onq. *Targum Onkelos*
Tg. Ps.-J. *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*

TATIAN

Orat. *Oratio ad Graecos*

TERTULLIAN

Jejun. *De jejunio adversus psychicos*

Marc. *Adversus Marcionem*

Val. *Adversus Valentinianos*

THEODORET OF CYRRHUS

Ps. 1-150 *Commentarii in Psalmos*

Ep. *Epistulae*

Interp. in Ep. *Interpretiones in Pauli epistulas*

Is. *Commentaria in Isaiam*

THEOPHILUS OF ANTIOCH

Auto. *Ad Autolycum*

XENOPHON

Mem. *Memorabilia*

MODERN SOURCES

AJP *American Journal of Philology*

BZNW *Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*

CCSG *Corpus Christianorum: Series graeca*. Turnhout, 1977–

CQ *Classical Quarterly*

CSEL *Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum*

GCS *Die griechische christliche Schriftsteller der ersten [drei]*

Jahrhunderte

HUCA *Hebrew Union College Annual*

JECS *Journal of Early Christian Studies*

JHS *Journal of Hellenic Studies*

JQR *Jewish Quarterly Review*

JSJ *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and*

Roman Periods

JSP *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha*

JTS *Journal of Theological Studies*

LASBF *Liber Annuus. Studium Biblicum Franciscanum*

LCL *Loeb Classical Library*

PG *Patrologia graeca [= Patrologiae cursus completus: Series graeca]*.

Edited by J.-P. Migne. 162 vols. Paris, 1857–1886

PL *Patrologia latina [= Patrologiae cursus completus: Series latina]*. Edited by J.-P. Migne. 217 vols. Paris, 1844–1864

RAC *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*. Edited by T. Kluser et al. Stuttgart, 1950–

REJ *Revue des études juives*

RelSRev *Religious Studies Review*

SC *Sources Chrétiennes*

SVF *Stoicorum veterum fragmenta*. H. von Arnim. 4 vols. Leipzig, 1903–1924

TUGAL *Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur*

VC *Vigiliae Christianae*

ZNW *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*

ZWT *Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Theologie*

Overview of Previous Scholarship

1.1. INTRODUCTION

Most of our knowledge about “Jewish Christianity” in antiquity is dependent on patristic heresiological sources. But in addition to these, the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* and the *Recognitions* (hereafter *Hom.* and *Rec.*) occupy a special place. For they are widely recognized as a few of the most important primary sources for gaining something of a firsthand knowledge of Jewish Christianity. The vast majority of scholarly attention given to the Pseudo-Clementines, however, has focused on its source criticism, but to date little attention has been given to pentateuchal exegesis within this literature, as the following survey will illustrate.

We are very fortunate to have available a thorough history of research on the Pseudo-Clementines, provided by F. Stanley Jones.^[1] Here I will highlight only those works of scholarship that have immediate bearing on the present study. My overview will begin with some of the scholarship dedicated to source-critical issues. Second, I will move from there to survey scholarly work on biblical exegesis in the Pseudo-Clementines in general. Third, I will discuss the *status quaestionis* in the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* regarding the more specific area of pentateuchal exegesis—the special focus of this study. Now, when it comes to source criticism, a great deal of scholarly effort has been directed toward the (now lost) “base text” on which *Hom.* and *Rec.* are believed to depend. Scholarship designates this base text as the *Grundschrift*. To this we now turn.

1.2. THE *GRUNDSCHRIFT*

Insofar as *Hom.* and *Rec.* are similar in structure and share many parallels, it was the study of the complex literary relationship between them that eventually led scholars to postulate a *Grundschrift*. Scholarly efforts have necessarily had a speculative character and have led to uneven results. Adolf Hilgenfeld reconstructed a Jewish-Christian source document from *Rec.* 1.27–72 and the “table of contents” preserved in *Rec.* 3.75.^[2] Also, attached to *Hom.* are two prefatory documents, the *Epistle of Peter to James* and the *Contestatio*. These were thought to be the introductory writings of the *Grundschrift*—which Hilgenfeld designated as the Κηρύγματα Πέτρου (“Preachings of Peter”). The Κηρύγματα were so called because of the various passages in *Rec.* which state that Peter had sent to James books recording his “preachings.”^[3] Hilgenfeld also believed the Jewish Christianity of the Κηρύγματα source was originally associated with the Essenes, and later adapted by Ebionites. Then, once the Κηρύγματα source was in the hands of the Homilist, it was given an “anti-Marcionite” shape.

Hilgenfeld believed that the Κηρύγματα source was subsequently combined with another source, called the Περίοδοι Πέτρου (“Circuits of Peter”). This source is attested to in Epiphanius, *Pan.* 30.15, where he reports that the Περίοδοι Πέτρου were written by Clement and used (or rather abused) by the Ebionites.^[4] According to Hilgenfeld, *Hom.* are secondary to and represent a reworking of *Rec.*, both of which drew on the *Grundschrift* (which itself was to be identified with the Κηρύγματα Πέτρου).^[5]

Karl Reinhold Köstlin differed from Hilgenfeld regarding the growth of the Pseudo-Clementines. He believed the material in *Rec.* 1–7 assumed only the Περίοδοι Πέτρου and that *Hom.* were also based on this source.^[6] He was the first to point out the similarity between parts of *Rec.* 1 and the Ἀναβαθμοὶ Ἰακώβου (“Ascents of James”) attested in Epiphanius, *Pan.* 30.16.6–9. Similarly, Gerhard Uhlhorn argued against Hilgenfeld’s view that *Rec.* are primary. But since he regarded some parts of *Rec.* to have “primitive” features, he was also compelled to assume a *Grundschrift* behind both *Hom.* and *Rec.*^[7] It was also Uhlhorn’s estimation

that the *Grundschrift* was composed of disputations between Peter and Simon, while lacking the personage of Clement.^[8]

Later, Johannes Lehmann took a middle road between Hilgenfeld and Uhlhorn and proposed a synthesis that, according to Jones, “advanced research by preparing the way for a new approach where the exclusive priority of either [*Rec.* or *Hom.*] would no longer be discussed.”^[9] Consequently, the focus then shifted toward refining scholars’ understanding of the sources and character of the *Grundschrift* itself.

It was Richard Adelbert Lipsius who introduced a new stage in Pseudo-Clementine research. For Lipsius went beyond Hilgenfeld, asserting that the Κηρύγματα Πέτρου source was dependent on an older, Ebionite Πράξεις Πέτρου (“Acts of Peter,” attested to in Eusebius, *HE*3.3.2), which depicted discussions between Peter and Simon Magus.^[10] It was also Lipsius who for the first time differentiated the *Grundschrift* itself from the Κηρύγματα Πέτρου. Shortly thereafter, at the beginning of the twentieth century, Hans Waitz attempted to substantiate Lipsius’s thesis.^[11] Waitz employed a comparative methodology, analyzing patristic witness as literary proof for the actual existence of the *Grundschrift*, understood here as “the Clement-narrative.” He concluded that the *Grundschrift* originated in Rome around 220 or 230 ce, and that both *Hom.* and *Rec.* derived independently from it.^[12]

Carl Schmidt subsequently built on Waitz’s efforts and proceeded to do comparative work on the *Grundschrift* and the *Didascalia apostolorum*.^[13] He concluded by dating the *Grundschrift* between 220 and 230 and locating it in the Transjordan; the author of the *Grundschrift* was thought to be a Syrian Catholic Christian of Jewish heritage.^[14] In Jones’s estimation, Schmidt’s presentation proved to be “the most extensive characterization of [the *Grundschrift*], and most subsequent scholars have done little more than accept Schmidt’s view with minor variations.”^[15] One important exception to the reception of Schmidt’s work (as Jones notes) is his suggestion that *Rec.* were actually dependent on both *Hom.* and the *Grundschrift*. On this point, Schmidt’s proposal has “remained highly controversial in Pseudo-Clementine research.” The precise literary relationship between *Hom.*, *Rec.*, the *Grundschrift*, and the other underlying sources of all three remains a matter of ongoing scholarly debate.^[16] Indeed, as Jan N. Bremmer has recently summarized the situation, “Virtually everything is unclear about

the work that is commonly known as the *Pseudo-Clementines*. Debates have raged now for over a century, and scholars have not yet reached a full consensus regarding the nature of the work, its sources of inspiration, the time and place of its composition, or the author himself and his milieu.”^[17]

In sum, as evidenced by this brief survey, twentieth-century scholarship on this literature sought to delineate alleged sources behind the *Grundschrift* and to determine its provenance, yielding mixed results.^[18] Let us turn now from source-critical questions to consider what other scholarly work has been done in the area of biblical exegesis in the Pseudo-Clementines.

1.3. FROM “SOURCE-CRITICAL” TO “EXEGETICAL” CONSIDERATIONS

Although the literary-historical classification of the *Grundschrift* and/or the *Κηρύγματα Πέτρου* has long been disputed, the ubiquity of actual “Jewish-Christian” elements in the Pseudo-Clementine literature has not. As Jones puts it: “While most of modern research into the [Pseudo-Clementine literature] has focused on the question of the sources behind our present recensions, the older literature that was produced before the source critical phase undertook extensive discussions of the doctrine, date, and origin of [*Hom. and Rec.*].”^[19]

About a hundred years ago, work like this was done by Juda Bergmann.^[20] Bergmann’s study sought to examine the Clementine literature “au point de vue de leurs elements juifs et de noter les vestiges des idées juives qui s’y trouvent à l’état sporadique” (“in terms of their Jewish elements and to note the remains of Jewish ideas which they occasionally contain”).^[21] But while some scholars have accounted for the Jewish-Christian theological/doctrinal elements in the Pseudo-Clementine corpus, the *exegetical* elements remain largely untouched. In the estimation of G. B. Bazzana, “It is an established fact that many inquiries into the pseudo-Clementine literary history have yielded results unstable, if not self-contradictory. New analyses require new criteria that focus less on theological doctrines than on stylistic and lexical observations on pseudo-Clementine materials.”^[22]

Moving somewhat further in the direction of exegetical analysis, some scholars have dealt with the scriptural quotations in the Pseudo-Clementines. Uhlhorn, for example, collected the quotations from the Old Testament.^[23] Subsequently, Waitz collected quotations from both the Old and the New Testament.^[24] But once again, it appears that the primary concern of these studies has been source critical. These collections, as valuable as they are for their philological notes and implications for source criticism, do little to further our knowledge about the *actualexegesis* of those biblical texts. Other similar studies have been conducted specifically on the scriptural quotations and sayings of Jesus in the Gospels.^[25] The pentateuchal material, however, has received little attention. A thorough

analysis of Jewish-Christian biblical exegesis in general, and of the Pentateuch in particular, remains to be done. C. Bigg wrote “The interest that attaches to the *Recognitions* is mainly literary. A close examination of its structure may throw light on difficulties that surround the other far more interesting book [i.e., the *Homilies*]; whereas the interest of the *Homilies* is mainly *doctrinal* and *historical*.”^[26] It should be added that the interest of the *Homilies* is also exegetical. For the *Homilies* are imbued with a number of intriguing exegetical issues. Yet it remains the case that scholarship has largely overlooked the exegetical material contained in this rich corpus. This circumstance remains largely the same in the present situation, as can be seen from the *status quaestionis*. To this we now turn.

1.4. SURVEY OF MORE RECENT SCHOLARSHIP

As I bring my survey of previous scholarship on the Pseudo-Clementines to an end, it is fitting to call attention to some of the more recent works and their relationship to the present study. Jean Daniélou's important work on the theology of Jewish Christianity is a valuable contribution, especially for the history of Christian doctrine. One chapter of Daniélou's book is in fact dedicated to Jewish-Christian exegesis.^[27] The goal of that chapter, Daniélou says, is "to try to discover *whether, in interpreting the Old Testament, Jewish Christianity made use of the methods of the Judaism of its day.*"^[28] For his analysis of Jewish-Christian (theological) exegesis, Daniélou examines Targumim, midrashim, and various comments on the book of Genesis. Yet the Pseudo-Clementine literature plays only a very small role in Daniélou's volume, with little concern for pentateuchal exegesis outside Genesis.

In a similar vein, H. J. Schoeps brought together an impressive body of material and gave to scholars a clearer picture of Jewish Christianity (which for him essentially means Ebionitism).^[29] Schoeps combed through a great deal of the Pseudo-Clementine literature. Of interest to Schoeps were the (Ebionite) doctrinal/theological characteristics found there. Schoeps's work represents a comprehensive, creative synthesis of material that is indispensable for the field. It goes without saying that the present work owes much to his efforts. Even so, his project was simply not directed toward examining the Pseudo-Clementines with a view to pentateuchal exegesis.

Georg Strecker's *Das Judenchristentum in den Pseudoklementinen* gives a detailed analysis of the various elements contained within the Pseudo-Clementines that give them their Jewish-Christian character. His work systematically addresses such Jewish-Christian features as the "True Prophet," the "False Pericopes of Scripture," anti-Pauline tendencies, and others. Particularly useful for the present study is Strecker's catalog of scriptural citations.^[30] Even so, Strecker's analyses of the scriptural quotations are (once again) mainly concerned with text-critical and source-critical issues. Only occasionally are exegetical comments offered.^[31]

Kelley Coblentz Bauch has explored some of the "esoteric traditions" – aspects of the True Prophet's teaching and an oral tradition affiliated with

Moses – that inform the Pseudo-Clementine Homilies. The focus of her study is simply not exegetical in focus, and her treatment of pentateuchal exegesis is limited.^[32]

J. Neville Birdsall has done “a little original research, namely in looking at a sampling of instances which bear on the scriptural citations in the Clementines.”^[33] Birdsall focuses solely on Gospel citations. So, as far as the present study is concerned, it is in his discussion of the True Prophet that more profitable lines of thought are to be found. In particular, Birdsall addresses an issue concerning (what Strecker calls) the “incarnation” of the True Prophet. The issue here concerns the method whereby the “spirit” changes before ceasing at the final stage, that is, Jesus as the True Prophet.^[34] Birdsall suggests a resolution to the matter by postulating either (1) a link between the idea of the “incarnation” and the concept of the *Logos empsykos* as found in Philo’s discussion of Moses, or (2) a similar phenomenon reported by Jerome whereby the spirit, having sought Jesus in all the prophets, now finds rest in him.^[35]

Annette Yoshiko Reed attempts to move beyond the multiplication of hypothetical sources posited by previous research. She focuses on the internal literary features of the text itself rather than emphasizing its hypothetical relationship to the (nonextant) texts mentioned by Epiphanius, Hegesippus, and others. Her study is “socio-critical” in nature and represents an attempt “to elucidate the self-understanding of their [i.e., *Hom.* and *Rec.*] final authors/redactors.”^[36] Reed analyzes three short passages from *Hom.* and *Rec.* in an attempt to offer a corrective to the standard “parting of the ways” model so often employed within contemporary scholarship.^[37] Reed emphasizes the “final form” of the Pseudo-Clementine literature and what it offers for our understanding of Judaism and Christianity in the fourth century.^[38] Her project, and that of the other scholars who contributed to the same volume, represents an attempt to direct scholarly attention away from “approaching Judaism and Christianity as monolithic entities that partook in a single act of separation,” and toward an attempt “to illuminate the broad range of regional and cultural variation in the encounters between different biblically-based religious groups . . . who so strain the dichotomous definitions of modern scholarship.”^[39]

In recent days, scholarly attention given to the Pseudo-Clementines has also been directed toward addressing questions concerning the relationship between Judaism and Hellenism. A collection of recently published articles in *The Pseudo-Clementines*, edited by Jan N. Bremmer, exemplifies a number of scholars' interest in this material for some of its more distinctively "Hellenistic" features. Thus G. H. van Kooten has written about the notion of "philanthropy" (φιλανθρωπία) in the Pseudo-Clementines; C. Jedan has investigated some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophical sources used in the corpus; and L. R. Lanzillotta has looked at Orphic cosmogonies in the Pseudo-Clementines (with a view to source-critical interests).^[40] But of the seven studies included in Bremmer's book, only one deals with biblical exegesis in any direct way. E. J. C. Tigchelaar offers an analysis of *Hom.* 8.10–20 and the Enochic traditions therein (i.e., the Enochic "Watcher" myth based on certain elaborations of Gen. 6:1–4), arguing that "the so-called embellishments to the Watcher story, are, in fact, the most essential parts of the discourse of the author, and that the traditional Watcher story mainly serves as a stepping-stone to propound the author's distinctive application of the story."^[41] But Tigchelaar concentrates on how the Homilist reworks the Enochic Watcher myth and gives only minimal attention to questions of biblical exegesis.

In sum, the preceding survey reveals something of a gap in the scholarly literature regarding biblical exegesis in the Pseudo-Clementines. Indeed, that such a gap exists is made clear from the most recent history of research to date—that of Frédéric Amsler.^[42] Amsler's survey highlights previous histories of scholarship on the corpus, the state of the edition of texts, treatments of the source-critical problems, and a number of "synchronic studies." It ends with an overview of scholarly treatments of "le monde pseudo-clémentin" ("the Pseudo-Clementine world"), including studies on such topics as "Jewish-Christianity," "anti-Paulinism" (with philosophy and astrology), and "women and family." Absent are any studies dedicated to a fuller investigation of biblical exegesis in the Pseudo-Clementines. It is hoped that the present study will meet this need by shedding light on the area of exegesis in the *Homilies*. My specific goal is to identify the Homilist's exegetical theory in his approach to the Pentateuch.

Finally, a brief word is in order regarding methodology. Annette Yoshiko Reed's work on the Pseudo-Clementines is one expression of the penchant others share for sociohistorical and rhetorical matters.^[43] I wish to briefly highlight the basic methodology these scholars and others have employed in their works. For as N. Kelley suggests, "Future scholarship might profitably continue this trend toward redaction, narrative, and rhetorical analysis of the Pseudo-Clementines."^[44] Or, as Reed observes, "Rather than studying [*Hom. and Rec.*] for their own sake, scholars have focused their efforts on reconstructing the early sources that may lie *behind* their (also non-extant) source [i.e., the *Grundschrift*]."^[45] Consequently, Reed takes a different route, focusing primarily on "the late antique authors/redactors of this literature, exploring the efforts at self-definition found within [*Hom. and Rec.*] in their extant, redacted forms."^[46] To this extent, she shares the approach employed by Jones in his 1995 monograph, in which Jones (says Reed) "attempts to move beyond the multiplication of hypothetical sources (and conflicting scholarly hypotheses about them) in previous research on the Pseudo-Clementines by focusing upon the internal literary features of the text itself."^[47] This is echoed by K. M. Vaccarella, who writes, "Out of frustration with source criticism as well as an interest in the literary motivations behind the *Recognitions* and the *Homilies* themselves, there has been a growing trend in recent scholarship to investigate the texts using other approaches that relegate the issue of sources to minimal importance. Such scholars argue that there is intrinsic value in the investigation of the surviving texts."^[48] Graham Stanton made a similar observation: "Scholars have all too often paid scant attention to the forms of the text for which we have firm textual evidence. They have started back to front, so to speak, and isolated earlier sources with breathtaking confidence as a prelude to reconstruction of their redaction by later editors. The influence of redaction critical studies of the Gospels on some recent studies of the *Pseudo-Clementines* is all too apparent."^[49]

Likewise, while my own reading of the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* is bound to no *single* literary method or theory in particular, I do find traditional "formalism" helpful. In my estimation, George W. E. Nickelsburg has spoken aptly on this. In the introduction to his commentary on *1 Enoch*, he writes the following:

The surface structure of a text provides clues for the text's interpretation, and to take seriously the shape, pattern, and order of a text is to honor the text as it presents itself. Because they are not likely to be accidental, they provide entry to an author's mind and purpose. . . . When such order presents itself, it invites the careful reader to make sense of it. This approach from the textual data themselves bears more fruit, I believe, than reading a text through our own axiomatic, theological, literary, and philosophical categories. Thus my way into the text has been inductively literary. . . . I have also sought to make sense of the text as a whole.^[50]

I wish to affirm these remarks. Here I adopt something of an “inductively literary” approach, which seeks to address these texts as they appear in their “final forms,” paying special attention to the texts’ rhetorical “patterns.” Proceeding in this fashion, it is the goal of the present study to accurately describe the theory of exegesis of the Pentateuch as it emerges from the texts of the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*.^[51] I begin my study with an investigation into a fundamental principle underlying the Homilist’s theory of exegesis—the rejection of allegorism.

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1. F. Stanley Jones, “The Pseudo-Clementines: A History of Research,” *Second Century* 2 (1982): 1–33; 63–96. Also helpful is Frédéric Manns, “Les Pseudo-Clémentines (Homélies et Reconnaissances): Etat de la Question,” *LASBF* 53 (2003): 157–84. For an overview of some more recent developments, see Frédéric Amsler, “État de la Recherche récente sur le Roman pseudo-clémentin,” in *Nouvelles intrigues pseudo-clémentines*, ed. Frédéric Amsler et al. (Lausanne: Editions du Zebre, 2008), 25–45; Pierre Geoltrain, “Le Roman pseudo-clémentin depuis les recherches d’Oscar Cullmann,” in *Le Judéo-christianisme dans tous ses états*, ed. Simon C. Mimouni and F. Stanley Jones (Paris: Cerf, 2001), 31–38.^[52]
 2. See also *Rec.* 1.21.7–9, 74.3–5; *Rec.* 3.32.4–7, 52.5, 74.4–75.11.^[53]

3. This term is also taken from its occurrence in *ep. Petr.*, 1.2 and *Cont.* 1.1. [↩](#)
4. See *Pan.* 30.15.1-2: Χρῶνται δὲ καὶ ἄλλαις τισὶ Βίβλοις, δῆθεν ταῖς Περιόδοις καλουμέναις Πέτρου ταῖς διὰ Κλήμεντος γραφεῖσαις, νοθεύσαντες μὲν τὰ ἐν αὐταῖς, ὀλίγα δὲ ἀληθινὰ ἐάσαντες, κτλ. [↩](#)
5. Adolf Hilgenfeld, *Die clementinischen Rekognitionen und Homilien* (Leipzig: Chr. E. Kollmann, 1848), cited in Jones, “Pseudo-Clementines,” 9n41. Hilgenfeld developed a view similar to Dodwell’s before him; see H. Dodwell, *Dissertationes in Irenaeum* (Oxford, 1689), 439–46, cited in Jones, “Pseudo-Clementines,” 8n36. [↩](#)
6. Karl Reinhold Köstlin, review of Adolf Hilgenfeld, “Die clementinischen Rekognitionen und Homilien, nach ihrem Ursprung und Inhalt dargestellt,” in *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* (1849), cols. 577–78, 585, 608, 615, cited in F. Stanley Jones, *An Ancient Jewish Christian Source on the History of Christianity: Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions 1.27-71* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 5n13. [↩](#)
7. Gerhard Uhlhorn, *Die Homilien und Rekognitionen des Clemens Romanus* (Göttingen: Dieterische Buchhandlung, 1854), 351, cited in Jones, “Pseudo-Clementines,” 9n42. [↩](#)
8. Another important contribution was his argument for locating the *Grundschrift* in Syria; earlier scholarship placed it in Rome. See Uhlhorn, *Die Homilien*, 343–64, 381–429, cited in Jones, “Pseudo-Clementines,” 9n44. [↩](#)
9. Jones, “Pseudo-Clementines,” 10. [↩](#)
10. See Richard Adelbert Lipsius, *Die Quellen der römischen Petrus-Sage* (Kiel: Schwerssche Buchhandlung, 1872), 13–46., cited in Jones, “Pseudo-Clementines,” 15n97. [↩](#)
11. Hans Waitz, *Die Pseudoklementinen: Homilien und Rekognitionen* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1904), 2–15, 16–48, cited in Jones, “Pseudo-Clementines,” 11n57. [↩](#)
12. See Waitz, *Die Pseudoklementinen*, 74–75, 366, cited in Jones, “Pseudo-Clementines,” 11n61. [↩](#)
13. Carl Schmidt, *Studien zu den Pseudo-Clementinen* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1929), 278, 313, cited in Jones, “Pseudo-Clementines,” 12n66. [↩](#)
14. Schmidt, *Studien*, 286–88, cited in Jones, “Pseudo-Clementines,” 13n67. [↩](#)
15. Jones, “Pseudo-Clementines,” 14. See also Waitz, *Die Pseudoklementinen*, 340; Bernhard Rehm, “Zur Entstehung der pseudoclementinischen Schriften,” *ZNW* 37 (1938): 77–184; Hans Joachim Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte des Judenchristentums*

- (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1949), 38–41; Georg Strecker, *Das Judenchristentum in den Pseudoklementinen* (Berlin: Akademie, 1981), 256, 259, 267, 291. [↩](#)
16. Jones, “Pseudo-Clementines,” 14, especially nn82, 83. See also Manns, “Les Pseudo-Clémentines,” 164–65. [↩](#)
 17. Jan N. Bremmer, “Pseudo-Clementines: Texts, Dates, Places, Authors and Magic,” in *The Pseudo-Clementines*, ed. Jan N. Bremmer (Leuven: Peeters 2010), 1. [↩](#)
 18. See Jones, “Pseudo-Clementines,” 14–33. [↩](#)
 19. Ibid., 69. [↩](#)
 20. Juda Bergmann, “Les éléments juifs dans les pseudo-clémentines,” *REJ* 46 (1903): 89–98. [↩](#)
 21. Ibid., 89 (translation mine). [↩](#)
 22. G. B. Bazzana, “Eve, Cain, and the Giants: The Female Prophetic Principle and its Succession in the Pseudo-Clementine Novel,” in *Nouvelles intrigues pseudo-clémentines*, ed. Frédéric Amsler et al. (Lausanne: Editions du Zebre, 2008), 314. [↩](#)
 23. Uhlhorn, *Die Homilien*, 126–31. [↩](#)
 24. Waitz, *Die Pseudoklementinen*, 259–70, for Old Testament quotations; New Testament quotations are found on 271–361. [↩](#)
 25. See especially Leslie Kline, *The Sayings of Jesus in the Pseudo-Clementine Homilies* (Missoula: Society of Biblical Literature, 1975). [↩](#)
 26. The “Clementine Homilies,” in *Studia Biblica et Ecclesiastica: Essays in Biblical and Patristic Criticism* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1890), 2:157–93 (italics mine). [↩](#)
 27. Jean Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), 81–115. [↩](#)
 28. Ibid., 87 (italics original). [↩](#)
 29. Hans Joachim Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1949). [↩](#)
 30. Strecker, *Das Judenchristentum*, 117–36. [↩](#)
 31. E.g., in Georg Strecker’s estimation (ibid., 249), “Gen 49.10 hat im Weissagungsbeweis der Alten Kirche eine bedeutende Stellung innegehabt.” Strecker cites Tertullian, *Marc.* (4.11 CSEL 47); Eusebius, *Eclogae propheticae* 1.8; and *Constitutiones apostolicae* 6.11.10. [↩](#)
 32. Kelley Coblenz Bautch, “Obscured by the Scriptures, Revealed by the Prophets: God in the Pseudo-Clementine Homilies,” in *Histories of the Hidden God: Concealment and Revelation in Western Gnostic, Esoteric, and Mystical Traditions*, Gnostica, ed. April D. DeConick and Grant Adamson (Durham: Acumen, 2013), 120–36. It was only in the final moments of the present book’s publication that Prof. Bautch’s essay came

into my hands. It should be noted that she and I have examined facets of the subject of oral tradition in the *Hom.* independently of one another.

Prof. Bautch's essay and my book did not have the opportunity to be informed by one other. ↵

33. J. Neville Birdsall, "Problems of the Clementine Literature," in *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways A.D. 70 to 135*, ed. James D. G. Dunn (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 347–61. ↵
34. *Ibid.*, 352. ↵
35. Jerome, *Commentariorum in Isaiam* 4.11.2. ↵
36. Annette Yoshiko Reed, "'Jewish Christianity' after the 'Parting of the Ways,'" in *The Ways That Never Parted*, ed. Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 2005), 189–231. ↵
37. The selections Reed analyzes include *Rec.* 1.21–71 (for its description of salvation history); *Hom.* 8.5–7 and *Rec.* 4.5 (for its treatment of Moses and Jesus as teachers of truth); *Hom.* 8–11 / *Rec.* 4–6 (for its treatment of demons, Jews, the salvation of Gentiles, as well as other Jewish Christian features). ↵
38. See Hans Joachim Schoeps's comment (*Jewish Christianity*, 122), "I see no point in renewing the debate concerning the complicated literary situation presented by the Clementine novel, into which the *Kerygmata Petrou* has been incorporated." ↵
39. Reed, "Jewish Christianity," 1. ↵
40. G. H. van Kooten, "Pagan, Jewish and Christian Philanthropy in Antiquity: A Pseudo-Clementine Keyword in Context," in Bremmer, *Pseudo-Clementines*, 36–58; C. Jedan, "Fautsus: Epicurean and Stoic? On the Philosophical Sources of the *Pseudo-Clementines*," in Bremmer, *Pseudo-Clementines*, 142–56; L. R. Lanzillotta, "Orphic Cosmogonies in the Pseudo-Clementines? Textual Relationship, Character and Sources of Homilies 6.3–13 and Recognitions 10.17–19.30," in Bremmer, *Pseudo-Clementines*, 115–41. ↵
41. E. J. C. Tigchelaar, "Manna-Eaters and Man-Eaters: Food of Giants and Men in the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* 8," in Bremmer, *Pseudo-Clementines*, 94–95. ↵
42. Amsler, "État de la Recherche récente." ↵
43. Noteworthy in this regard is Nicole Kelley, *Knowledge and Religious Authority in the Pseudo-Clementines: Situating the Recognitions in Fourth Century Syria* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006). ↵
44. *Ibid.*, 25. ↵
45. Reed, "Jewish Christianity," 201. ↵
46. *Ibid.*, 203. ↵
47. *Ibid.*, 203n52. ↵

48. Kevin Vaccarella, "Shaping Christian Identity: The False Scripture Argument in Early Christian Literature" (PhD diss., Florida State University, 2007), 127. [↩](#)
49. Graham Stanton, "Jewish Christian Elements in the Pseudo-Clementine Writings," in *Jewish Believers in Jesus*, ed. Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007), 307. [↩](#)
50. George W. E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch: a Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch Chapters 1–36; 81–108* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 1–2. [↩](#)
51. Relevant parallels in the *Recognitions* will also be treated. [↩](#)

The Rejection of Allegorism

2.1. INTRODUCTION TO THE EXEGETICAL THEORY IN THE PSEUDO-CLEMENTINE *HOMILIES*

The Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* (in twenty discourses) and *Recognitions* (in ten books) present a life of Clement of Rome (fl. 96 ce). The overarching narrative framework tells of Clement's quest to be reunited with his estranged family. Within this narrative, and at the outset of the tale, Clement happens to meet up with the apostle Peter, who quickly becomes Clement's beloved mentor. Clement accompanies Peter in his travels, following him closely as Peter engages in a series of heated debates with a certain Simon Magus.^[1] "Their conflict becomes the vehicle for debating philosophy and *the interpretation of Scripture*."^[2] The Pseudo-Clementines purport to be Clement's personal account of these debates.

In order to furnish proof for their respective positions, both Peter and Simon Magus appeal to the Scriptures (in Greek form), the "correct interpretation" of which is itself a matter of central importance for the Homilist.^[3] Just how, exactly, is one to arrive at a "correct interpretation"? What sort of criteria determine the proper interpretation of Scripture? This chapter will address such questions by identifying underlying exegetical principles at work in the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*, whereby a "correct interpretation" of the Pentateuch is to be achieved.

At the outset, a word is in order concerning the rationale for my isolation of the Pentateuch in the present study. Two sets of circumstances warrant this procedure. First, we know that within the broader Judeo-Hellenistic exegetical milieu, the Pentateuch received far greater attention than did other Jewish Scriptures.^[4] The Pentateuch was the most important part of the Jewish Scriptures and the first to be translated by Jews into another language. This point is readily apparent from the famous *Letter of Aristeas*. During the first century CE, Philo, the primary representative of Judeo-Hellenistic exegesis, bends nearly all of his exegetical energy toward the Greek Pentateuch alone. Not only in the Diaspora, but even within Palestine itself, some groups of Jews (Samaritans, for example) had as their Scripture a "limited" canon consisting only of the Pentateuch. From Josephus we learn that the Sadducees rejected the oral traditions of their Pharisaic contemporaries on the grounds that those traditions were not

found written in the Mosaic legislation.^[5] Thus, during the Hellenistic period in Alexandria, and extending through the end of the Second Temple period in Palestine, for many Jewish exegetes it was the Pentateuch that received the greatest amount of attention.

In addition to the centrality of the Pentateuch within Judeo-Hellenistic traditions, a second circumstance emerges from the witness of the texts of the Pseudo-Clementines themselves, thus warranting the isolation of the Pentateuch for the present study.^[6] The following three examples demonstrate how this is so. First, we may begin with the *Letter of Peter to James* (hereafter *ep. Petr.*). In *ep. Petr.*, Peter charges James to transmit Peter's books only in a manner that emulates the way in which Moses delivered the Torah to the Seventy who succeeded to his chair. I will discuss this passage in greater detail later. For now, it will suffice to recognize the emphasis placed on the oral tradition in the *Homilies* in connection with Moses' oral transmission of the Torah. Indeed, as we shall see, the theory of the false pericopes itself is constructed on the basis of a particular understanding of the Torah's transmission and (eventual) transcription. Second, *Rec.* 10.42.1–4 contains one of the more important statements on exegetical theory, which I will be addressing in my study. In that passage, the allegorical approach is explicitly rejected. The specific prohibition in *Rec.* 10.42.1–4 concerns the allegorical approach as it is applied to the *lex dei*, that is, the Pentateuch. Third, when we turn to the *Homilies*, we encounter the following data.

1. The first clear display of actual exegetical activity is found in *Hom.* 2.26. In this text, the Homilist focuses on Adam, Cain and Abel, the Patriarchs, Aaron, and Moses—all figures from the Pentateuch.
2. In *Hom.* 2.22, one of the early charges laid against Simon is that he “allegorizes the things of the law” (ὁ νόμος = Torah).
3. *Hom.* 33 alludes to the exodus story in order to illustrate Peter's upcoming debates with Simon. (Diseases were produced by Aaron's rod; then remedies were given through Moses' prayers. So also Simon's “miracles” are not for “the healing of humanity,” while Peter's prayers are what bring healing.)
4. *Hom.* 2.38 and 3.47 concern the (oral) transmission of the Pentateuch, the accretion of false passages that crept into the Pentateuch (which

- was committed to writing sometime after Moses died) as it underwent stages of redaction. The theory of the false pericopes is linked especially with the nature of the Pentateuch in its written form.
5. *Hom.* 2.42–45 raises a series of rhetorical questions dealing with various types of false passages. In *Hom.* 2.52, the first clear illustration of false passages concerns the “just men recorded in the law.”^[7]
 6. Simon sets out to prove that “the books current among the Jews” say there are many gods.^[8] The ensuing debate in *Hom.* 3.38–43 centers on Genesis, and 3.44–46 concerns Numbers. In *Hom.* 3.48 Simon’s question (and Peter’s reply) concerns specifically “the things in the law which are from the tradition of Moses.”
 7. In *Hom.* 3.50, Peter relates the True Prophet’s teaching on how to adjudicate between true and false pericopes in the Scriptures. In this instance, Peter recalls the time when Jesus was chiding the Sadducees. From Josephus we learn that Sadducees rejected the oral traditions of the Pharisees because they were not written in the Torah (*Ant.* 13.297–98). The material in *Hom.* 3.50–57 concerns the True Prophet’s words regarding the proper interpretation of the Pentateuch. Indeed, the entire catalog of the True Prophet’s sayings in 3.50–57 exclusively addresses the Pentateuch. Jesus says in *Hom.* 3.51.1, “I have not come to destroy the law” (οὐκ ἤλθον καταλῦσαι τὸν νόμον). It is significant that the second part of the original Matthean “law or prophets” (ἤλθον καταλῦσαι τὸν νόμον ἢ τοὺς προφῆτας) is omitted from this saying.
 8. The Appion-Clement disputation in *Hom.* 4–7 concerns especially the “law of the Jews.”^[9] In this block of material, the “law of the Jews” is brought into discussion with the question of the ethical value and proper interpretation of Greek myth. This marks yet another instance of the circumstance discussed above. For in this case, the Appion-Clement debates accord with the general observation that “in the Hellenistic period, Jewish study of the Torah in general was influenced or stimulated by the study of Homer among the Greeks.”^[10]
 9. *Hom.* 8 presents Jesus and Moses as equal teachers.^[11] It also contains a large block of Enochic material (i.e., a “midrashic” retelling of an episode in the Pentateuch, in Genesis 6).
 10. *Hom.* 10 alludes to the Decalogue.

11. The “harmony criterion” (see below, chapter 6) is employed at length in the Homilist’s exegesis of Gen. 1:26 (*Hom.* 11.4).
12. The “seven pillars of the world” (Adam, Enoch, Noah; Abraham, Isaac, Jacob; Moses) mentioned in *Hom.* 18.14 are famous biblical figures known from the Pentateuch.

Thus my isolation of the Pentateuch in this study is warranted by (1) the privileged position the Pentateuch enjoyed within Hellenistic Judaism more generally and (2) the Pseudo-Clementines’ own focus on the Pentateuch in particular.

Now, the theory of exegesis put forth in the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* represents an attempt to come to terms with the general (problematic) character of the Pentateuch, as the Homilist perceives it. That is, owing to its aggregate nature, the Pentateuch displays various inconsistencies and contradictions, real or perceived.^[12] The Pentateuch also contains certain “morally offensive” passages, for example, that Noah got drunk, or that Moses killed an Egyptian; or other “theologically problematic” passages, for example, those which suggest that more than one god was responsible for creating the cosmos. Furthermore, the Pentateuch is marked by a peculiar polysemous quality, which may occasion potentially discordant interpretations, thereby obstructing the desired “correct” interpretation. An apt description of Scripture’s “polysemous quality” is given in *ep. Petr.*, where reference is made to Scripture’s “sinewy” quality.^[13] As it says in 1.3,

[οἱ ὁμόεθνοι] κατὰ μηδένα τρόπον ἄλλως φρονεῖν ὑπὸ
τῶν πολλὰ νευρουσῶν γραφῶν ἐξοδευθῆναι
δυνηθέντες.

[The people of Moses] can in no way be compelled to think otherwise, nor can they be much led astray by the “sinewy” [i.e., multivalent or ambiguous] quality of the Scriptures.^[14]

In an effort to obtain and preserve a correct interpretation of the Scriptures in the face of these circumstances, the Pseudo-Clementines adopt a unique approach to the Pentateuch. This approach includes the conviction that the allegorical method of interpretation is completely inappropriate when it comes to the Pentateuch. As we shall see, allegorism is rejected on the grounds that it imposes a “foreign, external sense” on the text of Scripture.

[15] In this way, the rejection of allegorism represents, in part, the expression of a more basic concern for the *sensus litteralis* of the Scriptures. Furthermore, this *sensus litteralis* is not to be allegorized but to be handled in keeping with a certain oral, ancestral tradition. In addition to this, in his avoidance of the allegorical approach, and in keeping with his concern for the *sensus litteralis*, the Homilist (perhaps ironically) espouses the theory that the Pentateuch contains various “false pericopes.” [16] These false pericopes tend to be those types of passages that, under other circumstances, could be interpreted allegorically. Rather than allegorize difficult or offensive passages, the Homilist rejects them out of hand as “false.” On what basis does he do this? In part because such passages are thought not to have originated from Moses himself but to have crept in over a period of time—after Moses’ death and after the Torah was committed to writing. The exegetical theory in the Pseudo-Clementines largely concerns the proper adjudication of these false passages.

I wish to propose, then, that the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* maintain a unique posture toward the Pentateuch by the use of three distinct external criteria, according to which the Scriptures are evaluated. By “external” I mean that such criteria refer to something “outside of” the Pentateuch in order to elucidate the various passages of Scripture under consideration. I suggest that these three criteria can be grouped together under “tradition” on the one hand and “philosophy” on the other. We may set out the criteria in the following way:

Tradition	Philosophy
1. The True Prophet’s teaching 2. The oral tradition	3. The harmony criterion

The three external criteria I am proposing are briefly introduced as follows:

Tradition:

1. *The True Prophet's teaching.* Jesus is the “True Prophet” in this corpus, and he differs notably from the Christ of the (now canonical) Gospel tradition. In the Pseudo-Clementines, the True Prophet and his teaching are vital for the proper interpretation of Scripture.

2. *The oral tradition.* Moses orally communicated the law “with its solutions” (from λύσις) to the seventy elders, who became the first links in a chain of oral transmission. This concept of an oral tradition—of a “rabbinic” type—helps ensure and secure a proper understanding of Scripture. The oral tradition is a body of teaching that exists independently of the True Prophet’s own teaching.

Philosophy:

3. *The harmony criterion.* Some passages of the Pentateuch, more than others, are thought to be “in harmony” with the physical creation and with God. Such passages function as a sure criterion by which other (sometimes “contrary”) passages are to be appropriately handled. The harmony criterion can be said to have a “dual” reference, whereby the “primary element” refers to *creation*, and the “secondary element” to the Creator. Underlying this differentiation is the more general distinction between Creator and creation, as it was maintained within Hellenistic Judaism.

It is on the basis of these three external criteria that the Scriptures are to be evaluated, the false pericopes addressed, and a “correct interpretation” thereby achieved and preserved. The general structure of my study will therefore consist of a detailed discussion of these criteria. In the present chapter, I look at the theoretical basis for the Homilist’s rejection of allegorism on principle, as well as his basic “literalist” orientation toward the Pentateuch. In chapter 3, I will discuss the theory of the “false pericopes.” In chapter 4, I will deal with the True Prophet’s teaching as the first of the three external criteria under consideration. The focus of chapter 5 will be on the role of the oral tradition, followed by what I am calling the

harmony criterion in chapter 6. Thus we begin with the Homilist's rejection of allegorism.

2.2. THE REJECTION OF ALLEGORISM

The Pseudo-Clementines were well aware of the Pentateuch's ambiguities and discordances. One way to address this situation, of course, would have been to engage in allegorical interpretation.^[17] But the Pseudo-Clementines categorically reject this as a viable option. For the interpreter is beholden to “take the sense of truth from the Scriptures themselves.” This idea—the rejection of allegorical interpretation on principle—is articulated most explicitly in *Rec.* 10.42.1–4. In order to better appreciate this important passage, a word is in order about the general narrative context of *Rec.* 10.42, and a relevant parallel in *Hom.* 6–7, which contains Clement's own critique of the allegorical method.

In *Hom.* 6–7, Clement and Appion debate the question of the allegorical interpretation of the Greek myths. Both *Hom.* 6–7 and *Rec.* 10.17–19, 30–34 present extended discussions about the allegorical interpretations of Greek mythology.^[18] The underlying concern, especially as it appears in *Hom.* 6–7, is the question of the proper locus of “piety” (ἡ εὐσεβία). Appion, on the one hand, argues that piety is to be found within Greek *paideia*, especially in the poetic stories of the gods (after they have been interpreted allegorically, that is). Clement, on the other hand, argues that “piety” is to be found in the Pentateuch. In *Hom.* 6.11–16, Clement, who is all too familiar with and unimpressed by Appion's explanations, summarizes and critiques Appion's allegories.^[19] I will more fully consider the Appion-Clement debates over the question of piety below.

For now, I wish to highlight the importance of *Rec.* 10.42.1–4 for its unambiguous, explicit statement on the rejection of all allegorism on the grounds that it is regarded as an illegitimate exegetical method. This statement takes on particular significance when we recognize that Peter's words are directed specifically to the interpretation of the *lex dei*, that is, the Pentateuch. The passage is important and worth citing in full. We read in *Rec.* 10.42.1–4:

Et Petrus, conlaudans prosecutionem eius, ait: Multas,
ut video, ingeniosi homines ex his quae legunt
verisimilitudines capiunt, et ideo diligenter

observandum est, ut lex dei cum legitur, non secundum proprii ingenii intellegentiam legatur. sunt enim multa verba in scripturis divinis, quae possunt trahi ad eum sensum, quem sibi unusquisque sponte praesumpsit; quod fieri non oportet. non enim sensum quem extrinsecus adtuleris alienum et extraneum debes quaerere, quomodo ex scripturarum auctoritate confirmes, sed ex ipsis scripturis sensum capere veritatis; et ideo oportet ab eo intellegentiam discere scripturarum, qui eam a maioribus secundum veritatem sibi traditam servat, ut et ipse posit ea quae recte suscepit, competenter aderere.

Then Peter, having commended Niceta's explanation, said: As I see it, clever people make conjectures^[20] from the things they read. Therefore great care is to be taken, that when the law of God is read, it is not read according to our own subjective understanding. For there are many expressions in the divine Scriptures that can be pulled toward that sense which each person preconceives for himself as he wishes—a thing that ought not happen. *For you should not seek a foreign and external sense, which you have imported from outside, in that you verify it from the authority of Scripture; but you ought to take the sense of truth from the Scriptures themselves.* So therefore it is necessary to learn the correct interpretation of the Scriptures from the one who preserves it *according to the ancestral tradition handed down to him*, in order that he might properly declare that which he has correctly received.

This statement represents an important aspect of the theoretical basis for the rejection of allegorism: one must not import a “foreign and external” sense to the scriptural text. This passage also makes quite clear that the

Recognitionist is in fact cognizant of attempts to apply the allegorical method to the Pentateuch (*lex dei*). Olga Nesterova suggests,

Tout en se montrant très compétent en matière d'allégorèse païenne, l'auteur de l'*Écrit primitif*, de même que sa source juive, semble être tout à fait ignorant de la possibilité d'une adaptation de cette méthode à l'interprétation des textes scripturaires, et la critique de l'allégorèse dans les redactions des *Homélies* et des *Reconnaisances* est entièrement subordonnée à la critique du polythéisme: la seule question discutée est celle de la valeur de l'allégorèse comme mode de défense des croyances religieuses païennes.^[21]

While showing himself to be very competent in pagan allegory, the author of the base text, as well as its Jewish source, seems to be completely ignorant of the possibility of adapting this method to the interpretation of scriptural texts, and criticism of allegorism in the redactions of the *Homilies* and the *Recognitions* is entirely subordinated to the critique of polytheism: the only question discussed is that of the value of allegorism as a way of defending pagan religious beliefs.

While it may be true that the author of the “base text” was unfamiliar with the adaptation of the allegorical method to the Scriptures, the same cannot be said of the Recognitionist, into whose hands the base text ultimately arrived. For the Recognitionist is indeed aware of—and opposes—attempts to apply the allegorical method to the Pentateuch. The same holds true for the Homilist as well, as we shall see. Furthermore, the Recognitionist's critique of the allegorical method is not to be understood as one “entirely

subordinate to the critique of polytheism,” as Nesterova suggests. Nor does the opposition to allegorism merely concern “the question of its value as a way of defending pagan religious beliefs.” Rather, the nature of the critique, as it is put forth in *Rec.* 10.42, is of a more theoretical nature: the allegorical method involves importing a “foreign and external” sense to the scriptural text.

Such a formulation as the one given in *Rec.* 10.42 accords well with certain Antiochene criticisms leveled against the allegorical method.^[22] Diodore of Tarsus (d. 392), who is regarded as the founder of Antiochene exegesis in its classical formulation, says as much in the prologue to his *Commentary on the Psalms*. There Diodore describes the advantage of the “literalist” approach, which is mindful of and seeks to retain both the *historia* (the “historical sense” of the text) and the *theoria* (the “higher” or “spiritual” sense) in a balanced way:

καὶ ἐλληνισμοῦ ἀπαλλάττει ἕτερα ἀνθ’ ἐτέρων
ἀγορεύοντος καὶ ἀλλόκοτα ἐπείσφροντος.

It liberates [one] from a paganism that says some things in place of other things and that *introduces foreign subject matter*.^[23]

Diodore’s comment here reveals some important things about the nature of the Antiochene assessment of the allegorical method. Besides the fact that allegorism consists in “saying some things in place of others,” allegorism is also *closely connected with pagan thought*. Indeed, this circumstance marked a fundamental problem Antiochenes had with the whole enterprise of the allegorical method.^[24] For the present, however, it is sufficient to notice the actual terminology Diodore employs. For when he faults pagan allegorism, he does so on the grounds that it “introduces foreign material,” ἀλλόκοτα ἐπείσφerein. This is the same terminology employed in *Rec.* 10.42.3—*sensum quem extrinsecus adferre* [= ἐπείσφerein] *alienum et extraneum* [= ἀλλόκοτα].

The particular formulation given in *Rec.* 10.42 is, moreover, predicated on a specific assumption about the nature of the scriptural texts, namely, their polysemous or ambiguous quality:

sunt enim multa verba in scripturis divinis, quae
possunt trahi ad eum sensum, quem sibi unusquisque
sponte praesumpsit.

For there are many expressions in the divine
Scriptures that can be pulled toward that sense which
each person preconceives for himself as he wishes.

This assumption about the ambiguous quality of the Scriptures is explicitly highlighted in *ep. Petr.*, as I noted earlier. A similar description of Scripture's polysemous character is also found in *Hom.* 16:

πολλοῖς γὰρ καὶ διαφοροῖς τύποις ἐοικυῖαι πρόκεινται.
ἕκαστος οὖν κηρῷ ἐοικυῖαν τὴν αὐτοῦ προαίρεσιν
ἔχων, περιβλεψάμενος αὐτὰς καὶ πάντα εὐρὼν ἐν
αὐταῖς, ὅποῖον θεὸν εἶναι θέλει, τὴν (ὥς ἔφην) κηρῷ
ἐοικυῖαν προαίρεσιν ἐπιβαλὼν ἀπομάσσεται.

For [the Scriptures] are set out like many diverse
typecasts. Each person, then, having his own
predisposition [at the outset], then examines the
Scriptures, and, once he finds everything in them, he
impresses upon them his own predisposition—which
(as I said) is like wax—and he forges whatever sort of
God he so desires. [\[25\]](#)

It is this particular feature of the scriptural texts that presents a (potential) threat to a “correct” interpretation. Part of the problem with the allegorical method, then, as it is conceived in the Pseudo-Clementines, is that allegorism entails an abusive manipulation of the scriptural texts by imposing foreign material onto it. That is, the interpreter’s own “predisposition” or “preconception” (προαίρεσις/πρόληψις) counts as “foreign,” “external” material, which is not to be impressed on the scriptural texts. As it turns out, similar terminology is discernible in both *Rec.* 10.42 and *Hom.* 16.10. The former cautions against scriptural expressions being “drawn toward” a sense that the interpreter “preconceives”—*sunt enim multa verba in scripturis divinis, quae possunt trahi ad eum sensum*. The latter cautions against the interpreter taking his own preconception, or “predisposition” (προαίρεσις), and “impressing” it on the scriptural texts in order to discover “whatever he wishes” (θέλει . . . προαίρεσιν ἐπιβάλλειν = *sponte praesumere*).

Now, over the course of the disputations between Peter and Simon Magus, Simon will contend that “the books current among the Jews say that there are many gods,” and that the god portrayed in the Pentateuch is rather inferior.^[26] How will Simon do this? At this point, it is important to recognize the significance of what exactly Simon is accused of when it comes to his own method of exegesis. For when Simon is first introduced in *Hom.* 2, among his despicable vices is the fact that he “interprets allegorically the things of the law by means of his own preconceptions” (τὰ δὲ τοῦ νόμου ἰδίᾳ προλήψει ἀλληγορεῖ).^[27] Simon is thus indicted with the crime of interpreting the Pentateuch allegorically. Unfortunately for us, however, no further development of the precise nature of Simon’s allegorical activity in *Hom.* or *Rec.* is offered in any detail aside from the Homilist’s simple assertion in *Hom.* 2.22.6 given above.^[28]

In any case, it is clear that Simon’s *modus operandi* is (1) to employ the false passages of Scripture, and (2) to take advantage of Scripture’s polysemous quality—the *multa verba in scripturis divinis*—and then to seek scriptural support for his own “preconceptions.”^[29] In this way, the terminology employed in *Hom.* 2.2.6 is readily discernable in *Rec.* 10.42.2 above, where Latin *praesumpsit* = πρόληψις.

In sum, the three main passages I have just mentioned—*Rec.* 10.42, *Hom.* 16.10, and *Hom.* 2.22—tell us several important things about the

theoretical nature of the criticism lodged against the allegorical method, as it is given in the Pseudo-Clementines. First, the similar terminology present in all three demonstrates a notable degree of consistency in the Pseudo-Clementines' formulation of and opposition to the allegorical method. Second, allegorism is *defined as* imposing "foreign," "external material" onto the scriptural texts. Such a definition accords with Antiochene formulations directed toward the rejection of allegorism. Third, it is precisely this activity which characterizes Simon's basic strategy in his debates with Peter. An important implication of this latter point, moreover, is that there exists an implied relationship between Simon's approach (the imposition of external, foreign material onto the scriptural texts) and Simon's arsenal (the false pericopes). Again, as I noted above, among the things said of Simon in the *Homilies*, two stand out in this regard: Simon "allegorizes the things of the law" (*Hom.*2.22.6), and he comes "armed with the false passages of the Scriptures" (*Hom.*3.3.3). However, as for Simon's actual "allegorizing" the things of the law, no real examples of his allegorical exegesis exist in the narrative, as I noted above. Any concrete examples of allegorism come not from Simon but from his literary counterpart Appion, whom we shall discuss below.^[30]

Now, rather than engage in allegorical interpretation, the interpreter must "take the sense of truth from the Scriptures themselves."^[31] And in order to obtain a "correct interpretation," the interpreter must be well acquainted with a certain "ancestral tradition":

et ideo oportet ab eo intellegentiam discere
scripturarum, qui eam a maioribus secundum
veritatem sibi traditam servat, ut et ipse posit ea quae
recte suscepit, competenter aderere.

So therefore it is necessary to learn the correct interpretation of the Scriptures from the one who preserves it according to the ancestral tradition handed down to him, in order that he might properly declare that which he has correctly received.^[32]

Both the technical terminology employed—*tradere*—and the general tenor of the Pseudo-Clementine corpus make clear that the nature of this ancestral tradition is indeed *oral*.^[33] As for the general *function* of this oral, ancestral tradition, it clearly functions to preserve the “correct interpretation” of the Scriptures.^[34] More specifically, *Rec.* 10.42 makes clear that the oral tradition also serves as a sort of “protectant” against allegorism. That is, the oral tradition functions (in part) to guard against idiosyncratic preconceptions being brought in from the outside, which would seek to derive scriptural “proof” by manipulating the polysemous character of the Scriptures to conform to that preconception. When it comes to the very law of God (*lex dei*), such things must not be done.

As we draw this section to a close, it is appropriate to consider yet a further dimension of the Pseudo-Clementines’ opposition to allegorism; namely, the association of the allegorical method with Greek myth. It is significant that *Rec.* 10.42 itself sits at the conclusion of a lengthy discussion of Greek mythology and the allegorical interpretations of it (*Rec.* 10.17–41). Similarly, in *Hom.* 4–7 (which contains a good many parallels to *Rec.* 10.17–41), the discussion of allegorism is also carried out directly with reference to its association with Greek myth. Thus in both the *Rec.* and in the *Hom.*, we find the implied concession that allegorism somehow belongs to pagan myth and (by extension) should therefore have nothing to do with the Pentateuch. The Appion-Clement debates in *Hom.* 4–7 in particular will show us how this is so. To these we now turn.

2.3. ALLEGORISM, GREEK *PAIDEIA*, AND THE PENTATEUCH

An important discussion about Greek allegorical exegesis is preserved in the Appion-Clement debates found in *Hom.* 4–7. The material in this block is generally agreed to derive from an independent source, perhaps even a “Hellenistic Jewish apology.”^[35] As Annette Yoshiko Reed puts it, “Clement’s critique of Greek philosophy, mythology, and education is framed as a defense of Jews and Judaism. For this, the *Homilies* may be ultimately indebted to a Hellenistic Jewish source.”^[36] Nesterova also recognizes that this particular block of material is significant:

Le témoignage du roman pseudo-clémentin est particulièrement précieux, car la discussion sur l’allégorie, présentée dans les deux redactions du roman et fondée sur un écrit juif perdu, fait la lumière sur l’attitude vis-à-vis de la tradition allégorie païenne dans les milieux juif, judéo-chrétien et chrétien.^[37]

The witness of the Pseudo-Clementine novel is especially valuable because the discussion of allegorism, presented in the two redactions of the novel and based on a lost Jewish source, sheds light on the attitude vis-à-vis the pagan allegorical tradition in Jewish, Jewish-Christian, and Christian milieus.

Indeed, texts like *Hom.* 4–7 have sparked in some scholars a “new appreciation of the pseudo-Clementine literature as evidence for Christian attempts to grapple with the perils and prestige of ‘pagan’ culture.”^[38] But Reed is surely correct in her caution that “new attention to the appropriation and representation of ‘pagan’ culture should not lead us to dismiss the enduring place of Judaism in the pseudo-Clementine tradition.”^[39]

The Appion-Clement debates contribute to our understanding of the exegesis of the Pentateuch, the main theme of my study, for they offer an example of how the Homilist conceptualizes the value of the allegorical

method in relationship to Greek myth (an integral component of Greek *paideia*), and also in relationship to the Pentateuch. In addition to this, the Appion-Clement debates in *Hom.* 4–7 also allow us to see a fundamental aspect of the “function” of the Pentateuch, namely, that it, and not Greek *paideia*, leads people toward “piety” (εὐσέβεια) and “living temperately” (σωφρονίζειν).^[40] Indeed, the whole question of “piety” (εὐσέβεια) is a central concern in the Appion-Clement debates.^[41] Thus “the subject matter of the exchange mainly concerns the comparative value of Jewish and Greek culture, especially as it involves education and the inculcation of virtue. When challenged by Apion to justify his decision to ‘speak and act after the manner of the Jews (τὰ Ἰουδαίων ποιεῖν καὶ λέγειν),’ Clement freely admits to having abandoned Greek ἔθνη, ‘customs,’ in favor of the sublime doctrines of Jewish monotheism.”^[42] The Appion-Clement debate is cast as an ἀγών, a formal contest, intended to deal with a particular “problem” (ἐπὶ τὸ ζητούμενον).^[43] Among the questions the two men address is this: Where is piety to be found?^[44] Is piety to be found in Greek *paideia* (Appion) or in the “law of the Jews” (Clement)? Appion advocates the value of Greek *paideia* and its mythic stories of the gods for promoting piety (how he does this will be addressed momentarily), while Clement opposes Greek *paideia* in its entirety, rejecting it as a “most dreadful subject of a wicked demon.”^[45] We are told that specific to the “law of the Jews” (also called the “teaching of the Jews,” ὁ Ἰουδαίων λόγος) is its ability to do what Greek *paideia* cannot: the teaching of the Pentateuch leads people toward “piety” (εὐσέβεια) and “living temperately” (σωφρονίζειν).

In *Hom.* 4.6.2, we are introduced to Appion himself, who is identified as being “a friend of Clement’s father.” Now, according to other ancient sources, in 40 ce, Appion acted as the leader of the Alexandrian delegation to Rome to argue against Philo before Caligula (37–41 ce). Appion is also said to have taught in Rome during the reign of Tiberius (14–37 ce) and of Claudius (41–54 ce).^[46] This means that Clement, whose pontificate is to be placed somewhere between the years 92 and 101, was likely not even born until *after* Appion had already died. Why then does the Homilist have Clement debating with Appion? A word on this issue is in order.

Appion is described as “Appion Pleistonikes, the man of Alexandria, a *grammatikos* by profession.”^[47] Appion was “notorious among Hellenistic Jewish writers for his virulent enmity toward the Jews.”^[48] As for his

nickname, several ancient sources attest to the epithet “Pleistonikes.”^[49] The name means something like “victor of many contests.”^[50] As for his Alexandrian origin, Josephus reports that Appion claims to be a citizen of Alexandria, priding himself as “the top man of all the Egyptians.”^[51] Also well attested is Appion’s reputation as a *grammatikos*.^[52] As Jan N. Bremmer points out, “Appion’s Homeric scholarship was his main claim to fame.”^[53] John Dillery even links Appion’s Homeric scholarship in particular with Josephus’s own attack on Appion.^[54]

In addition to Appion’s nickname, his connection with Alexandria, and his reputation as a *grammatikos*, we learn from *Hom.* 5.2.4 a few other important things about Appion:

ἐγὼ δὲ τὸν ἄνδρα οὐκ ἄγνοῶν πάνυ Ἰουδαίους δι
ἀπεχθείας ἔχοντα, ὥς καὶ πολλὰ βιβλία κατ’ αὐτῶν
συγγεγραφέναι, καὶ αὐτὸν Σίμωνα νῦν οὐ διὰ
φιλομάθειαν αὐτὸν εἰς φιλίαν προσέμενον, ἀλλ’
ἐπειδὴ Σαμαρέα αὐτὸν οἶδεν μισοιουδαῖόν τε ὄντα καὶ
κατὰ Ἰουδαίων προεληλυθότα, διὰ τοῦτο αὐτὸν
προσφκειώσατο, ἵνα δύναίτο κατὰ Ἰουδαίων τι παρ’
αὐτοῦ μανθάνειν.

But I [Clement] knew full well that the man
[Appion] has a deep hatred for the Jews, that he has
authored many books against them, and that he has
formed a friendship with Simon himself—not for the
sake of learning together, though; Appion merely
knew that [Simon] was a Samaritan, a hater of Jews,
and that he had come out in opposition against them.
This is why Appion has associated with Simon, in
order that he might learn something from him [to use]
against the Jews.

Here the Homilist brings Appion and Simon into close association with one another.^[55] According to William Adler, this Appion-Simon linkage offers

a way to explain the otherwise chronologically problematic Appion-Clement linkage noted above:

The redactor of the *Homilies* faced difficulties in assimilating Apion into the narrative. . . . In order to make a place for Apion in the narrative, the editor first had to somehow link Apion with the real enemy of Peter and Clement, Simon Magus. To accomplish this, he first transferred Apion from his customary haunts in Alexandria and Rome to Tyre. . . . The editor also had to explain how Apion, the grammarian of Alexandria, managed to strike up a friendship with the Samaritan Simon Magus. The common link was supposedly hatred of the Jews. [56]

The emphasis on Appion's scholarship and his anti-Semitism suggest a connection between our Appion and the one against whom Josephus himself wrote. However, Dillery points out that "throughout the crucial first section of Josephus' [*Contra Appionem*], Appion is referred to as ὁ γραμματικός." [57] Dillery has proposed that

Josephus was not only critiquing Appion's account of the Jews . . . in his own *Contra Appionem*, but was also commenting on Appion as a Homeric scholar. In fact, I think that Josephus was aware that much of Appion's fame was due to his lexical work, and in order to make his criticism succeed, Josephus mounted an attack on Appion's reputation as a *grammatikos* as well, even though it did not really concern his main target, namely, Appion's historical writing. [58]

Again, Dillery sees a strong connection between Josephus’s attack on Appion and Appion’s Homeric scholarship. In this regard, it is significant that the material in *Hom.*4–6 concerns especially Greek mythology—including bits of the Homeric poems—and Appion’s own “scholarly” handling of those stories. These connections are important in that the identification of our Appion with Josephus’s Apion further evinces a clear mark of the Judeo-Hellenistic coloring of the *Homilies*. Moreover, given the circumstances enumerated above, together with the general Judeo-Hellenistic apologetic thrust of *Hom.*4–7, it is not unreasonable that the Homilist based his chronology of Appion on Josephus. Well, upon meeting Clement, Appion turns to his own companions, introducing them to Clement with these words:

Οὗτός ἐστιν Κλήμης, περὶ οὗ ὑμῖν τῆς τε εὐγενείας καὶ
τῆς ἐλευθεροπρεπείας πολὺν ἐποιούμην λόγον, ὅτι
ἀνὴρ πρὸς γένους Τιβερίου Καίσαρος ὢν καὶ πάσης
Ἑλληνικῆς παιδείας ἐξησκημένος ὑπὸ βαρβάρου
τινὸς, τὴν προσηγορίαν Πέτρου, τὰ Ἰουδαίων ποιεῖν
καὶ λέγειν ἠπάτηται.

This is Clement about whose noble pedigree and liberal education I have often made mention to you—that though he is a relative of Tiberius Caesar, and trained in all of Greek education, he has been deceived into doing and discussing things Jewish, having been trained by a certain barbarian called Peter. [\[59\]](#)

Appion then proceeds to invite his companions to join him in his attempt to “set Clement right” by getting Clement to see that he is acting “impiously” by forsaking the “customs” of their shared (pagan) cultural inheritance. As Alain Le Boulluec notes,

Pour Appion, représentant ici le point de vue de l'élite cultivée du I^{er} siècle de notre ère, la *piété* consiste principalement à observer *les usages ancestraux (patria)*.^[60]

For Appion, here representing the views of the elite of the first century of our era, *piety* consists mainly in *the observance of ancestral customs (patria)*.

The exchange between Clement and Appion concerning piety opens up as a debate over “truth” (ἡ ἀλήθεια) versus “custom” (ἡ συνήθεια). According to Clement,

Τὸν εὐσεβεῖν προαιρούμενον οὐ πάντως φυλάσσειν
δεῖ τὰ πάτρια, ἀλλὰ φυλάσσειν μὲν ἐὰν ᾗ εὐσεβῆ,
ἀποσεῖσθαι δὲ ἐὰν ἀσεβῇ τυγχάνῃ.

It is necessary that the person who desires to be pious not altogether to observe the ancestral customs; but to observe them only if they actually happen to *be* pious, but to shake them off if they happen to be impious.^[61]

For this reason, Clement broke from his own father's way of life, which consisted of believing in “the false and wicked myths of the Greeks.” For those “mythological gods” do not offer examples worthy of emulation. Included within the ancestral customs Clement rejects are the notions of both “fate” (ἡ εἰμαρμένη)—also called “astral determinism” (ἡ γένεσις)—and “random destiny” (τὸ ἀπρονόητον).^[62] These are rejected partially on the grounds that they make repentance from wicked deeds meaningless. Turning to Greek *paideia* itself, Clement says,

Πλὴν ἐπάνειμι ἐπὶ τὴν πρωτίστην τῶν Ἑλλήνων
δόξαν, τὴν πολλοὺς καὶ παντοπαθεῖς θεοὺς εἶναι
μυθολογοῦσαν. . . ὧν οὐδὲ αὐτοὶ ἀγνοεῖτε ἐκ παιδίας
Ἑλληνικῆς ὁρμώμενοι οὕς ἐπαιδεύθητε βίους, ἵνα ὡς
ζηλωταὶ τῶν θεῶν τὰ ὅμοια πράττητε.

In any case, I now return to the foremost doctrine of the Greeks, which says in a mythic way that there are many gods, gods which are subject to all sorts of passions . . . of which things you yourselves, being keen on Greek education, are not ignorant. You have been taught about the lives of the gods in order that, as emulators of the gods, you might do similar deeds. [\[63\]](#)

Clement maintains that the “impious” ones are those who keep the “ancestral customs” that honor those gods, those who would accept the gods of the Greek myths as worthy of emulation. Such people “do not easily, or perhaps do not at all, live temperately [σωφρονίζειν],” says Clement. [\[64\]](#) In opposition to Greek *paideia*, Clement, then, deems the content of “the teaching of the Jews” alone as “most pious” (εὐσεβέστατος):

ἓνα πατέρα καὶ δημιουργὸν τοῦδε τοῦ παντός
εἰσηγούμενος, τῇ φύσει ἀγαθὸν καὶ δίκαιον· ἀγαθὸν
μέν ὡς μεταμελομένοις χαριζόμενον τὰ ἁμαρτήματα,
δίκαιον δὲ ὡς ἐκάστῳ μὴ μετανοοῦντι κατ’ ἀξίαν τῶν
πεπραγμένων ἐπεξιόντα.

One Father and Creator of all this world, by nature both “good” and “just”; good, in that he forgives sins to those who repent; but just, in that he issues

punishment to everyone who does not repent,
according to the merits of his actions.^[65]

The statement above in *Hom.*4.13.3 represents what Le Boulluec calls “a simplified version of Judaism” directed at the “impiety” of pagan Greek “custom.”^[66] Also significant about this statement is the way in which Clement emphasizes, offsets, and separately defines the two different descriptions of God, that is, that God is both “good” (ἀγαθός) and “just” (δίκαιος). This distinction evokes discussions in Philo and the rabbis concerning God’s two *middot*.^[67] The rabbis taught that the name אלהים denotes God’s “justice,” while יהוה denotes God’s “mercy.”^[68] In Philo, the situation is reversed: θεός denotes God’s beneficent, gracious, and creative power (i.e., God’s “goodness”); κύριος denotes God’s royal, ruling, or punishing power (i.e., God’s “justice”).^[69] Although the Homilist nowhere explicitly discusses these two different names for God, it would seem that he, like Philo, does associate *kyrios* with the royal, ruling, governing aspect of God:

Δέσποτα καὶ κύριε τῶν ὅλων, ὁ πατήρ καὶ θεός . . . σὺ
ἡ πρόφασις, σὺ ἡ δύναμις . . . σὺ γὰρ ἄρχων ἀρχόντων
καὶ κύριος κυρίων, δεσπότης βασιλέων.

O Master and *Lord* of all, [you are] father and God...
you are the *cause* and *power* . . . for you are the Ruler
of rulers, the Lord of lords, and the Master of kings.
^[70]

In any case, in Clement’s estimation, the teaching of the Jews is superior to both Greek *paideia* and Greek myth. For the teaching of the Jews contained in the Pentateuch offers instruction about the “Father and Creator of all this

world.” Moreover, the Jewish teaching about the “good and just” God is also “useful” (σύμφορος) for life:

ἕκαστος γὰρ προσδοκία τοῦ κριθήσεσθαι ὑπὸ τοῦ
παντεπόπτου θεοῦ πρὸς τὸ σωφρονεῖν μᾶλλον τὴν
ὀρμὴν λαμβάνει. εἰ δὲ καὶ ἀληθὴς εἴη ὁ λόγος,
ἀπήλλαξε μὲν τὸν σωφρόνως βεβιωκότα τῆς αἰωνίου
κολάσεως, προσευεργέτηκεν δὲ τοῖς ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ
αἰδίοις τε καὶ ἀπορρήτοις γιγνομένοις ἀγαθοῖς.

For each person, by the anticipation of being judged by the all-seeing God, receives the impulse toward living temperately. If this teaching is true, it keeps eternal punishment away from him who has lived temperately, and benefits him with eternal and innumerable good things from God.^[71]

The “benefits” offered by the law of the Jews as the proper source for piety based on “God’s righteous judgment” won Clement over. As he says,

διὰ τοῦτο ἐγὼ τῷ ἁγίῳ τῶν Ἰουδαίων θεῷ καὶ νόμῳ
προσέφυγον ἀποδεδωκὼς τὴν πίστιν ἀσφαλεῖ τῇ
κρίσει, ὅτι ἐκ τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ δικαίας κρίσεως καὶ νόμος
ὥριστα καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ πάντως τὸ κατ’ ἀξίαν ὧν ἔπραξεν
ὅπουδὴποτε ἀπολαμβάνει.

For this reason, I took refuge in the holy God and the law of the Jews, putting full confidence in the sure decision that [the] law has been established [on the basis] of God’s righteous judgment, that at some point

the soul will be paid back in full for the things that it has done.^[72]

A bit later, in *Hom.5*, Clement says he learned “from a certain Jew” both “to understand and to do the things that are proper to God” (τὰ θεῷ πρόποντα), thereby keeping him from being trapped by the “lying fables” of the Greek myths and (by extension) bringing him in line with living temperately.^[73] As Clement would have it, then, Greek *paideia* in general, and especially the stories of the gods, are unedifying at best and outright wicked at worst. For those stories are little more than tales of murder, lust, adultery, betrayal, incest, and all sorts of corruption. Their educative value is called into question, not least because of the noxious effect the stories of the gods can have on young people.^[74] As such, they are altogether unfit for cultivating any semblance of piety. So how might Appion himself respond to Clement’s critique? In an effort to defend both the reputation of the gods and Greek “ancestral custom,” Appion says that these stories are to be interpreted *allegorically*. Appion proceeds to explain that the ancients—the wise men who first told these stories—wished to express profound truths not about ethical living *per se*; they wished to express *truths about the physical cosmos*. In this way, then, the gods of Greek myth are not in fact corrupt themselves. Rather, the situation is that

οἱ ἀρχαῖοι τὰ μυστήρια μόνους τοὺς φιλομαθεῖς
εἰδέναι θέλοντες μύθοις οἷς εἴρηκας αὐτὰ
προεκάλυψαν. Ζῆνα γὰρ τὴν ζέουσαν οὐσίαν εἶναι
φυσιολογοῦσιν, Κρόνον δὲ τὸν χρόνον καὶ Ῥέαν τὴν
ἀεὶ ῥέουσιν τοῦ ὕδατος φύσιν.

the ancients, wishing that only those who love learning should know the mysteries, veiled them with those myths that you have mentioned. For [the myths] speak in “materialistic” terms, [depicting] the boiling

substance as “Zen”; time as “Kronos”; and the ever-flowing quality of water as “Rhea.”^[75]

Thus the wise men of old wished to limit the availability of their instruction only to “worthy students.” This is why the poets “encoded” their sound teachings in the guise of Greek myth, namely, in the form of “physical” allegories. Appion elaborates,

Τῶν πάλαι ἀνδρῶν οἱ σοφώτατοι, πᾶσαν ἀλήθειαν
αὐτοὶ καμάτῳ μεμαθηκότες, τοὺς ἀναξίους καὶ μὴ
ὀρεγομένους θεῶν μαθημάτων ἀπεκρύψαντο τὴν
ἐπιστήμην λαβεῖν.

The wisest men of old, men who by very hard work had learned all truth, hid knowledge from those who were unworthy, who would not exert themselves for lessons in physical matters.^[76]

Appion proceeds to mention a number of well-known tales of the Greek gods. He insists that these stories of the gods (e.g., the stories found in Homer and Hesiod) are not to be taken at face value. After having run through a litany of such tales, Appion concludes by explaining to Clement,

ἔχει τινὰ λόγον τὰ τοιαῦτα οἰκεῖον καὶ φιλόσοφον,
ἀλληγορίᾳ φρασθῆναι δυνάμενον, ὥστε σε ἀκούσαντα
θαυμάσαι.

Such stories have a proper and philosophical meaning, a meaning that can be explained allegorically such that you yourself would be amazed as you listen.^[77]

Now, Appion's approach to explaining Homer and Hesiod is akin to the way in which Stoics handled the same mythic stories of the gods. Cornutus (fl. 60 CE), for example, presents the Stoic approach, which sought to defend, by means of the same sort of "physical" allegorical interpretation, the wise men of old and their teachings:

Οὕτω δ' ἂν ἤδη καὶ τᾶλλα τῶν μυθικῶς παραδεδόσθαι
περὶ θεῶν δοκούντων ἀναγαγεῖν ἐπὶ τὰ
παραδεδειγμένα στοιχεῖα, ὧ παῖ, δύναιο, πεισθεῖς ὅτι
οὐχ οἱ τυχόντες ἐγένοντο οἱ παλαιοί, ἀλλὰ καὶ
συνιέναι τὴν τοῦ κόσμου φύσιν ἱκανοὶ καὶ πρὸς τὸ διὰ
συμβόλων καὶ αἰνιγμάτων φιλοσοφῆσαι περὶ αὐτῆς
εὐεπίφοροι.

It is my hope that you may be able in this same way to take the other things which have been handed down to us in mythical form, ostensibly about the gods, and may bring them into conformity with the elementary models I have taught you, convinced that the men of antiquity were no common men, but that they were competent to understand the nature of the cosmos and were inclined to make philosophical statements about it through symbols and enigmas. [78]

But this kind of approach, represented by Cornutus and Appion, is not satisfactory to Clement, and the ancient poets themselves are in no way "consistent" (ἀκόλουθος) in their accounts of the origins of the physical cosmos. For sometimes the poets say that "nature" (φύσις) was the "first cause"; at other times they say "mind" (νοῦς) was the first cause. [79] Clement finds it more reasonable by far to think there must be a "mind" that acted as the first cause and brought all things into existence. He asserts,

οὕτως ἀνάγκη τινὰ εἶναι νοῦν ἀγέννητον τεχνίτην, ὃς
τὰ στοιχεῖα ἢ διεστῶτα συνήγαγεν ἢ συνόντα
ἀλλήλοις πρὸς ζώου γένεσιν τεχνικῶς ἐκέρασεν καὶ ἔν
ἐκ πάντων ἔργον ἀπετέλεσεν· ἀδύνατον γὰρ ἄνευ
τινὸς νοῦ μείζονος πάνου σοφὸν ἔργον ἀποτελεῖσθαι.

Thus we are compelled to believe that there is some unbegotten craftsman, who either assembled the raw elements together (if they were separate) or (if they were together) he artistically mixed them together in order to generate life, and bring to completion one work out of it all. For it is impossible, without a certain mind that is greater than it, for such intelligent work to be wrought.^[80]

Thus Clement opposes these stories and their various allegorical explanations because either (1) they present “actual crimes of the gods,” in which case they can in no way serve as edifying moral exempla, or (2) these stories tell of things “falsely attributed to the gods.” Either way, the problem of the impious content of the Greek myths is not solved by recourse to allegorical explanations. Furthermore, those so-called wise men of old were themselves in the wrong because they “led men to sin,” in that they packaged their lessons in the garb of these “unworthy stories.” Thus the charge of impiety falls either to the gods themselves, to the myths about them, or to the wise men of old who sang them.

Although Clement has carefully examined the “many doctrines of philosophers,” none is as intellectually satisfying to him as “the teaching of the Jews,” which alone presents the unique “concept of monotheism” (τὸ μοναρχικὸν φρόνημα).^[81] Thus, in spite of clever allegorical explanations, those who would hold to the teachings of the Greek myths remain in no way able to “live temperately” (σωφρονίζειν).^[82]

Now, it is worth noting that nowhere in *Hom.* 4–6 does Clement address the question of whether allegorism, as a *method* of explaining

Greek myth, is legitimate. Clement merely displays his over familiarity with the allegorical method and finds himself simply unimpressed by Appion's allegorical interpretations of these stories. Yet Clement never comes out against the allegorical method *per se* when it comes to Greek myth.^[83] As it was for Plato, so it is for the Homilist: "The allegorical defense is simply set aside as irrelevant."^[84] No, instead Clement's critique is specifically directed at the "impious *content*" of the Greek myths, and how, for example, they have a particularly noxious effect upon young people:

διὰ τοῦτο αὐτῶν πολλῶ ἔλαττον οἱ κατ' ἀργὸν
βιοῦντες ἐξαμαρτάνουσιν, οὐκ εἰσηγμένοι πονηρῶς δι'
ῶν εἰσέχθησαν οἱ ταῦτα τολμῶντες, ἐκ παιδείας κακῆς
ἀσεβεῖν μεμαθηκότες. οἱ γὰρ ἐκ παιδὸς διὰ τῶν
τοιούτων μύθων μανθάνοντες γράμματα ἔτι ἀπαλῆς
οὔσης τῆς ψυχῆς τὰς τῶν λεγομένων θεῶν ἀσεβεῖς
πράξεις εἰς τὸν αὐτῶν συνφύουσι νοῦν. ὅθεν
ἐπαυξηθείσης τῆς ἡλικίας ὡς κακὰ σπέρματα
καταβληθέντα τῇ ψυχῇ τελεσφοροῦσιν.

For this reason, people who live in the country sin much less than they do, not having been corruptly inculcated by those teachings—teachings with which they who dare to do such things have been indoctrinated. For they who from their childhood learn letters by means of such fables, while their soul is still pliable, implant the impious deeds of those so-called gods into their own minds. Once they mature, they bring forth as ripe fruit [those same impious deeds], like evil seeds that were cast into the soul.^[85]

The concern for the youth in this critique of allegorism is similar to the one put forth in Plato's *Republic* (377–378d).^[86] Clement's problem with Greek

paideia, then, specifically has to do with its *content* because the stories of the gods simply cannot produce the good fruit that accords with “living temperately” (σωφρονεῖν). But when it comes to the Pentateuch, the situation is reversed. The allegorical interpretation of the Pentateuch is categorically rejected on principle, on the grounds that it constitutes inserting “foreign material” into Scripture.^[87] But the actual *content* of the “law of the Jews” is, of course, “useful” (σύμφορος) for living temperately.^[88] Thus, as far as the “law of the Greeks” (Greek *paideia*) is concerned, the content is rejected outright, while the method of allegorical interpretation is declared *irrelevant*. Conversely, regarding the “law of the Jews” (the Pentateuch), allegorism is categorically rejected, while the content is itself retained and affirmed.^[89] According to the Homilist (via the Appion-Clement debate in *Hom.* 4–6.26), “piety” and the proper resource for “temperate living” are to be found not in the “laws of the Greeks” but in the “law of the Jews.” Where Greek *paideia* fails, the Pentateuch succeeds.

2.4. *SENSUS LITTERALIS* IN THE *HOMILIES*

The *explicit rejection* of allegorism is also an *implicit affirmation* of the basic “historicity” of the Pentateuch. For the rejection of allegorism reflects a fundamental concern for the basic *sensus litteralis* of the Scriptures, and for their “moral-didactic” quality. As part of his own general philosophy, the Homilist shows a keen interest in “what is rational,” or “what is reasonable” (τὸ εὐλογον).^[90] Even so, this concern for “what is rational” in the Scriptures does not compel him to explain away the “unreasonable” or “problematic” passages by, say, offering allegorical interpretations of them. The “literalist” approach adopted by the *Homilies* in particular is marked by other distinctive traits. For example, there is next to nothing in the way of “christological” exegesis. This may come as a surprise, inasmuch as the Homilist is in some sense “(Jewish) Christian.” Also significant is the fact that there is virtually no “proof from prophecy.”^[91] This too might strike us as odd, given the emphasis throughout the *Homilies* on “prophecy” as the higher form of knowledge.^[92] Another important feature of the “literalist” approach at work in the *Homilies* is the concern for the “basic context” of a given Scripture. Finally, also relevant for this study is the way in which the Homilist interprets the human characters of the Pentateuch as “real people” and not as, say, symbols or metaphors. The historicity of these characters is at least implied by the absence of allegorism and/or typological interpretation. Rather, the human characters of the Pentateuch are understood primarily as “moral exempla.”

Now, the great Antiochene school of exegesis is well known for its affirmation of and desire to uphold the *sensus litteralis* of the text of Scripture.^[93] While the *Homilies* do not generally employ the precise exegetical terminology found among Antiochene sources, the *Homilies* do nonetheless share the same basic concern for what has been called the *historia* of the text.^[94] In addition to the *Homilies*’ attention to the *sensus litteralis* is the related concern for the general “moral” or “didactic” quality of the Pentateuch. This too was of interest among the Antiochenes. Both of these—the “literal” quality of the text and its capacity for proper “moral instruction”—emerge clearly in a passage like *Hom.* 2.52.1–3. Peter is here excising as “false” certain statements in Scripture that speak ill of the “righteous men recorded in the law.” Part of Peter’s defense of these

“righteous men recorded in the law” is fundamentally an expression of the Homilist’s interest in the “historical” and “didactic” quality of those Scriptures. Peter therefore seeks to vindicate Adam, on the grounds that Adam was actually “fashioned by God’s hands.”^[95] Noah is said to have been “found righteous above all the world.” As for Abraham, “on account of his temperance [σωφροσύνη], he was deemed worthy of many descendants.” “Temperance” (σωφροσύνη) is a central concept in ancient Greek ethics; in fact, it is one of the four cardinal virtues in Stoic thought.^[96]

This catalog continues by saying how Jacob “signaled the arrival of our Teacher” (τὴν τοῦ διδασκάλου ἡμῶν παρουσίαν ἐσήμανεν ἐλθεῖν).^[97] This marks a clear allusion to Gen. 49:10.^[98] And when the Homilist comes to Gen. 49:10, he is not so much “lifting” a single verse out of its (literary) context but approaching the text by taking account of the “general context” of the chapter itself. For part of the Homilist’s interpretation of verse 10 derives from verse 1, which makes clear that not only is “Jacob” indeed the speaker of verse 10, but also that verse 1 sets the “eschatological” and “prophetic” orientation of the following verses: “Then Jacob summoned his sons and said *Gather together in order that I may tell you what will happen to you at the last of the days.*”

Finally, in the case of Moses, we are told in *Hom.* 2.52.3 that he “prophesied the law of God to every age” and on account of his “sound wisdom” (ὀρθή φρόνησις) was testified to as a faithful steward. *Hom.* 2.52.3 is unique for its particular attestation to the “sound wisdom” of Moses. “Wisdom” (φρόνησις), like “temperance” (σωφροσύνη), is also a cardinal virtue in Greek philosophy and (therefore) in Judeo-Hellenistic thought. *Hom.* 19.22.9 asserts that Moses, “on account of his piety [εὐσέβεια], continued free from suffering all his life.”^[99] The “piety” and “sound wisdom” of Moses, as well as the “temperance” of Abraham, further illustrate the Homilist’s orientation toward the Pentateuch—that is, as a source for edifying moral exempla.

Another similar “catalog” of certain “righteous men recorded in the law” shows up in *Hom.* 17.4.3. The Homilist explains that the Creator of the world (ὁ δημιουργός) was known to Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses.^[100] The Homilist calls these figures “the seven pillars of the world,” who were able “to please the most just God.”^[101] In his study of

the “seven pillars” in the Pseudo-Clementines, Charles Gieschen asserts that

early Christian and rabbinic literature offer important insights into the personification or anthropological interpretation of *styloi* in [the Pseudo-Clementines]. Gal. 2:9 reflects its usage as an esteemed title which Jewish Christianity had given to James (the brother of Jesus), Peter, and John. *I Clem.* 5.2 draws upon this technical usage, but applies it to Peter and Paul as οἱ μέγιστοι καὶ δικαιοτάτοι στῦλοι. Irenaeus broadens the application of this technical title to the twelve apostles when he speaks of “the twelve pillared foundation of the church” (*Haer.* 4.21.3). It is in this context that the promise of becoming a “pillar” in the heavenly temple found in Rev. 3:12 can be properly understood. In *b. Ketub.* 104a the righteous are called “pillars.” *Exodus Rabba* 2 (69a) specifies that Abraham is called the “pillar of the world” and God has put Moses in his place. . . . The closest parallel to the Ps-Clem usage of pillars is found in rabbinic speculation on Prov. 9:1.

[102]

In his descriptions of these figures as “pillars,” the Homilist “absolves them of even their most prominent sins.” [103] Thus, in this instance Enoch, is described as one “who pleased God” and Noah is called one “whom God deemed righteous.” A very similar list also appears in *Hom.* 18.13.5–6. In this passage, the Homilist explains how the Son (i.e., the True Prophet) instructed those whom he wished, including Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This time, Noah is called “the righteous one”; Abraham, “his friend”; and Jacob, the one “who wrestled with him.” [104] These brief lists further illustrate the Homilist’s general belief in the historicity of these characters, and especially their “moral character.” [105]

Another important example of how the Homilist interprets “historical characters” of the Pentateuch can be seen in *Hom.* 17.14–19. This passage contains a wonderful exchange between Peter and Simon over the question of whether the “impious see true visions and dreams.” Peter’s basic position here (contra Simon) is that if someone receives a vision from God, that does not mean a priori that such a person is pious. To make his point, Peter will furnish several examples of “impious” characters from the Scriptures. Peter’s position draws on certain philosophical associations between “piety” and “dreams” (see below).^[106]

Hom. 17 contains a locus classicus for the particular question of the nature and extent of “anti-Paul polemic” in the Pseudo-Clementines. As Graham Stanton observes, “[*Hom.* 17.14-19] is one of the most subtly argued and rhetorically sophisticated sections of the Pseudo-Clementine writings. There can be no doubt at all that behind the mask of Simon Magus stands Paul. Nowhere else in the *Pseudo-Clementines* does Simon Magus appeal to his own visionary experiences.”^[107] In this section, Simon claims that Jesus appeared to him in a vision (δι’ ὁράματος). But Peter maintains that if this is so, by virtue of Jesus’ mode of communication with Simon—in a vision, or as an apparition—Jesus must have appeared to Simon “as one who is enraged with an adversary” (ὡς ἀντικειμένῳ ὀργιζόμενος).^[108] For it is not possible, says Peter, to obtain authentic revelation via a “vision” (ὄραμα) or “apparition” (ὀπτασία).^[109] Simon disagrees. He says that the one who sees the vision (ὀπτασία) can be fully assured of its authenticity, since it comes from God (θειότης ἐστίν).^[110] Indeed, it is Simon’s contention that

ἂν ἢ ὁ ἐωρακὼς δίκαιος, ἀληθὲς ἐώρακεν . . . μόνος
ὁ δίκαιος ὄραμα ἀληθὲς ἰδεῖν δύναται . . . ἐμοὶ γὰρ
κέκριται ὅτι ἀσεβῆς ἀληθῆ ὄνειρον οὐχ ὄρα.

If he who has had the vision is just, then he has seen a
true vision . . . the just man alone can see a true vision

. . . for it is clear to me that an impious man does not see a true dream.^[111]

Simon's position here accords with what we find in Strabo (c. 64 bce–c. 21 ce):

ἐγκοιμᾶσθαι δὲ καὶ αὐτοὺς ὑπὲρ ἑαυτῶν καὶ ὑπὲρ τῶν ἄλλων ἄλλους τοὺς εὐονείρους· καὶ προσδοκᾶν δεῖν ἀγαθὸν παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ δῶρον αἰεὶ τι καὶ σημεῖον τοὺς σωφρόνως ζῶντας καὶ μετὰ δικαιοσύνης, τοὺς δ' ἄλλους μὴ προσδοκᾶν.

People who have good dreams should sleep in the sanctuary, not only themselves on their own behalf, but also others for the rest of the people; and those who live self-restrained and righteous lives should always expect some blessing or gift or sign from God, but no other should expect them.^[112]

Indeed, for many Greek philosophers, one's virtue is closely linked with one's ability to receive a "true vision."^[113] But Peter disagrees with Simon's position on this point:

Τοῦτο ψευδός ἐστιν, καὶ περὶ τούτου ἀγράφως καὶ ἐγγράφως ἀποδείξαι δύναμαι.

This is false, and I can prove it both apart from Scripture [ἀγράφως] and on the basis of Scripture itself [ἐγγράφως].^[114]

For the first part of his argument, Peter goes on to prove “apart from Scripture” (ἀγράφως) that human beings, because of their unique physical composition, are capable of seeing neither God’s (corporeal) form, nor the Son, nor the angels, who are all “illuminated by exceeding great light,” because “the excess of light dissolves the flesh of him who sees.” And so,

πέρας γοῦν κἄν ἀγγέλων τις ἀνθρώπῳ ὀφθῆναι
πεμφθῇ, τρέπεται εἰς σάρκα, ἵνα ὑπὸ σαρκὸς ὀφθῆναι
δυνηθῇ. ἄσαρκον γὰρ δύναμιν οὐ μόνον υἱοῦ ἀλλ’
οὐδὲ ἀγγέλου ἰδεῖν τις δύναται. εἰ δὲ ἴδῃ τις ὀπτασίαν,
κακοῦ δαίμονος ταύτην εἶναι νοεῖτω.

If any angel is sent in order to be seen by a man, it is changed into flesh, that it can be seen by [human] flesh. For no one can see the incorporeal power not only of the Son, but not even of an angel. But if one does see a vision, he should recognize that this is of an evil demon.^[115]

In short, flesh can only see flesh. Flesh cannot behold the substance of divine beings. This then is Peter’s argument “apart from Scripture.” But what of his argument “on the basis of Scripture itself” (ἐγγράφως)? In order to “prove from Scripture” that the “impious see true visions and dreams,” Peter first cites the particular case of “Abimelech who, being impious [ἀσεβής], desired to defile the wife of the righteous Abraham.”^[116] God came to Abimelech in a dream when he commanded him not to touch Sarah. Likewise Pharaoh, who was also an “impious man” (ἀσεβὴς ἀνὴρ), was visited by God in a dream.^[117] Together with these, Peter also includes the impious Nebuchadnezzar, who looked into the fiery furnace and saw a fourth person “as a son of God.”^[118] Peter concludes from these instances that

οὕτως οὐ πάντως ἐκ τοῦ ὁρᾶν τινα ὁράματα καὶ
ἐνύπνια καὶ ὀπτασίας πάντως εὐσεβὴς ἐστίν.

simply from the fact that someone sees apparitions, dreams, or visions does not necessarily mean he is pious.^[119]

Peter claims, however, that he has indeed benefited from “[direct] revelation” from the True Prophet, unlike Simon, who beheld Jesus in a (mere) vision. “True revelation” is superior to “visions” because anything said “by means of visions and dreams” demonstrates that it comes from “wrath” (ὀργή).^[120] Peter concludes his argument on this point by appealing (“on the basis of Scripture”) to the case of Moses himself. For Scripture says that God spoke to Moses not in dreams or visions but “visibly” (ἐν εἶδει), and “not through dreams” (οὐ διὰ ἐνυπνίων). Thus, when Peter argues from the basis of Scripture itself (ἐγγράφως), he concludes from the evidence of Abimelech, Pharaoh, and Nebuchadnezzar as follows:

ὁρᾷς πῶς τὰ τῆς ὀργῆς δι' ὁραμάτων καὶ ἐνυπνίων, τὰ δὲ πρὸς φίλον στόμα κατὰ στόμα, ἐν εἶδει καὶ οὐ δι' αἰνιγμάτων καὶ ὁραμάτων καὶ ἐνυπνίων, ὥς πρὸς ἐχθρόν.

You see how messages of wrath come through visions and dreams, but friendly messages are made face-to-face, visibly, and not through riddles and visions and dreams, as though to an enemy.^[121]

But if “friendly messages are made face-to-face” and “visibly,” and if God spoke to Moses as one would speak “to his own friend” (πρὸς τὸν ἑαυτοῦ φίλον), how does this work with what the Homilist says above in *Hom.* 17.16.2, namely, that humans cannot see God’s incorporeal form

(ἄσαρκος ἰδέα) because it is “illuminated by exceedingly great light”? As the Homilist explains,

ἡ γὰρ ὑπερβολὴ τοῦ φωτὸς τὴν τοῦ ὁρῶντος ἐκλύει
σάρκα, ἐκτὸς εἰ μὴ θεοῦ ἀπορρήτῳ δυνάμει ἡ σὰρξ εἰς
φύσιν τραπῇ φωτός, ἵνα φῶς ἰδεῖν δυνηθῇ—ἢ ἡ τοῦ
φωτὸς οὐσία εἰς σάρκα τραπῇ, ἵνα ὑπὸ σαρκὸς
ὁραθῇ δυνηθῇ.

For the excess of light dissolves the flesh of the person who sees; unless by the secret power of God the flesh can be changed into the nature of light, so that it can see light, or the substance of light can be changed into flesh, so that it can be seen by flesh.^[122]

In the case of Moses, it would seem the Homilist has in mind the tradition, derived from Greek Exod. 34:29, that the flesh of Moses’ countenance radiated light as a result of his speaking-encounter(s) with God. As the Homilist says elsewhere,

οὐχὶ δὲ Μωυσῆς, αὐτὸς σὰρξ ὢν, εἰς μέγιστον ἐτράπη
φῶς, ὥς μὴ δυνηθῇναι τοὺς υἱοὺς Ἰσραὴλ ἀντιβλέψαι
αὐτῷ;

Was not Moses, being flesh himself, changed into a most radiant light, with the result that the sons of Israel were unable to look upon him?^[123]

In sum, the Homilist interprets the human characters of the Pentateuch as “real people” who function not as symbolic figures. A basic concern for the historicity of these characters is implicit by the complete absence of any attempts to interpret them allegorically. For the human characters of the Pentateuch are to be understood as “moral exempla,” to be either emulated as “pious” or avoided as “impious.” In the case of “pious” characters, any passages that might call their piety into question are rejected as false. As for certain “impious” characters, arguments can even be made (“from Scripture”) either to substantiate or to challenge the legitimacy of, for example, competing claims of divine revelation. Any approach that seeks to argue from the basis of Scripture itself (ἐγγράφως)—one that in some way attempts to take seriously the *sensus litteralis* of the Scriptures—must come to terms with those (morally or theologically) “offensive” passages. Such passages contain the sort of texts that, as I noted above, under other circumstances would normally be subject to allegorical (or even typological) interpretation. The Homilist, however, rejects this approach.

2.5. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have considered how the theory of exegesis put forth in the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* represents an attempt to come to terms with the general (problematic) character of the Pentateuch. The “sinewy” quality of the Scriptures allows for the possibility of divergent interpretations. Moreover, Scripture’s “morally offensive” and “theologically problematic” passages pose a particularly difficult problem. Along with the concern for the *sensus litteralis* is the concern for the general “moral” or “didactic” quality of the Pentateuch. Thus the human figures of the Pentateuch are understood primarily as “moral exempla” and not, say, “symbols” or “metaphors.” Such concerns create certain difficulties, especially given that the Pentateuch is deemed “useful” and the proper locus for “piety” and “temperate living.” Yet among the available solutions to this dilemma, the allegorical interpretive method is not accepted.

I noted the importance of *Rec.* 10.42.1–4 for its unambiguous, explicit statement on the rejection of all allegorism on the grounds that it is an illegitimate exegetical method. The rejection of allegorism is illustrated most vividly in the Appion-Clement debates of *Hom.* 4–7. We have seen how the Appion-Clement debates offer a clear example of how the Homilist estimates the value of the allegorical method in relationship to Greek myth and the Pentateuch. We saw that Clement never comes out against the allegorical method per se; the allegorical defense is simply “set aside as irrelevant.”^[124] Part of the Homilist’s aversion to the allegorical method is also due to the close association between allegorism and pagan Greek mythology. While this association comes to the fore in *Hom.* 4–7, as we have just seen, we are given a glimpse of it in as early as *Hom.* 2.25.3:

πλὴν τοιαῦτά τινα Ἑλληνικοῖς μύθοις συνπεπλασμένα
πιθανῶς ἀλληγορῶν ἀπατᾷ πολλούς.

What is more, by cunningly allegorizing things fabricated in Greek myths—[Simon] deceives many people.

Thus, as far as the “law of the Greeks” (Greek *paideia*) is concerned, the *content* is rejected outright, while the *method* of allegorical interpretation is declared irrelevant. Conversely, regarding the “law of the Jews” (the Pentateuch), allegorism is categorically rejected, while the content is itself retained and affirmed.^[125]

We have also seen how the Appion-Clement debates allow us to see a fundamental aspect of the “function” of the Pentateuch. It is the Pentateuch, and not Greek *paideia*, that leads people toward “piety” (εὐσέβεια) and “living temperately” (σωφρονίζειν).^[126] In opposition to Greek *paideia*, Clement deems the content of “the teaching of the Jews” alone as “most pious” (εὐσεβέστατος). The proper resource for “piety” and “temperate living” is therefore to be found not in the “laws of the Greeks” but in the “law of the Jews.”

Even so, the Pentateuch contains difficult, even “offensive” passages, which need to be addressed. In the case of Greek *paideia*, Appion does not deny the “immoral” guise of the Greek myths. Yet for him the solution to this situation is quite simple:

οἱ ἀρχαῖοι τὰ μυστήρια μόνους τοὺς φιλομαθεῖς
εἰδέναι θέλοντες μύθοις οἷς εἴρηκας αὐτὰ
προεκάλυψαν.

The ancients, wishing that only those who love learning should know the mysteries, veiled them with those myths.^[127]

For Appion, the key to accessing their “mysteries,” therefore, is the allegorical method. So this is how Appion takes care of the problem. But if

Clement deems the allegorical approach to Greek myth as irrelevant, and (more importantly) in the case of the Pentateuch, Clement rejects the allegorical method on principle, how are the Pentateuch's difficult passages to be properly handled, if not by allegorism? The Homilist puts forth a rather sophisticated answer to this question. It begins with his provocative theory that the Pentateuch, as it exists in written form, is laced with falsehoods.

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1. Irenaeus (*Haer.* 1.23–27) was the first to identify Simon as the source of all heresies. In the *Homilies*, Simon appears to be a cipher mainly for Marcion. Some, detecting in the *Hom.* a strain of anti-Paulism as well, believe Simon represents Paul. For example, see Georg Strecker, *Das Judenchristentum in den Pseudoklementinen*, 2nd ed., TUGAL (Berlin: Akademie, 1981), 187–96. For other relevant studies on Simon Magus, see Alberto Ferreiro “Simon Magus: The Patristic–Medieval Traditions and Historiography,” *Apocrypha* 7 (1996): 147–65; Wayne A. Meeks, “Simon Magus in Recent Research,” *RelSRev* 3 (1977): 137–41; A. Salles, “Simon le Magicien ou Marcion?,” *VC* 12 (1958): 197–224. [↩](#)
 2. R. F. Stoops Jr., “Simon,” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. D. N. Freedman (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1992), 6:30 (italics mine). [↩](#)
 3. For specific examples, see *Hom.* 3.2.2; 7.12.3. While recognizing the fact that the Pseudo-Clementines have undergone several stages of editorial revision, simply for sake of convenience I shall henceforth speak of the “Homilist” (or, where appropriate, the “Recognitionist”). [↩](#)
 4. See Folker Siegert, “Early Jewish Interpretation in a Hellenistic Style,” in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation*, vol. 1, part 1, *Antiquity*, ed. Magne Sæbø (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1996), 130–98. [↩](#)
 5. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 13.297–98. [↩](#)
 6. Outside of the Pentateuch, the *Homilies* quote from and/or allude to the following books: Psalms (approx. ten times), Isaiah (approx. ten times), Jeremiah (approx. three times), Joshua (once), Daniel (once). There is a significantly far greater distribution of quotations from the Pentateuch. For an analysis of the various biblical quotations/allusions in the *Homilies*, see especially Strecker, *Das Judenchristentum*, 118–36. [↩](#)
 7. *Hom.* 2.26. For νόμος as Pentateuch, see G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), 920. Examples given by Lampe include *T. Lev.* 16.2; Ignatius, *Smyrn.* 5.1; Diogn. 11.6; Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 3.12 (p. 284.16; M.8.665c); *Str.* 3.10 (p. 228.3;

M.8.1172b); *Const. ap.* 2.5.4, 6; 2.25.3; 2.39.6; 6.19.2, 20.1; John Chrysostom, *Hom.* 49.3 in *Jo.*

8. See *Hom.* 16.5–7.
9. See *Hom.* 4.22.
10. Adam Kamesar, “Biblical Interpretation in Philo,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Philo* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 73, following E. J. Bickerman, *The Jews in the Greek Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 171; S. Brock, “The Phenomenon of the Septuagint,” in *The Witness of Tradition*, ed. M. A. Beek et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 16.
11. Eusebius reports (HE 6.19) that Origen had written a work entitled “The Harmony of Moses and Jesus.”
12. See especially *Ep.* 1.1–2.1; see also *Hom.* 3.10, 16.10; *Rec.* 10.42.1–4 (to be discussed below).
13. It should be noted that the Scripture’s polysemous quality is understood as a *potential* problem, though not an *inherent* one.
14. All English translations are mine unless noted otherwise.
15. As the Recognitionist puts it, *non enim sensum quem extrinsecus adtulervis alienum et extraneum debes quaerere* (*Rec.* 10.42.3). Cf. *Hom.* 2.22; 16.10, to be discussed below.
16. For a general discussion on the “false pericopes,” see especially Strecker, *Das Judenchristentum*, 162–84; Hans Joachim Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte des Judenchristentums* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1949), 147–55.
17. On allegorical interpretation, see Folker Siegert, “Early Jewish Interpretation in a Hellenistic Style,” in Sæbø, *Antiquity*, 130–89; J. N. B. Carleton Paget, “The Christian Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Alexandrian Tradition,” in Sæbø, *Antiquity*, 478–542.
18. William Adler notes, “Although the relationship of these two sections is still a mystery, it is at least possible that the material in the *Recognitions* has inserted material from the same Jewish source into another setting.” See his “Apion’s ‘Encomium of Adultery’: A Jewish Satire of Greek Paideia in the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*,” *HUCA* 64 (1993): 29n38c.
19. See *Hom.* 6.17–25.
20. Lit., “they hold plausible guesses.”
21. Olga Nesterova, “L’attitude à l’égard de l’allégorie païenne chez les auteurs du corpus pseudo-clémentin,” in *Nouvelles intrigues pseudoclémentines—Plots in the Pseudo-Clementine Romance*, ed. Frédéric Amsler et al. (Lausanne: Éditions du Zèbre, 2008), 398.

22. See also Porphyry's criticisms of Origen and his use of the allegorical method (Eusebius, *HE*6.9).[↩](#)
23. Diodore of Tarsus, *Comm. in Ps.* 6 (CCSG 6).[↩](#)
24. See Theodore of Mopsuestia's comments on Psalm 118, available in Von Rompay's French translation, and discussed by David Runia in *Philo in Early Christian Literature* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 264–71.[↩](#)
25. *Hom.* 16.10.2–3. A similar scenario is described in *Hom.* 3.9.[↩](#)
26. See *Hom.* 3.38. In this way, Simon appears to be a cipher for Marcion. Speaking generally, Simon's arguments and exegesis of Scripture seem to reflect Marcionite theology active in Syria. On this point, see H. J. W. Drijvers, "East of Antioch: Forces and Structures in the Development of Early Syriac Theology," in *East of Antioch: Studies in Early Syriac Christianity* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1984), 1–27. See also Schoeps's remarks on *Hom.* 18.15.1–7 in *Theologie und Geschichte*, 160. The bulk of Simon and Peter's debates with one another focuses on Genesis (though other passages do come into play as well). There is a predilection for Genesis shared among Judeo-Hellenistic exegetes (e.g., Philo), and Christian writers influenced by them (e.g., Theophilus of Antioch).[↩](#)
27. *Hom.* 2.22.6.[↩](#)
28. Even so, it would seem that Simon Magus, in addition to his role as a cipher for Marcion and/or Paul, also embodies a "heretical" approach to interpreting Scriptures—namely, the allegorical method.[↩](#)
29. See *Hom.* 2.39, 3.10.[↩](#)
30. Indeed, it is worth noting how the Homilist attributes "allegorizing" activity (from ἀλληγορεῖν) to both Simon and to Appion in *Hom.* 6.11.1, ταῦτα τοῦ Ἀππίωνος ἀλληγοροῦντος.[↩](#)
31. See *Hom.* 17.15.5; 17.16.1.[↩](#)
32. *Rec.* 10.42.4.[↩](#)
33. See *ep. Petr.*; *Hom.* 2.38, 3.47; *Rec.* 2.30.[↩](#)
34. The nature and function of the oral tradition is the subject of ch. 5.[↩](#)
35. Adler ("Apion's 'Encomium,'" 28–30) summarizes the arguments for this claim. For a brief discussion of pagan sources in the *Homilies*, see J. van Amersfoort, "Pagan Sources in the Pseudo-Clementine Novel," in *Religious Identity and the Problem of Historical Foundation*, ed. J. Frishman et al. (Leiden: Brill 2004), 265–74.[↩](#)
36. Annette Yoshiko Reed, "Cultural Identities and Religious Polemics in the Pseudo-Clementine Homilies," in Amsler et al., *Nouvelles intrigues pseudo-clémentines*, 432.[↩](#)
37. Nesterova, "L'Attitude a l'égard de l'Allégorie païenne," 397.[↩](#)







38. Reed, “Cultural Identities,” 426. For studies on how the Pseudo-Clementines appropriate the Greco-novel, see Nicolle Kelley, *Knowledge and Religious Authority in the Pseudo-Clementines* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006); K. Cooper, “Matthia’s Wish: Division, Reunion, and the Early Christian Family in the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions*,” in *Narrativity in Biblical and Related Texts*, ed. G. J. Brook and J. D. Kaestli (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2000), 243–64. [↩](#)
39. Reed, “Cultural Identities,” 427. [↩](#)
40. See *Hom.* 4.7.3; 4.8.3; 4.13.3; 4.14.1–2; 5.26.3–4; 5.28.2. [↩](#)
41. See *Hom.* 4.1–6.26. The Appion-Clement debates are framed at each end by the debates between Simon and Peter. [↩](#)
42. Adler, “Apion’s ‘Encomium,’” 29. [↩](#)
43. *Hom.* 4.1.4 (ἀγών), 6.1.2 (ἐπὶ τὸ ζητούμενον). [↩](#)
44. See also Adler (“Apion’s ‘Encomium,’” 32–33): “What is especially notable is that the subjects that Clement and Apion examine are well documented *theses* in the rhetorical schools.” [↩](#)
45. Clement himself says, αὐτίκα γοῦν ἐγὼ τὴν πᾶσαν Ἑλλήνων παιδείαν κακοῦ δαίμονος χαλεπωτάτην ὑπόθεσιν εἶναι λέγω (*Hom.* 14.12.1). This attitude is similar to that of Tatian, *Orat.* 9. Clement also calls the stories of the Greek gods “lying tales” (ψευδεῖς μῦθοι, *Hom.* 5.26.3). Reed (“Cultural Identities,” 431) calls attention to the rhetorical link between what is said here of Greek *paideia* and similar themes that emerge in the Enochic traditions in *Hom.* 8, especially “defilement” brought on by the rogue angels. Le Boulluec (“Roman pseudo-clémentin: *Homélies*,” in *Écrits apocryphes chrétiens*, ed. Pierre Geoltrain and Jean-Daniel Kaestli (Paris: Gallimard, 2005), 1360n17.1) notes that the mention here of the “wicked demon” is a “Christian”—and not a “Jewish”—feature of Clement’s polemic. [↩](#)
46. See F. Montanari, “Apion,” in *Brill’s New Pauly*, ed. H. Cancik et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 840–41. [↩](#)
47. Ἀπίων ὁ Πλειστονίκος, ἀνὴρ Ἀλεξάνδρεια, γραμματικὴν τὴν ἐπιστήμην. [↩](#)
48. Adler, “Apion’s ‘Encomium,’” 31. [↩](#)
49. Pliny, *Nat.* 37.75; Josephus, *C. Ap.* 2.3; Clement of Alexandria, *Str.* 1.21.3; Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 10.12.2; Suda, s.v. *Ἀπίων*. The sources are not always consistent in the spelling of his name; Josephus has “Apion,” while the Homilist has “Appion.” Simply for sake of convenience, “Appion” is used here throughout. [↩](#)
50. H. Jacobson has argued that “Pleistonikes” means something like “quarrelsome.” See “Apion’s Nickname,” *AJP* 98 (1977): 413–15. See also Clement of Alexandria, *Str.* 1.21.101.3. [↩](#)

51. πάντων Αἰγυπτίων πρῶτος. Cf. *C. Ap.* 2.29, 41, 135. [↩](#)
52. See Seneca, *Ep.* 88.40; Pliny, *Nat. Praef.* 25; 30.18; Josephus, *C. Ap.* 2.2, 12, 15; Tatian, *Or.* 38; Clement of Alexandria, *Str.* 1.22; Eusebius, *HE* 3.9.4; *Praep. ev.* 10.10.16; 10.11.14; 10.12.2. [↩](#)
53. Jan N. Bremmer, “Foolish Egyptians: Appion and Anoubion in the *Pseudo-Clementines*,” in *The Wisdom of Egypt: Jewish, Early Christian, and Gnostic Essays in Honour of Gerard Luttikhuisen*, ed. A. Hilorst and G. H. van Kooten (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 321. Bremmer (*ibid.*, 323–27) also highlights Appion’s interest in magic; see also Bremmer’s article “Pseudo-Clementines: Texts, Dates, Places, Authors and Magic,” in *The Pseudo-Clementines*, ed. Jan N. Bremmer (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 12–23. [↩](#)
54. John Dillery, “Putting Him Back Together Again: Appion Historian, Appion ‘Grammatikos,’” *Classical Philology* (2003): 383–90. [↩](#)
55. Reed (“Cultural Identities,” 432n36) detects “the implication that Simon hates the Jews simply because he himself is a Samaritan; in effect, the dichotomy between ‘orthodoxy’ and ‘heresy’ is here framed in Jewish terms.” [↩](#)
56. Adler, “Apion’s ‘Encomium,’” 31n44. [↩](#)
57. Dillery, “Putting Him Back Together,” 384. [↩](#)
58. *Ibid.*, 383. [↩](#)
59. *Hom.* 4.7.2. Appion’s unfriendly assessment of Clement is similarly described in *Hom.* 4.24.1; 5.27. [↩](#)
60. Le Boulluec, “*Homélies*,” 1319n3. [↩](#)
61. *Hom.* 4.8.3. [↩](#)
62. See *Hom.* 4.12.3, 4.13.1. [↩](#)
63. *Hom.* 4.15.1–2. [↩](#)
64. *Hom.* 4.13.2. [↩](#)
65. *Hom.* 4.13.3. Cf. *Hom.* 2.45.1. [↩](#)
66. Le Boulluec, “*Homélies*,” 1324n13.3; 1329n22.2. [↩](#)
67. See Arthur Marmorstein, “Philo and the Names of God,” *JQR* 22 (1932): 295–306; N. A. Dahl and A. F. Segal, “Philo and the Rabbis on the Names of God,” *JSJ* 9 (1978): 1–28. [↩](#)
68. See *Sifre Deut.* 27; *Gen. Rab.* 33; *Ber.* 60b. [↩](#)
69. See *Migr.* 24.121; *Plant.* 20.86. [↩](#)
70. *Hom.* 3.72.1, 3. [↩](#)
71. *Hom.* 4.14.1–2. [↩](#)
72. *Hom.* 4.22.2. [↩](#)
73. See *Hom.* 5.26.3. Clement’s words here in *Hom.* 5.26.1–4 are presented as though they came from a woman who wrote a letter in response to Appion’s seductive overtures. The “fake letter” Clement crafted is part of

- a “trick” he played on Appion some years before. Much of *Hom.*5 relates Clement’s little prank on Appion.
74. See *Hom.*4.18–19.
 75. *Hom.*4.24.3–4. See also *Hom.*4.17.1–2.
 76. *Hom.*6.2.1.
 77. *Hom.*6.2.12. See also *Hom.*6.10.1.
 78. Cornutus, *Nat. de.* 76.2. The English translation given here is that of R. S. Hays, “Lucius Annaeus Cornutus’ ‘Epidrome’: Introduction to the Traditions of Greek Theology” (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1983), 120–21. For Greek text with German translation, commentary, and essays, see F. Berdozzo et al., *Cornutus: Die Griechischen Götter*, ed. H. G. Nesselrath (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009).
 79. See *Hom.*6.19.1–5; 6.20.1–2.
 80. *Hom.*6.25.1. See also *Hom.*6.24.1–3.
 81. *Hom.*5.28.2. This sentiment is consistent with *Hom.*1.1.1.
 82. *Hom.*4.13.2.
 83. For Clement’s presentation of his familiarity with allegorical interpretations of Greek myth, see *Hom.*6.11.1–3.
 84. James Tate, “Plato and Allegorical Interpretation,” *CQ*23 (1929): 147.
 85. *Hom.*4.18.1–3. The Homilist’s attitude toward *paideia* here accords with similar attitudes Celsus noted on the part of Christians he observed in his own day. See Celsus *apud* Origen, *Cels.* 3.55.
 86. See Tate, “Plato and Allegorical Interpretation,” 145. See also Dominique Côté, “Les Procédés rhétoriques dans les Pseudo-Clémentines: L’Éloge de l’adultère du grammairien Apion,” in Amsler et al., *Nouvelles intrigues pseudo-clémentines*, 200.
 87. See especially *Rec.*10.42.1–4.
 88. It is a characteristic feature of Judeo-Hellenistic thinking to say that the Pentateuch is “useful” (σύμφορος) or “beneficial” (ὠφέλιμος). See, e.g., 2 Tim. 3:16. On the “*opheleia* criterion,” see especially Manlio Simonetti, *Lettera e/o allegoria: un contributo alla storia dell’esegesi patristica* (Rome: Institutum patristicum Augustinianum, 1985), 79, 146–47, cited in Adam Kamesar, “Biblical Interpretation in Philo,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Philo*, ed. Adam Kamesar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) 81n49.
 89. That is, the “true” portions of the Pentateuch are retained. For there are indeed certain “false” portions, which are to be rejected. This notion of the “false pericopes” in the Pentateuch is the subject of the next chapter.
 90. Strecker (*Das Judentum*, 186) argues that “rationalistic” approaches to the Scriptures found in Jewish and Gnostic sources

- instigated the *Homilies*' theory of the false pericopes. [↩](#)
91. The only possible exception to this is the case of Gen. 49:10 in *Hom.* 3.49.1. But the point there is that Gen. 49:10 is to be understood within the framework of the appearance of the True Prophet, who alone provides the necessary instruction for handling the false pericopes. This is a significantly different use of Gen. 49:10 than, say, Justin Martyr's use of Gen. 49:10 as a "proof from prophecy." [↩](#)
 92. *Hom.* 2.5.1. [↩](#)
 93. For Antiochene exegesis, see Sten Hidal, "Exegesis in the Antiochene School," in Sæbø, *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament*, 543–68. [↩](#)
 94. For a discussion of exegetical terminology employed by Alexandrian and Antiochene exegetes, see especially H. N. Bate, "Some Technical Terms of Greek Exegesis," *JTS* 24 (1923): 56–66. Also helpful in this regard is Hidal, "Exegesis in the Antiochene School," 546–57; A. Gudeman, *Λύσεις*, *PREi.* 13.2 (1927), cols. 2511–29. Two examples of relevant (albeit general) exegetical terminology within the *Homilies* include phrases "in the person of" (ἐκ προσώπου, *Hom.* 18.18.1; 20.3.5) and "solutions to a few [problematic] statements" (εἰς ὀλίγων λόγων ἐπλύσεις, *Hom.* 19.6.5). [↩](#)
 95. ὁ ὑπὸ τῶν τοῦ θεοῦ χειρῶν κυοφορηθεῖς (*Hom.* 2.52.2). [↩](#)
 96. On Abraham's virtues (e.g., courage, temperance, justice, and piety) in Josephus, see Louis Feldman, *Josephus's Interpretation of the Bible* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 234–49. The term σωφροσύνη is rather rare in the LXX (except in *4 Maccabees*), but does occur more frequently in later Jewish-Hellenistic literature: Pieter Willem van der Horst (*The Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides* [Leiden: Brill, 1978], 166) cites Josephus, *C. Ap.* 2.195; *T. Jos.* 4.2; 9.2; 10.2.3. "Temperance" and "self-restraint" in all things are very important in Pseudo-Phocylides (see sayings 59–60, 69, 76, 98). Similarly, *Hom.* 9.12.4, "Wherefore in all respects moderation [in eating] is excellent" (διὸ ἐπὶ πάντων καλὸν ἡ αὐτάρκεια). [↩](#)
 97. *Hom.* 2.52.2. [↩](#)
 98. The *Biblia Patristica: Patristica: Index des citations et allusions bibliques dans la littérature* (Paris, 1975–), 2:97, also confirms this. [↩](#)
 99. Εὐσέβεια is unattested in the LXX. However, it is a favorite term for certain authors of other Judeo-Hellenistic works, such as *4 Maccabees*. [↩](#)
 100. See Charles A. Gieschen, "The Seven Pillars of the World: Ideal Figure Lists in the Christology of the Pseudo-Clementines," *JSP* 12 (1994): 47–82. Cf. *b. Sanh.* 97b; *Sukkah* 45b. [↩](#)
 101. *Hom.* 18.14.1. [↩](#)

102. Gieschen, “Seven Pillars,” 51. See also *b. Hag.* 12b, which maintains that the physical world is anchored in the waters on twelve or seven pillars or one pillar (but the text does not itself explicitly say these “pillars” are “people”). Only *Pesiq. Rab.* 8 attests to seven (“physical”) pillars that correspond to—but are not themselves—the seven fathers of the world: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Kehat, Amram, Moses, and Aaron. I am indebted to Richard Sarason for this reference. [↩](#)
103. Gieschen, “Seven Pillars,” 48. [↩](#)
104. The tradition that Abraham was called a “friend” (φίλος) of God is attested in the New Testament book of James 2:24. See also 2 Chron. 20:7; Isa. 41:8; 51:2; Dan. 3:35. [↩](#)
105. See also *Hom.* 17.17.1–4, where the lives of three “impious” figures (Abimelech, Pharaoh, and Nebuchadnezzar) are discussed. [↩](#)
106. A different approach to *Hom.* 17 is given by Nicolle Kelley, “The Value of Sense Perception” in Amsler et al., *Nouvelles intrigues pseudo-clémentines*, 361–69. [↩](#)
107. Stanton, “Jewish Christian Elements,” 315–16. Stanton cites E. Schwartz, “Unzeitgemässe Beobachtungen zu den Clementinen,” *ZNW* 31 (1932): 184–87, who argues that Simon stands for Paul. [↩](#)
108. *Hom.* 17.19.1. [↩](#)
109. See *Hom.* 17.13.1. [↩](#)
110. See *Hom.* 17.13.2. [↩](#)
111. *Hom.* 17.15.3–4. [↩](#)
112. Strabo, *Geographica* 16.35.11–14. The English translation given here is that of H. L. Jones, *Strabo: Geography, Books 15–16*, LCL (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1930). [↩](#)
113. See Plato, *Resp.* 9.571c–572c. In a personal correspondence, M. Jason Reddoch brought to my attention the close link, attested in classical sources, between one’s virtue and one’s ability to receive a “true vision.” The same idea is paraphrased by Cicero (*Div.* 1.60.1) and appears again c. 400 ce in the commentary on the *Timaeus* (*Comm. in Tim.* 253) by Calcidius, the Christian Neoplatonist. I am most grateful to Reddoch for bringing these references to my attention. [↩](#)
114. *Hom.* 17.15.5; cf. 17.16.1. [↩](#)
115. *Hom.* 17.16.6. [↩](#)
116. *Hom.* 17.17.1; cf. Gen. 20:1–4. [↩](#)
117. *Hom.* 17.17.2; cf. Gen. 41:25–28. [↩](#)
118. *Hom.* 17.17.3; but cf. Dan. 3:92. [↩](#)
119. *Hom.* 17.17.5. [↩](#)
120. *Hom.* 17.18.4. [↩](#)
121. *Hom.* 17.18.6. [↩](#)

122. *Hom.* 17.16.4. 
123. *Hom.* 20.6.8. The tradition of Moses' shining countenance appears in Philo, *Mos.* 2.70; Pseudo-Philo, *L.A.B.* 12.1; *Tg. Onq.*; *Tg. Neof.*; 2 Cor. 3:7. 
124. See Tate, "Plato and Allegorical Interpretation," 147. 
125. That is, the "true" portions of the Pentateuch are retained. For there are indeed certain "false" portions which are to be rejected. 
126. See *Hom.* 4.7.3; 4.8.3; 4.13.3; 4.14.1–2; 5.26.3–4; 5.28.2. 
127. *Hom.* 4.24.3–4. See also *Hom.* 4.17.1–2. 

The Theory of the False Pericopes

3.1. INTRODUCTION TO THE FALSE PERICOPES

The Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* maintain a general concern for the *sensus litteralis* of the Scriptures. As such, allegorical interpretation is not accepted. We saw in the previous chapter that when it comes to Greek myth, allegorism is deemed *irrelevant*; when it comes to the Pentateuch, allegorism is altogether *rejected* (owing in part to its association with pagan myth) on the grounds that it constitutes introducing a “foreign and external” sense to the scriptural text. Its risqué content renders Greek *paideia* and the mythic poems of the gods as illegitimate sources for the inculcation of piety and temperate living. Allegorism does little to resolve this problem, and such a method of interpretation is in no way to be applied to the law of God (*lex dei*). What, then, is to be done about the Pentateuch’s “morally offensive” and/or “theologically difficult” passages?

As part of his approach to this situation, the Homilist postulates that the written Pentateuch contains various “false pericopes.” As I noted briefly in the previous chapter, these tend to be the types of passages that, under other circumstances, would be interpreted allegorically. But rather than allegorize difficult or offensive passages, the Homilist rejects them as “false.” Paradoxically, it is because of the Homilist’s uncompromising commitment to the *sensus litteralis* that he is willing to excise as “false” certain passages of Scripture.

This notion of the “false pericopes” is one of the very trademarks of the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*.^[1] The theory of the false pericopes is, as Karl Evan Shuve puts it, “one of the more distinctive and provocative elements of the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*,” which functions as “a central element of the *Homilies*’ defense of the oneness and goodness of God.”^[2]

Scholarly discussion concerning the Pseudo-Clementines in general has been largely dominated by source-critical interests. And yet, “although the doctrine of the false pericopes is generally acknowledged to be an important feature of the *Homilies*, it has been the subject of few focused studies.”^[3] According to Georg Strecker, the theory developed during a (later) period when Jewish and Gnostic interpreters were eager to explain the nature of scriptural contradictions. Thus Strecker claims that the theory of the false pericopes is to be seen as an expression of (later) “rationalistic”

exegetical approaches.^[4] In a similar way, Hans Joachim Schoeps says, “It must be observed that the biblical criticism of the *Kērygmata Petrou* is thoroughly permeated with rationalism, its distinctive feature.”^[5] According to Strecker, the theory would have served as a defense against various Gnostic approaches, likely (though not originally) including Marcionite biblical criticism, for example.^[6]

According to Schoeps, however, the theory of the false pericopes would have been quite widespread, and was developed rather early. Various Jewish and early Jewish Christian exegetes (e.g., Ebionites, Marcion, the rabbis) were simultaneously and independently coming to terms with scriptural contradictions.^[7] Schoeps argues that in particular Ebionites would have appropriated the theory to their own ends, illustrated by their exegesis of especially Matt. 5:17-18:

Μὴ νομίσητε ὅτι ἦλθον καταλῦσαι τὸν νόμον ἢ τοὺς
προφῆτας· οὐκ ἦλθον καταλῦσαι ἀλλὰ πληρῶσαι.
ἀμὴν γὰρ λέγω ὑμῖν· ἕως ἂν παρέλθῃ ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ
γῆ, ἰῶτα ἐν ἧ μία κεραία οὐ μὴ παρέλθῃ ἀπὸ τοῦ
νόμου, ἕως ἂν πάντα γένηται.

Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or
the Prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill.
For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away,
not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from
the law until all is accomplished.^[8]

At one level, biblical criticism of this sort can also be seen in exegetical methods adopted by the likes of Marcion and Ptolemy. Concerning the theory of the false pericopes in connection with Marcion, Schoeps has suggested that

It seems probable that the *Kērygmata Petrou* was
intended to provide an answer to Marcion’s teaching. .

. . Since Marcion's teaching penetrated Christian congregations everywhere in the fourth decade of the second century, the theory of the false pericopes may be regarded as representing the Ebionite contribution to the great intellectual struggle. . . . In this case, the deletion of the laws of sacrifice and the expunging of anthropomorphisms and unworthy passages would be interpreted as a concession to Marcion's point of view for the purpose of overcoming the Marcionite threat on the basis of the Old Testament itself.^[9]

Indeed, several scholars have brought Marcion, Ptolemy, and the *Homilies* together in comparison.^[10] As part of my study, I too will consider relevant points of comparison to be found among these three.

Before we proceed with our own discussion of the theory of the false pericopes, however, one last observation by way of introduction is in order. Frédéric Manns has noted that both the theory of false pericopes and the aversion to allegorism fit very well within a Jewish "apologetic" framework:

L'ensemble du roman a une forte coloration apologétique; il réfute les fausses interprétations de la Torah et les erreurs ajoutées aux Ecritures (*Hom.*2.38). Le recours aux allégories pour expliquer les mythes (*Rec.*10.35) et le fatalisme de l'horoscope (*Rec.*9.12) qui avaient cours dans le monde hellénisé sont également rejetés.^[11]

The entire novel has a strong apologetic coloring; it refutes the false interpretations of the Torah and the errors that have been added to the Scriptures. Recourse to allegorical interpretation in order to explain myths and astro-determinism, which were prevalent in the Hellenistic world, are equally rejected.

Manns's comment here illustrates a general connection that seems to exist between the rejection of allegorism and the theory of the false pericopes. The following three observations are offered as reinforcements for such a connection.

First, as I noted above, the false pericopes tend to be those sorts of passages that other exegetes are wont to allegorize. In this way, the rejection of allegorism and the theory of the false pericopes are at least implicitly related as different responses stimulated by the need to explain difficult passages. Second, a general relationship between the rejection of allegorism and false pericopes is further suggested by the overarching shape of the *Homilies* in their entirety. According to Charles Bigg, "The main body of the work is dictated by two different motives. The first is the debate between Christianity and Gnosticism, conducted by St. Peter and Simon Magus: the second is the debate between Christianity and Heathenism, in which the parties are Clement and his brothers on the one side, and Appion and Faustus on the other."^[12] Accordingly, the theory of the false pericopes is central to debates between Simon and Peter. Likewise, the question of allegorism is central to the debates between Appion and Clement. This circumstance suggests that there is some linkage between the rejection of allegorism and the theory of the false pericopes. Third, the function of the "oral tradition" itself, as it is presented in the Pseudo-Clementines, suggests further linkage between the rejection of allegorism and the theory of false pericopes.^[13] That is, we saw in *Rec.* 10.42 how the oral ancestral tradition works as something of a protectant against allegorism:

You should not seek a foreign and external sense, which you have imported from outside, in that you verify it from the authority of Scripture; but you ought to take the sense of truth from the Scriptures themselves. So therefore it is necessary to learn the correct meaning of the Scriptures from the one who preserves it according to the ancestral tradition handed down to him, in order that he might properly declare that which he has correctly received.

But protecting against allegorism is only one part the ancestral tradition's function. As Schoeps has noted, "Die allegorische Deutung secundum proprii ingenii intelligentiam, wie sie zumal die alexandrinische Exegese pflegte, haben sie ausdrücklich (*Rec.* 10.42) zugunsten der Tradition abgelehnt."^[14] ("The allegorical method of interpretation, as was used especially in Alexandrian exegesis, has been explicitly rejected [*Rec.* 10.42] in favor of tradition.") The oral tradition also holds the "mystery" of (or "the solutions" to) the false pericopes. Just after we are told that Simon "comes to do battle with us, armed with the false chapters of the Scriptures," *Hom.* 3.4 begins with Peter saying,

καὶ ἡμῖν μὲν τοῖς ἐκ προγόνων παρειληφόσιν τὸν τὰ
πάντα κτίσαντα σέβειν θεόν, ἔτι δὲ καὶ τῶν ἀπατᾶν
δυναμένων βίβλων τὸ μυστήριον, οὐδὲν δυνήσεται.

Indeed, with us who have had handed down from our ancestors the [proper] worship of the Creator God, as well as the mystery of the books, which can deceive, [Simon] will be unable to do anything.^[15]

Hom. 16.14.4–5 conveys similar notions:

ἔτι δὲ καὶ ἐκ πατέρων ἐφοδιαζόμενοι τῶν γραφῶν τὰ
ἀληθῆ ἓνα μόνον οἶδαμεν τὸν πεποιηκότα τοὺς τε
οὐρανοὺς καὶ τὴν γῆν, θεὸν Ἰουδαίων καὶ πάντων τῶν
σέβειν αὐτὸν αἰρουμένων. τοῦτον καὶ θεοφιλεῖ
λογισμῶ ἀληθῆ δογματίσαντες οἱ πατέρες παρέδωκαν
ἡμῖν, ἵνα εἰδῶμεν ὅτι, εἴ τι κατὰ τοῦ θεοῦ λέγεται,
ψεῦδός ἐστιν.

Moreover, being equipped by our ancestors with the truths of the Scriptures, we know that there is only

One who has made the heavens and the earth—the God of the Jews—and of all who choose to worship him. Our fathers, with a rational love for God, setting out true teachings, transmitted [orally] this belief to us, in order that that we may know that if anything is said against God, it is a falsehood.

On the one hand, then, the oral tradition prepares one for how to deal with the false pericopes (*Hom.*3.4; 16.14). On the other hand, the oral tradition also serves as a protectant against allegorism (*Rec.*10.42; *Hom.*2.2). This “double duty” of the oral tradition suggests a link between the rejection of allegorism and the theory of the false pericopes. That said, let us turn our attention to the false pericopes themselves.

3.2. THE ORIGINS OF THE FALSE PERICOPES

Now, the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* demonstrate sensitivity to historical and exegetical “problems” posed by the Pentateuch. But allegorical and typological interpretations of Scripture, so prevalent in early Christianity, are categorically eschewed in this corpus. Instead, certain passages that others might allegorize the Pseudo-Clementines simply reject out of hand as “false.” But how can this be? On what basis? In addition to the Homilist’s concern for the basic *sensus literalis* (which we discussed in chapter 2), the answer is also to be found in the Homilist’s particular understanding of how the Pentateuch came to exist in its *written* form.^[16]

As ancient (and even modern) readers of the Pentateuch have pored over the “problem” of its Mosaic authorship, various “solutions” have been put forth. The Pseudo-Clementines offer a unique perspective on this issue: Moses himself did not actually *writethe* Pentateuch; he transmitted it orally to the seventy elders. The passage under consideration is important and worth citing in full:

καὶ ὁ Πέτρος· Ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ νόμος διὰ Μωυσέως
ἐβδομήκοντα σοφοῖς ἀνδράσιν ἀγράφως ἐδόθη
παραδίδοσθαι, ἵνα τῇ διαδοχῇ πολιτεύεσθαι δύνηται,
μετὰ δὲ τὴν Μωυσέως ἀνάληψιν ἐγράφη ὑπὸ τινος, οὐ
μὴν ὑπὸ Μωυσέως· ἐν αὐτῷ γὰρ τῷ νόμῳ γέγραπται·
Καὶ ἀπέθανεν Μωυσῆς καὶ ἔθαψαν αὐτὸν ἐγγὺς οἴκου
Φογόρ, καὶ οὐδεὶς οἶδεν τὴν ταφὴν αὐτοῦ ἕως τῆς
σήμερον. οἷόν τε ἦν ἀποθανόντα Μωυσῆν γράφειν·
Ἀπέθανεν Μωυσῆς ; ἐπεὶ ἐν τῷ μετὰ Μωυσέα χρόνῳ
(ὥς γε ἔτη που πεντακόσια ἢ καὶ πρὸς) ἐν τῷ κτισθέντι
ναῶ κείμενος εὐρίσκεται, καὶ μεθ’ ἑτερά που
πεντακόσια ἔτη φέρεται καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ Ναβουχοδονόσορ
οὕτως ἐνπρησθεὶς ἀπόλλυται. καὶ ὅμως μετὰ Μωυσῆν
γραφεῖς καὶ πολλάκις ἀπολωλὼς τὴν τοῦ Μωυσέως
πρόγνωσιν καὶ οὕτως ὁμολόγησεν, ὅτι τὸν ἀφανισμόν
αὐτοῦ προειδὼς οὐκ ἔγραψεν· οἱ δὲ γράψαντες τῷ τὸν

ἀφανισμόν μὴ προεγνωκέναι ἐπ’ ἀγνωσίας
ἐλεγχθέντες, προφηται οὐκ ἦσαν.

Then Peter said, “The law of God, which was delivered orally from Moses to seventy wise men, was given in order that by means of this succession it would be possible to [preserve] the Jewish mode of life. But after Moses was taken up, the law was written by someone, though certainly not by Moses. For in the law itself it is written *Moses died and they buried him near the house of Phogor, and no one knows his burial place to this day*. How then could a dead Moses have written ‘*Moses died?*’^[17] Indeed, in the time after Moses (some five hundred years or more) the law is discovered lying in the temple, and then after another five hundred years it is carried away, and then, being burnt in the time of Nebuchadnezzar, it is utterly lost. All the same, being written after Moses and often lost, even this speaks to Moses’ foresight; because he, foreseeing its disappearance, did not write it. But those who did write it were not prophets, given that they were tried and found guilty on the charge of ignorance because they did not foresee its disappearance.”^[18]

The Pentateuch, then, was committed to writing only *after* Moses’ death, and by others who were not even prophets. What is more, the Pentateuch itself suffered along with Israel over the course of her turbulent history; it was lost, then found again (during Josiah’s reign), only to be dragged away and eventually burnt and destroyed during the Babylonian exile.^[19] As a result, over time the Pentateuch acquired dozens of passages that, according to the Homilist, turn out to be “false.” One reason why this perspective is important is that it provides a witness from antiquity to a theory of the postexilic redaction of the Pentateuch.^[20] Indeed, as Schoeps has observed,

It is very interesting and curious that [the *Homilies*] employed an almost-modern Pentateuchal criticism . . . that the law was set down in writing after Moses' death "by someone" (the Yahwist?) and approximately five hundred years later was rediscovered in the Temple (Josiah's reform, Deuteronomy); after another five hundred years it perished in the flames . . . then was written down again (Priestly Code, under Ezra), with the result that in successive drafts it became more and more falsified.^[21]

The recognition that there are false passages in the Pentateuch is first introduced in *Hom.*2.38. The Homilist's theory of the false pericopes is rooted in one of the most important pentateuchal traditions: the very giving of the law at Sinai.^[22] As we learn from *Hom.*2.38.1–2:

πολλὰ γὰρ ψευδῇ κατὰ τοῦ θεοῦ προσέλαβον αἱ
γραφαὶ λόγῳ τούτῳ· τοῦ προφήτου Μωυσέως γνώμη
τοῦ θεοῦ ἐκλεκτοῖς τισιν ἐβδομήκοντα τὸν νόμον σὺν
ταῖς ἐπιλύσεσιν παραδεδωκότος πρὸς τὸ καὶ αὐτοὺς
ἐφοδιάζειν τοῦ λαοῦ τοὺς βουλομένους, μετ' οὐ πολὺ
γραφεῖς ὁ νόμος προσέλαβέν τινα καὶ ψευδῇ κατὰ τοῦ
μόνου θεοῦ τοῦ τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν καὶ πάντα τὰ
ἐν αὐτοῖς δημιουργήσαντος, τοῦτο τοῦ πονηροῦ
δικαίῳ τινὶ λόγῳ ἐνεργῆσαι τετολμηκότος. καὶ τοῦτο
γέγονεν λόγῳ καὶ κρίσει, ὅπως ἐλεγχθῶσιν τίνες
τολμῶσιν τὰ κατὰ τοῦ θεοῦ γραφέντα φιληκόως ἔχειν
τίνες τε στοργῇ τῇ πρὸς αὐτὸν τὰ κατ' αὐτοῦ
λεγόμενα μὴ μόνον ἀπιστεῖν, ἀλλὰ μηδὲ τὴν ἀρχὴν
ἀκούειν ἀνέχεσθαι, κἂν ἀληθῇ τυγχάνῃ, πολλῶ
κρίναντες ἀσφαλέστερον περὶ εὐφήμου πίστεως
κινδυνεύειν ἢ ἐπὶ βλασφήμοις λόγοις δυσσυνειδήτως
βιοῦν.

The Scriptures acquired many falsehoods against God in the following way: the prophet Moses, by the will of God, transmitted the law with its solutions to seventy certain chosen men in order that they might equip those among the people who wish [to teach]. Not long after, the law, once it was committed to writing, acquired certain additional material—falsehoods against the only Creator God who made the heaven, the earth, and everything in them. This, even though the devil attempted it as a scheme, was in keeping with a certain righteous design. This happened with divine oversight, in order that they might be censured who dare to listen fondly to the things written against God, and [in order that they] who, because of their love toward him, might not only disbelieve the things spoken against him, but refrain from so much as hearing them at all—even if such things should happen to be true—determining it safer by far to run the risk of reverence than to live with an evil conscience on account of blasphemous words.

Several elements from this passage merit further comment. The text says that Moses delivered the law “with its solutions” (σὺν ταῖς ἐπιλύσεσιν) to the Seventy. Moreover, he originally transmitted the law orally. This is also made clear in *Hom.*2.38.1, where it says, “after a little while, when the law was then committed to writing.”^[23] Thus, as Shuve puts it, “The *written* Torah cannot be connected to Moses and therefore it cannot be traced back to the revelation given by God. Only the oral tradition has roots at Sinai.”^[24] However, we should be careful to point out that the purpose of this passage is not to mount a polemic against the written Torah *per se*.^[25] Rather, the emphasis is to say that *the false passages crept in after Moses’ original oral transmission of the law, that is, during the interim after his death and the subsequent stages of transcription after the exile*. On this point, therefore, William Horbury’s statement can be refined when he says, “False paragraphs were interpolated into the law when it was handed down

to the elders.”^[26] To the contrary, it is clear from *Hom.* 2.38 that it is during the time between Moses’ death and, later, the written transcription of the law when false pericopes are thought to have crept in. Indeed, Moses’ oral transmission of the law to the elders is precisely that which embodies the means by which one properly adjudicates true from false Scriptures.

Hom. 2.43–50 constitutes a short discourse on the underlying logic explaining the presence of the false pericopes. Peter poses the question: How did the author of “the books” know how the world was made, and how did he know that God foreknows? The answer is that he was a prophet. It follows, reasons Peter, that this prophetic author received his capacity for foreknowledge from God. Thus, in order for God to impart the “gift of foreknowledge,” God himself must logically possess the same ability.^[27] Therefore, since God foreknows all things, it must be the case that those Scriptures are “false” that say otherwise.^[28] But what might this look like in practice? That is, what sort of passages in Scripture should be designated as “false?”

3.3. THE GENERAL FUNCTION AND CHARACTER OF THE FALSE PERICOPES

The *Homilies* put forth the idea that certain Scriptures are “false” (ψευδής), or “spurious” (νόθος). The guiding principle, expressed in its most compact form, is this:

πᾶν λεχθὲν ἢ γραφὲν κατὰ τοῦ θεοῦ ψευδὸς ἐστίν.

Everything spoken or written against God is false.

[29]

Such passages do not belong to God’s original, “perpetual” law, which he had established:

νόμον αἰώνιον ὥρισεν τοῖς ὅλοις, μήτε πολέμῳ
ἐμπρησθῆναι δυνάμενον μήθ’ ὑπὸ ἀσεβοῦς τινος
ὑπονοθευόμενον μήτε ἐνὶ τόπῳ ἀποκεκρυμμένον,
ἀλλὰ πᾶσιν ἀναγνωσθῆναι δυνάμενον.

[God] appointed a perpetual law to all, which can be abrogated neither by an enemy nor impaired by any impious one. Nor is it hidden in some secret place, but it can be publicly read by all. [30]

We also learn that these false pericopes were “designed to test those who hear them.” [31] Thus the knowledge that certain sections of Scripture have been “added” and are “false” is not something to be admitted openly, “lest the unlearned should become perplexed, and so accomplish the purpose of this wicked Simon.” [32] Rather, the “solution” to the problem of the false chapters is offered only privately, “to the prudent, after a trial of their loyalty” (τοῖς δὲ εὐγνωμονοῦσιν μετὰ πείραν πίστεως ἰδίᾳ παρέχειν τὴν

ἐπίλυσιν).^[33] The ability to recognize and reject false passages keeps one from sinning against God.^[34]

Schoeps organizes the false pericopes under four general categories: the sacrificial cult, the validity of prophecy, the monarchy, and offensive passages in Scripture.^[35] According to Schoeps, “The rest of the Torah apparently remained as legally binding on the Jewish Christians as before. Only the revelatory character of the prophetic books of the Old Testament canon seems to have been impaired or even rejected.”^[36]

Strecker organizes the false pericopes a bit differently, grouping them according to five main types: anthropopathisms, polytheism, (false) prophecy, the sacrificial cult and the temple, and the monarchy.^[37] For our purposes, both taxonomies will do. In subsequent chapters, I will consider certain false pericopes that fall into these categories, especially those having to do with polytheism. Here I consider those passages that seek to defend the character of the patriarchs.

3.4. THE DEFENSE OF IMPORTANT BIBLICAL CHARACTERS

The Homilist betrays a concern for the reputation of key biblical figures. This can be traced to the underlying “literalist” approach taken by the Homilist, who understands biblical characters as real human characters whose lives provide “pious” or “impious” moral examples. Charles Gieschen has identified “the listing genre” whereby exemplary biblical characters are connected who are considered “pillars” of piety and righteousness.^[38] Such a list typically includes Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses—“the seven pillars of the world” (ἐπὶ τὰ στύλους ὑπάρξαντος κόσμῳ)—and functions as a sort of moral and spiritual encomium.^[39] Thus, according to *Homilies*, any apparently morally offensive or contradictory statements about these pious figures are rejected as “false.”

*Hom.*2.52.2–3 offers a few specific examples of certain false pericopes in the Pentateuch. In this passage, Peter evokes a handful of brief episodes from the Pentateuch. These include passages concerning key biblical figures such as Adam, the patriarchs, and Moses. According to the theory of false pericopes, Adam simply did not transgress; Noah did not get drunk; Abraham did not have three wives; Jacob did not cohabit with four women; and Moses neither murdered the Egyptian nor learned from a pagan priest.^[40] In light of this list, we do well to recall that no attempt whatsoever is made to explain these “offensive” passages by recourse to allegorical or typological interpretation. Rather, in keeping with the theory of the false pericopes, such passages are regarded as just plain false.

This brief catalog (*Hom.*2.52.2–3) of the false pericopes is marked by a tight, stylistic pattern. In each instance, the biblical character is introduced with the “falsehood” about him, followed immediately with something of the “truth” about each biblical character in this list. Hence, Adam was in fact fashioned by God’s hands; Noah was found to be “more righteous than all the world”; Abraham, “because of his temperance, was deemed worthy of many descendants”; Jacob was the father of the twelve tribes and “signaled the arrival of our teacher” (τὴν τοῦ διδασκάλου ἡμῶν παρουσίαν ἐσήμανεν ἐλθεῖν); and Moses prophesied the law of God to every age and was verified as a “faithful steward.”^[41] The case of Jacob clearly marks an

allusion to Gen. 49:10, a favorite “messianic” text among the writings of the church fathers and even among the Targumim.^[42]

Of these biblical figures, Adam receives special attention. The focus of Peter’s discussion in *Hom.* 3.17-21 concerns whether Adam sinned and whether he possessed foreknowledge. According to Peter, Adam was indeed fashioned by God’s hands and did in fact possess the “holy spirit of foreknowledge.” Concordantly, Adam did not transgress: οὐτε Ἀδὰμ παραβάτης ἦν.^[43] Indeed, the entire block of material in *Hom.* 3.17–21 constitutes a defense of Adam as the True Prophet against the charge that he transgressed. Hence, the Homilist regards the so-called fall of Adam itself as one such “false pericope” of the Pentateuch.^[44] Although the Homilist is fully aware that the world is full of suffering, violence, and illness, he does not fault Adam for being the origin of these. The Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* do not espouse any “doctrine of original sin” attributed to Adam, such as we find developing among some of the Homilist’s contemporary Christian exegetes.^[45] In order to account for the origin of sin and evil, the Homilist appeals to a different pentateuchal tradition—the myth of the “demon-giants,” the wicked offspring of the rogue angels in the days of Noah.^[46]

In short, the theory of the false pericopes in the *Homilies* is characterized by a number of distinctive features. In particular, the *Homilies* attribute the appearance of the falsehoods in the Pentateuch to the process of transmission of the Mosaic legislation, that is, as it came to exist in its written form. When it comes to biblical criticism and theories of “false Scriptures” in antiquity, there do exist other important parallels. Two such parallels are to be found in Marcion and Ptolemy. At this point, then, we would do well to consider Marcion and Ptolemy with reference to this aspect of the exegetical theory put forth in the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*. We begin with Marcion.

3.5. EXCURSUS: PARALLELS IN MARCION

Marcel Simon reminds us that Marcion's approach to the Scriptures compelled other Christians to reevaluate their own Jewish scriptural heritage.^[47] For Marcion's teaching would become the greatest rival to the apostolic faith. Indeed, Marcion (c. 140–170 CE) was “one of the very few opponents of orthodoxy whom Greek and Latin theologians united in damning.”^[48] Edwin Cyril Blackman points out that “the oldest church-inscription we possess [c. 318] happens to be the inscription on a Marcionite church.”^[49] Celsus reports that he knew of only two branches of Christianity, one of them Marcionite.^[50] As late as the mid-fifth century, Theodoret, bishop of Cyrrhus, boasts of freeing over a thousand souls “from the disease of Marcion.”^[51] For purposes of the present study, however, what is particularly important about Marcion is his insistence on a literal rather than an allegorical interpretation of the Scriptures.^[52] Indeed, Marcion has been described as being “rather doggedly literal-minded in his reading” of the Jewish Scriptures, “perhaps in reaction to the kind of unrestrained allegorical exegesis found among some of his contemporaries (e.g., the author of *Barnabas*).”^[53] Adolf von Harnack once said of Marcion, “There was no theologian in the early church who rejected allegorical interpretation as consistently as did he.”^[54]

Marcion was born and bred in Sinope, which in his day was home to a flourishing Jewish community. The Christian Marcion taught that there were two gods.^[55] One of these is the creator of the world, the god of the Pentateuch, the god of “judgment,” who is an inferior deity. This creator demonstrated his ignorance when, for example, he asked where Adam was in the Garden.^[56] The other god is the Redeemer, a God of “mercy,” utterly separate from the creator, and unknown until revealed by Jesus. In this regard, it is significant that in the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*, Simon Magus intends to argue against Peter that

ἕτερος ἀγράφως περιλείπεται εἶναι προγνωστικός,
τέλειος, ἀνευδεής, ἀγαθός, πάντων χαλεπῶν
ἀπηλλαγμένος παθῶν.

It remains the case that there is another, different [God] not recorded [in the Scriptures] who is foreknowing, complete, without want, good, far removed from all troublesome passions.^[57]

According to Marcion, this god's appearance in Jesus was an unprecedented, unheralded irruption, having no close association with that inferior creator god.^[58] Jesus was linked with the God of the Christians (and of their Scriptures) and not with the God of the Jews (and of their Scriptures). "No other early Christian thinker, it might appear, so openly rejects the Jewish Scriptures and denigrates their God."^[59] Thus, as Marcion would have it, Jesus' teaching was incompatible with the Pentateuch.

Marcion's corpus of Scripture consisted of a combination of Paul's letters and Luke's Gospel. This truncated collection of Scripture, together with his own *Antitheses* (commentary on his edited Gospel), constituted the textual expression of the Marcionite tradition.^[60] The *Antitheses* explained how Jesus contradicted the Old Testament teachings. The *Gospel* presented the "true" text of the Jesus-story. The *Apostle* presented the "true" text of Paul's "genuine" letters. Marcion believed that both the *Gospel* and Paul's own letters had been "interpolated by the defenders of Judaism." According to the testimony of Irenaeus (c. 140–202 ce),

In addition to this [Marcion] circumcised the gospel according to Luke by excising everything written about our Lord's nativity, as well as removing from our Lord's teaching many passages in which it is written that he openly professed that the Creator of this universe is his Father. Marcion persuaded his adherents that he himself expressed the truth better than the apostles who delivered the gospel: though in fact he delivered them no gospel but only a part of one. In like manner he castrated the epistles of Paul the apostle by removing all things clearly expressed

by the apostle concerning the God who made the world.^[61]

Now, scholarship has often connected the theory of the false passages in the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* with Marcion's own biblical criticism. On the one hand, Robert M. Grant, for example, describes the *Homilies* as "a heretical Christian parallel to Marcion."^[62] On the other hand, according to Strecker, the simple governing principle behind the proper evaluation of the false pericopes is that "every saying written against God is false" (*Hom.*2.40.1), and that the interpretation of each text from Scripture must accord with this idea. Strecker describes this posture towards scriptural interpretation as *rationalistisch* ("die Kriterie der Vernunft").^[63] As for this "rationalistic" character of the false pericopes, Schoeps suggests, "It must be observed that the biblical criticism of the *Kērygmata Petrou* is thoroughly permeated with rationalism, its distinctive feature. One could in fact refer to it as a sample of an ancient Enlightenment."^[64] Strecker, though, associates the false pericopes theory more with Gnostics and less with Marcion.^[65] Strecker understands the "false pericopes" as a hermeneutical device that was employed primarily against the Gnostics.^[66] According to Strecker's understanding of the way in which the underlying literary sources (of the *Grundschrift*) developed, the apparent connection between the false pericopes and the Marcionites is separate from and subsequent to the *Κηρύγματα Πέτρου* source.^[67] That is, according to Strecker, the author of the *Grundschrift* incorporated that stratum which contains the notion of the "false pericopes" with other material at a later stage.

In Schoeps's view, the false-passages theory emerged at a very early period, among the Ebionites.^[68] Furthermore, Schoeps (who identifies "Simon" as "Marcion") does perceive palpable connections between the false pericopes theory and Marcionism: "It seems probable that the *Kērygmata Petrou* was intended to provide an answer to Marcion's teaching . . . inasmuch as the *Kērygmata Petrou*, influenced by Marcion's arguments, abandons that which is untenable in the Old Testament in order to be able to save that which is essential."^[69] Indeed, as Schoeps sees it, the false-pericopes theory could be interpreted "as a concession to Marcion's point of

view for the purpose of overcoming the Marcionite threat on the basis of the Old Testament itself.”^[70] Horbury has also suggested that the Pseudo-Clementine theory of the false pericopes constitutes a concession to the Marcionite attack on the Jewish Scriptures.^[71] More recently Manns has written,

au deuxième siècle les communautés chrétiennes furent secouées par les doctrines de Marcion, lequel se présentait comme un nouveau Paul, mais plus radical que lui dans le rejet de la Torah. La défense de l’Ancien Testament ébauchée contre Simon paraît convenir contre les attaques de Marcion. Les critiques contre Paul visent en fait Marcion.^[72]

Second-century Christian communities were upset by the doctrines of Marcion, who presented himself as a new Paul, but more radical than him in the rejection of the Torah. The defense of the Old Testament outlined against Simon seems to agree with attacks against Marcion. The criticisms against Paul are actually against Marcion.

Similarly, Shuve has recently suggested, “The *Homilies*’ doctrine of the false pericopes may have been tailored to refute the doctrines of Marcion, whose *Antitheses* apparently sought to establish the difference between the God proclaimed in the Jewish Scriptures and the Father revealed by Christ.”^[73]

The written Scriptures were a primary point of disputation with the Marcionites. At this level, the *Homilies* seem to appropriate certain Marcionite tactics in order to refute Marcionite teaching. Unlike Marcion, however, the *Homilies* assume a much more favorable posture toward Judaism and the Torah.^[74] Indeed, in the *Homilies*, both Peter and Clement defend the teaching (and reputation) of the Jews as “most pious,” derived from the one true God.^[75] Han Jan Willem Drijvers detects an even more

substantive contact between the *Homilies* and Marcion: “The well-known controversy between Peter and Paul, the later the only and favourite apostle of the Marcionites, is transformed into a series of disputes between Peter and Simon, the arch-heretic, who however stands for Marcion and Marcionite doctrine.”^[76] Drijvers’s thesis is that the *Grundschrift* (which Drijvers suggests was probably called the *Periodoi Petrou*) that underlies the Pseudo-Clementines was an “anti-Marcionite book” composed around 220 ce “in a period when the Marcionites represented a real danger for the nascent orthodoxy in Syria.”^[77] According to Drijvers, “The doctrine of the one righteous God, who gave the divine Spirit of foreknowledge to Adam and Christ, the True Prophet, and created the world in opposite pairs, a mixture of good and evil, true and false prophecy, true and false sayings of the Scriptures, forms a coherent whole.”^[78] This constellation of ideas “belong closely together and serve polemical aims, namely the refutation of a heresy allegedly ascribed to Simon Magus.”^[79] Drijvers here identifies Simon Magus as none other than Marcion. Hence, “the doctrinal complex of the True Prophet and the false scriptural passages is an original anti-heretical construction of the author of [the *Grundschrift*], invented to refute the prevailing Marcionism in the Syrian area, where the author of [the *Grundschrift*] is to be sought.”^[80] Drijvers points to Simon’s description of the creator as an imperfect, ignorant, maleficent being who lacks foreknowledge, and who made humanity as a sinful creature. Simon characterizes the creator precisely as Marcion would.^[81] Like Simon, Marcion emphasized Adam as the creature of an ignorant creator. In this way, Marcion therefore severed all ties between Adam and Christ.^[82] Accordingly,

the author of [the *Grundschrift*] took exactly the opposite position and stressed the foreknowledge and sinlessness of Adam, who knew good and evil and always had the Divine Spirit, like Christ, with whom he is in fact identical. In other words, the identity of Adam and the True Prophet is analogous with the identity of the Creator and the redeeming God, the father of both, and is an expression of His

foreknowledge, an element heavily emphasized by anti-Marcionite polemics. . . . The combination of sinlessness and foreknowledge made Adam into the True Prophet, the exact opposite of Marcion's sinful first man!^[83]

Drijvers isolates “the doctrinal complex of the True Prophet and the false scriptural passages” and identifies this as “an original anti-heretical construction” invented to refute Marcionism. Drijvers is particularly interested in offering us an interpretation of the Adam-Christ figure. I wish to suggest how, at an exegetical level, a good deal of the *Homilies* does indeed have Marcionism in view as a primary target. Thus Marcion believed that Paul's letters had been “corrupted” by others who “inserted” references to Old Testament promises. Marcion therefore “purged” the Pauline epistles of material he believed to have been introduced by Jewish and Jewish-Christian opponents of Paul.^[84] In a chapter dealing with Marcion's criticism of “the *Gospel* and the *Apostle*,” Grant observes that

Marcion's insistence that both *Gospel* and *Apostle* had been interpolated suggests that he knew current theories about interpolated religious documents, as well as the editorial procedures of the great Hellenistic textual critics. After all, he wrote in a time when scholars were zealously reconstructing the philosophies that supposedly underlay Greek poetry and the authentic ancient myths that underlay current versions of them. They were “demythologizing,” using literary analysis to produce theology.^[85]

So Marcion “rejected the Jewish Scriptures, and cut out books and passages which he thought Judaistic from the Scriptures of Christian authorship.”^[86] Marcion solved the Christian problem of relating the Testaments by cutting the Gordian knot. In a manner of speaking, what Marcion does to Paul's

letters, the Homilist does to the Pentateuch. The Homilist detects “false interpolations” in the Pentateuch in an effort to salvage both the Creator God, and (if somewhat paradoxically) the Jewish Scriptures, which tell of him.

Another significant parallel between Simon and Marcion is to be found in their approach to the contradictions in the Pentateuch. Marcion wrote up his *Antitheses* in order to address and explain such contradictions,^[87] and he advocated a system of “dualistic oppositions.” Hence, the two deities in Marcion’s system are further characterized by two different modes of operation in the world—namely, “law” and “gospel.” As Tertullian put it, “The separation of law and gospel is the primary and principal exploit of Marcion.”^[88] Marcion’s stamp of “dualism,” which engendered his law-versus-gospel dichotomy was further expressed in his system of antithetical “pairs.” It is significant that the Homilist puts forth his own version of “pairs” of opposites—in the form of the *Syzygienlehre*—whereby the scriptural contradictions are not denied but are “fit into the wider framework of God’s guidance and foreknowledge.”^[89] Thus Marcion’s dualism sought to reject the Pentateuch; the *Homilies* to explain (and retain) it. In Marcion, we find an important parallel to the false-pericope theory at work in the *Homilies*.

In addition to Marcion, another important parallel can be seen in Ptolemy’s *Letter to Flora*.

3.6. EXCURSUS: PARALLELS IN PTOLEMY'S *LETTER TO FLORA*

In his discussion on Marcionite criticism of the Old Testament, Horbury points to Ptolemy's *Letter to Flora* (hereafter *Flor.*) and the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*. Horbury presents these two works as part of a "set of responses" that "evinced some kinship with Marcion by the appropriation of elements in his criticisms."^[90] Similarly, according to Grant,

There is a heretical Christian parallel to Marcion in the *Clementine Homilies*, which says that interpolated passages in the Old Testament law can be discovered by comparison with the teaching of Jesus. The author starts with the contrast between God's original purpose for marriage and Moses' authorization of divorce. The real grounds for his criticism, however, must lie in rational criticisms of the Old Testament. As summarized in the *Homilies* themselves, in the Old Testament God is described as taking oaths, tempting, lacking foreknowledge, not seeing everything, not good, living in the temple, desiring sacrifices, and wicked. The criticism reappears in [*Flor.*] by the Valentinian Gnostic Ptolemaeus.^[91]

I would like to follow Horbury's lead on this point. So here I consider the Homilist's theory of false pericopes in connection with *Flor.*

Flor. derives from the Valentinian school and was likely composed in the mid- to late second century, though the text is only known to us from Epiphanius's *Panarion*.^[92] Ptolemy, a student of Valentinus, follows the principles of a Gnostic vision of reality. The god of the law is the Creator, the demiurge, and so the law is of divine origin. As such, the law is "good," though it is not "perfect" since it derives from the demiurge, who is inferior to the perfect God, the Father.^[93] Within this framework, the Old Testament is retained, but it is relegated to a somewhat inferior position, subject to the authoritative "words of the Savior."^[94] Even so, Ptolemy views the law itself as in some way still authoritative; even the parts about the cultus are

of value, *but only if they are read allegorically*. And so it is that *Flor.* “can be seen to express the typical Valentinian Gnostic position vis-à-vis the OT as a whole: even though it is inspired by an inferior deity, the OT contains valuable truth which ‘the Saviour’ fulfills, or which, when subjected to allegorical interpretation, reveals *gnosis*.”^[95] Now, it is probable that Ptolemy would have had some familiarity with Marcion and his biblical criticism. But “Marcion, though undoubtedly influenced by Gnosticism, was not a Gnostic but a Christian who carried to radical extremes the Pauline doctrine of justification by *faith* (not *gnosis*) apart from the works of the law.”^[96] It is evident from *Flor.* 3.2–3 that Ptolemy stands in opposition to Marcionites on one hand and “mainline” Christians on the other. The classical patristic answer to Marcionite criticism was to treat difficult passages of Scripture as “types” or allegories. But while Marcion described the Jewish law as the “inferior” teachings of a demiurge, Ptolemy understood the Mosaic legislation as a pure law *that had become interpolated with false material*. Contra Marcion, Ptolemy “considers the complete rejection of the Jewish corpus as more dangerous than its uncritical acceptance.”^[97] Ptolemy’s notion of spurious portions of Scripture “evinced some kinship with Marcion by the appropriation of elements in his criticisms.”^[98] For Ptolemy presents a tripartite division of the law including “genuine” and “spurious” portions. This device enables Ptolemy to employ a “rational” critique of the Mosaic legislation, with the result that large portions of it are eliminated.

In his discussion of the various ways in which the Gnostics employed the Old Testament, Birger Pearson enumerates three “hermeneutical presuppositions” of the Gnostics:^[99] (1) a wholly “negative view” of the Old Testament; (2) a wholly “positive view”; and (3) an “intermediate position.” The example Pearson gives for this third type is none other than *Flor.*^[100] This “intermediate position” is also adopted by the Homilist. The most characteristic feature of this “intermediate position,” and the clearest mark of similarity between *Flor.* and *Hom.*, is, of course, the view that the Pentateuch contains false interpolations. Indeed, Harnack once observed that this view “such as we find in Ptolemaeus and pseudo-Clement” is “highly deserving of attention from scholars.”^[101] This circumstance, along with their overlapping connections to Gnosticism in general, warrants comparison between *Hom.* and *Flor.*^[102]

What can we say about their literary relationship? Jean Daniélou mentions in passing that *Flor.* may have been influenced by the Jewish Christianity of the Pseudo-Clementines.^[103] Strecker grants that the teaching on the discrimination of the Scriptures stands on Jewish ground, but “in its radical form Gnostic influence is not denied.”^[104] However, neither Gilles Quispel nor Strecker assumes that Ptolemy is dependent upon *Hom.*^[105] The goal of this section, then, is to consider a few passages in *Flor.* with a view to identifying those elements it has in common with *Hom.* I will draw attention to the fact that several aspects of the exegetical theory present in *Hom.* are also present throughout *Flor.* as a whole. It is hoped that the following analysis will contribute positively to the general discussion. As we shall see, there is indeed significant overlap between the exegetical theories put forth in *Hom.* and *Flor.* Two in particular are the theory of the false pericopes and the True Prophet’s teaching. In addition to these, we might also include the “harmony criterion,” as well as the role of an “ancestral tradition.” Let us then turn to consider the parallels between *Hom.* 3.54.1–2 and *Flor.* 4.3–4.

In his tripartite division of the law of God, Ptolemy distinguishes between (1) the legislation of *God* himself, (2) the legislation of *Moses* himself, and (3) the legislation of the *elders*.^[106] To my knowledge, there are no other references to this sort of tripartite division of the Mosaic law. Quispel affirms Ptolemy’s novelty in his claim that the Pentateuch contains human interpolations: “si l’école de Ptolémée affirme que toute la Bible contienne des interpolations humaines, il faut reconnaître que ce point de vue ne se retrouve pas ailleurs.”^[107] (“If the school of Ptolemy claims that the entire Bible contains human interpolations, one must recognize that this view is not found elsewhere.”) Furthermore, Quispel recognizes that only the Pseudo-Clementines surpass *Flor.* in this regard:

Autant que je sache, il n’y a qu’un seul écrit chrétien qui reconnaisse (plus radicalement que Ptolémée) qu’il existe des additions humaines dans l’Ancien Testament. C’est le Κήρυγμα Πέτρου comme l’appelle Waitz, une source palestino-chrétienne des

*Homélie*sp. Clémentines et des *Recognitiones Clementis*.^[108]

As far as I know, there is only one Christian writing that recognizes (more radically than Ptolemy) that there are human additions in the Old Testament. This is the *Κήρυγμα Πέτρου* as Waitz calls it, a Palestinian-Christian source of the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* and *Recognitiones*.

This feature of *Flor.* is immediately recognizable by its similarity to the idea of the false pericopes in *Hom.* Ptolemy takes the “legislation that is from God” and further subdivides it into three parts. First is the “pure legislation not entangled with evil,” which Ptolemy calls “the law in its primary sense” (κυρίως νόμος). This is the Decalogue. The second part consists of the legislation “enmeshed [συμπεπλεγμένον] with the inferior and with injustice.” This is the part that “the Savior abolished since it was incongruous [ἀνοίκειον] with his own nature.”^[109] An example of this is the law of retaliation. As for the third part,

Διαρεῖται δὲ καὶ εἰς τὸ τυπικὸν καὶ συμβολικὸν τὸ κατ’ εἰκόνα τῶν πνευματικῶν καὶ διαφερόντων νομοθετηθέν· ὃ μετέθηκεν ὁ σωτὴρ ἀπὸ αἰσθητοῦ καὶ φαινομένου ἐπὶ τὸ πνευματικὸν καὶ ἀόρατον.

[The third part] is divided into the typological and symbolic legislation, ordained according to the image of spiritual and higher things, the part the Savior transferred from [the realm of] sense perception and appearance to [the realm of] the spiritual and the invisible.^[110]

Ptolemy includes in this third category “the legislation about sacrifices, circumcision, the Sabbath, fasting, the Passover, unleavened bread, and the likes of these.”^[111] These are some of the very same kinds of passages in the Pentateuch that the Homilist deems as false material. But at no point does the Homilist regard such passages “symbolically” or as “types.”

3.7. CONCLUSION

The biblical criticism at work in *Hom.* finds relevant parallels in both Marcion and in *Flor.* Like Marcion, the Homilist categorically rejects allegorism. Like Ptolemy, the Homilist advocates a theory of false interpolations. That the Pentateuch contains false pericopes is based on (1) a general concern for the *sensus literalis* of the text, and (2) the Pseudo-Clementines' particular understanding of how the Pentateuch was transmitted orally and eventually came to exist in written form. Moses at first orally transmitted the law "with its solutions" to the seventy elders. But after the law was committed to writing (sometime after Moses' death), certain spurious passages crept in. Moreover, as we shall see in the following chapters, according to the Homilist, the interpreter must be able to recognize and appropriately handle these "false pericopes" in order to arrive at a "proper interpretation" of Scripture. In order to handle the false pericopes in a satisfactory manner, reference must be made to a distinct set of three external criteria. The first of these criteria—the True Prophet's teaching—will be the focus of the next chapter.

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1. See *Hom.* 2.38–41, 48–52; 3.3–5, 10; 3.50. While the notion of false pericopes may be fueled by Gnostic threats, other second-century Christians (some Gnostic Christians as well) seem to be experimenting with this kind of critical evaluation of the Pentateuch. See, for example, *Flor.* (discussed below). Theophilus of Antioch advances the idea that Jesus' teaching adjudicates Scripture as true or false. On this point, see Robert M. Grant, *Greek Apologists of the Second Century* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 162, 171–72. [↩](#)
 2. Karl Evan Shuve, "The Doctrine of the False Pericopes and Other Late Antique Approaches to the Problem of Scripture's Unity," in *Nouvelles intrigues pseudo-clémentines—Plots in the Pseudo-Clementine Romance: Actes du deuxième colloque international sur la littérature apocryphe chrétienne*, ed. Frédéric Amsler et al. (Lausanne: Editions du Zebre, 2008), 437. [↩](#)
 3. Shuve, "Doctrine of the False Pericopes," 437. According to Shuve (438), "the doctrine of the false pericopes is best understood as part of the heresiological discourse of the *Homilies*." For Georg Strecker's discussion of the false pericopes, see his *Das Judenchristentum in den*

Pseudoklementinen, 2nd ed., TUGAL (Berlin: Akademie, 1981), 162–87. [↩](#)

4. See Strecker, *Das Judenchristentum*, 186. Such “rationalistic” considerations will be addressed below, in ch. 6. [↩](#)
5. Hans Joachim Schoeps, *Jewish Christianity: Factional Disputes in the Early Church*, trans. Douglas R. A. Hare (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), 94. [↩](#)
6. According to Strecker (*Das Judenchristentum*, 167–69), the literary stratum containing the theory of the false pericopes is not original to the (hypothetical) *Kerygmata Petrou*, but was subsequently incorporated with other material utilized by the author of the *Grundschrift*. [↩](#)
7. See Schoeps, *Jewish Christianity*, 94–98. [↩](#)
8. See *ibid.*, 76–78. [↩](#)
9. *Ibid.*, 95. [↩](#)
10. In a somewhat similar way, Marcion’s commitment to the *sensus litteralis* encouraged him to reject the Jewish Scriptures in their entirety. Both Marcion and the Homilist reject the allegorical approach. [↩](#)
11. Frédéric Manns, “Les Pseudo-Clémentines (*Homélie*set *Reconnaisances*): État de la question,” *LASBF* 53 (2003): 159–60. [↩](#)
12. Charles Bigg, “The Clementine Homilies,” in *Studia Biblica et Ecclesiastica: Essays in Biblical and Patristic Criticism* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1890), 158–59. [↩](#)
13. The oral tradition will be treated more fully in ch. 5. [↩](#)
14. Hans Joachim Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte des Judenchristentums* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1949), 177n1. [↩](#)
15. *Hom.*3.4.1. I will discuss below more about the “ancestral tradition” and the “mystery.” [↩](#)
16. See Shuve (“Doctrine of the False Pericopes,” 439), who observes, “The authors/redactors of the *Homilies* assert the divine inspiration of the Scriptures and celebrate it as a source of truth, even as they question the status of its written form.” [↩](#)
17. On this question, see Schoeps, *Jewish Christianity*, 96, who notes *B. Bat.* 15a, where R. Judah b. Ilai (a Tannaitic authority of the mid-second century) says that Moses himself could not have written the last verse of the Torah. [↩](#)
18. *Hom.*3.47.1–4. [↩](#)
19. See, e.g., *Hom.*2.38; 3.46; 3.47.3–4. See also the discussion in Strecker, *Das Judenchristentum*, 166–67. [↩](#)
20. Josephus (*C. Ap.* 1.2.) relates how some envisioned a similar circumstance in the case of Homer’s *Iliad*. [↩](#)
21. Schoeps, *Jewish Christianity*, 83–84. [↩](#)

22. It is clear that “Sinai” is intended here, even though the Homilist never explicitly calls it by name. [↩](#)
23. But see also *Hom.* 2.49.2. [↩](#)
24. Shuve, “Doctrine of the False Pericopes,” 440 (italics mine). [↩](#)
25. On this point, see *ibid.*, 440, “The key contrast is not between oral and written but rather between prophetic transmission and non-prophetic transmission.” [↩](#)
26. William Horbury, “Old Testament Interpretation in the Writings of the Church Fathers,” in *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. Martin Jan Mulder (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 759. [↩](#)
27. Similarly, in the case of Adam, see *Hom.* 3.43; in the case of Moses, see *Hom.* 3.44. [↩](#)
28. Rhetorically, the twofold notion of God as “Creator” and “Judge” forms something of an *inclusio*, whereby the very content of the True Prophet’s proclamation, articulated earlier in *Hom.* 2.12.3, is emphasized again here in *Hom.* 2.45–46. [↩](#)
29. *Hom.* 2.40.1. [↩](#)
30. *Hom.* 8.10.3. [↩](#)
31. This is spelled out in greater detail in *Hom.* 16.10; see also *Hom.* 18.20.2. [↩](#)
32. *Hom.* 2.39.1–2. Not only certain sections, but even whole books are thought to be false, even “written against God.” This notion appears also in *Hom.* 18.22.2. [↩](#)
33. *Hom.* 2.39.4. [↩](#)
34. See *Hom.* 2.40.4. [↩](#)
35. Schoeps, *Jewish Christianity*, 82–94; Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte*, 155–76. [↩](#)
36. Schoeps, *Jewish Christianity*, 94. [↩](#)
37. Strecker, *Das Judentum*, 166–85. [↩](#)
38. Charles Gieschen, “The Seven Pillars of the World: Ideal Figure Lists in the True Prophet Christology of the Pseudo-Clementines,” *JSP* 12 (1994): 47–82. [↩](#)
39. The “seven pillars of the world” are mentioned as such in *Hom.* 18.14.1. Adolf von Harnack, *Marcion: The Gospel of the Alien God*, trans. John E. Stelly and Lyle D. Bierma (New York: Labyrinth, 1990), 85–86, discusses how Marcion taught that the patriarchs refused to hear Christ’s words and erroneously placed their loyalty with the demiurge. [↩](#)
40. See Gieschen, “Seven Pillars,” 48. [↩](#)
41. In the case of Adam, the emphasis is that Adam was fashioned by God’s hands, an idea that recurs in other Christian and Jewish writings: Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4 (praef. 3); Theophilus, *Autol.* 2.18; 4 *Ezra* 3:5; Philo, *Opif.* 148.

- See Strecker, *Das Judenchristentum*, 145n2. As for Moses, πιστὸς οἰκονόμος clearly evokes Num. 12:7. [↩](#)
42. The *Biblia Patristica: Patristica: Index des citations et allusions bibliques dans la littérature* (Paris, 1975–), 2:97, includes *Hom*2.52.2 under the entry for Gen. 49:10. [↩](#)
 43. *Hom*.2.52.2. [↩](#)
 44. The attempt in the Pseudo-Clementines to exonerate Adam from sin in this way is unique. As Schoeps notes (*Jewish Christianity*, 69), “Even complete freedom from sin is affirmed for Adam on the assumption that otherwise the divine Spirit in him would have sinned. This is entirely unique in the literature of the ancient church and it contradicts what we find in the literature of Gnosticism.” [↩](#)
 45. See also *4 Ezra*3:21–26. [↩](#)
 46. See *Hom*.8.10–20. This block of material represents the most extensive reuse of Enochic traditions in early Christian literature. See E. J. C. Tigchelaar, “Manna-Eaters and Man-Eaters: Food of the Giants and Men in the Pseudo-Clementine Homilies 8,” in *The Pseudo-Clementines*, ed. Jan N. Bremmer (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 92–114. [↩](#)
 47. Marcel Simon, *Verus Israel: A Study of the Relations between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire (135–425)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 65–66. [↩](#)
 48. W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 212. [↩](#)
 49. Edwin Cyril Blackman, *Marcion and His Influence* (London: SPCK, 1948), 4. [↩](#)
 50. Celsus in Origen, *Cels*.2.6; 5.54; 6.57; 7.25–26. [↩](#)
 51. *Ep*.113. See Blackman, *Marcion and His Influence*, 4. [↩](#)
 52. In this way, Marcion’s approach is distinct from the way in which Gnostics would approach the Scriptures. See Arland J. Hultgren and Steven A. Haggmark, eds., *The Earliest Christian Heretics* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 1996), 102. [↩](#)
 53. Steven G. Wilson, *Related Strangers: Jews and Christians* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 213. [↩](#)
 54. Harnack, *Marcion*, 47. Marcion’s rejection of the allegorical method is an expression of his more fundamental rejection of the “harmony” between the Old and New Testaments.” See *ibid.*, 59. [↩](#)
 55. *Ibid.*, 67–81; Blackman, *Marcion and His Influence*, 60–80. On Gnosticism in particular, see also Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the Birth of Christianity* (Boston: Beacon, 1953), 137–46. [↩](#)
 56. Tertullian, *Marc*.2.25; 4.41. See also Philo, *Leg*.51–54; *QG*1.45, 68. [↩](#)

57. *Hom.* 3.38.3. Cf. Tertullian, *Marc.* 5.16. [↩](#)
58. Harnack, *Marcion*, 81–93; Blackman, *Marcion and His Influence*, 98–102. [↩](#)
59. Wilson, *Related Strangers*, 208. [↩](#)
60. See Hans von Campenhausen, *The Formation of the Christian Bible* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1972), 73–102. [↩](#)
61. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.25.1. The English translation given here is that of Ernest Evans, *Tertullian: Adversus Marcionem* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), x. [↩](#)
62. Robert M. Grant, *Heresy and Criticism* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 44. [↩](#)
63. Strecker, *Das Judenchristentum*, 169. In the context of his discussion, Strecker’s general point here is that it is better to understand the principle of the false pericopes (“Falscheperikopenlehre”) with reference to this “rationalistic” approach rather than with reference to “Marcionism.” Hence, “Der Markionitismus kann demnach zur Erklärung der Falscheperikopenlehre der *KII* nicht herangezogen werden.” See also 186. [↩](#)
64. Schoeps, *Jewish Christianity*, 94–95. [↩](#)
65. See Strecker, *Das Judenchristentum*, 167–69. In Strecker’s estimation, the anti-Marcionite elements in the *Homilies* are later and not indigenous to the *Κηρύγματα Πέτρου* (which he believes was a source incorporated into the *Grundschrift*). [↩](#)
66. See *ibid.*, 186, 167. [↩](#)
67. *Ibid.*, 167–69. [↩](#)
68. Schoeps, *Jewish Christianity*, 76–77. [↩](#)
69. *Ibid.*, 95. On Schoeps’s identification of Simon as Marcion, see *ibid.*, 16. [↩](#)
70. *Ibid.*, 95. [↩](#)
71. Horbury, “Old Testament Interpretation,” 758–60. [↩](#)
72. Manns, “Les Pseudo-Clémentines,” 175. [↩](#)
73. Shuve, “Doctrine of the False Pericopes,” 441. [↩](#)
74. An important example of the *Homilies*’ appreciation for Judaism is evident in their penchant for a rabbinic-type “oral tradition,” the subject of ch. 5. [↩](#)
75. See *Hom.* 4.13.1–3. [↩](#)
76. Han Jan Willem Drijvers, “Adam and the True Prophet in the Pseudo-Clementines,” in *History and Religion in Late Antique Syria* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1994), 320. [↩](#)
77. *Ibid.*, 323. [↩](#)
78. *Ibid.*, 316. [↩](#)

79. Ibid., 318; see also 320–21. [↩](#)
80. Ibid., 318. [↩](#)
81. Drijvers (ibid., 318) notes the parallel between Tertullian, *Marc.* 2.5 and *Hom.* 3.38. [↩](#)
82. Harnack, *Marcion*, 97–106, 108. [↩](#)
83. Drijvers (“Adam and the True Prophet,” 319, 320) cites Tertullian *Marc.* 2.5–7. [↩](#)
84. Tertullian, *Marc.* 5.4, 16. [↩](#)
85. Grant, *Heresy and Criticism*, 34–35. Relevant examples given by Grant include Diodorus Siculus (c. 1st c. bce), Plutarch (c. 46–120 ce), and Philo of Byblos (Marcion’s contemporary), as well as Strabo (c. 64 bce–24 ce) and Cornutus (fl. 60 ce). [↩](#)
86. Horbury, “Old Testament Interpretation,” 728. [↩](#)
87. Tertullian, *Marc.* 4.1.1. [↩](#)
88. Tertullian, *Marc.* 1.19; cf. 4.6; 5.13. [↩](#)
89. Drijvers, “Adam and the True Prophet,” 320. For the “syzygies” in the Pseudo-Clementines, see Strecker, *Das Judenchristentum*, 154–62. [↩](#)
90. Horbury, “Old Testament Interpretation,” 759. [↩](#)
91. Grant, *Heresy and Criticism*, 44–45. [↩](#)
92. See also Epiphanius, *Pan.* 33.3, 1–7, 10; Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.2.; Tertullian, *Val.* 4, 5. [↩](#)
93. *Flor.* 7.2–7. [↩](#)
94. For Ptolemy, the “words of the Savior” have a similar function to the True Prophet’s teaching in the *Homilies*. [↩](#)
95. Pearson, “Mikra in Gnostic Literature,” 645. [↩](#)
96. Ibid., 640. [↩](#)
97. Anne Pasquier, “The Valentinian Exegesis,” in *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis*, ed. Charles Kannengiesser (Leiden: Brill 2006), 459. [↩](#)
98. Horbury, “Old Testament Interpretation,” 759. [↩](#)
99. Pearson, “Mikra in Gnostic Literature,” 639–46. Pearson borrows this term from Giovanni Filoramo and Claudio Gianotto, “L’interpretazione gnostica dell’ Antico Testamento: Posizioni ermeneutiche e tecniche esegetiche,” *Augustinianum* 22 (1982): 56. [↩](#)
100. The example he gives for the first type is *The Second Treatise of the Great Seth*; the example he gives for the second type is *The Exegesis on the Soul*. [↩](#)
101. Harnack, *Marcion*, 177n1. [↩](#)
102. Comparisons between the two have been made by, Gilles Quispel, *Ptolémée: Lettre A Flora*, SC 24 (Paris: Cerf, 1966), 87; Horbury, “Old Testament Interpretation,” 759; K. M. Vaccarella, “Shaping Christian

Identity: The False Scripture Argument in Early Christian Literature”
(PhD diss., Florida State University, 2007), 34–80, 119–70.

103. Jean Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), 60.
104. Strecker, *Das Judenchristentum*, 171 (and 171n1).
105. Quispel, *Ptolémée*, 23–24.
106. *Flor.*4.14.
107. Gilles Quispel, “*La lettre de Ptolémée à Flora*,” in *Gnostic Studies* (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 86.
108. Quispel, *Ptolémée*, 84.
109. *Flor.*5.1; see also 5.5
110. *Flor.*5.2.
111. *Flor.*5.8.

The True Prophet's Teaching as an Exegetical Criterion

4.1. INTRODUCTION

Like the theory of the false pericopes, another trademark of this peculiar literature is the idea that correct interpretation of Scripture is not possible apart from a knowledge of the True Prophet's teaching.^[1] According to the Homilist,

διὸ πρὸ πάντων τὸν ἀληθῆ προφήτην ζητεῖν δεῖ, ὅτι
ἄνευ τούτου βέβαιόν τι προσεῖναι ἀνθρώποις
ἀδύνατον.

Before all things it is necessary to seek the Prophet of Truth, because without this one it is not possible that any bit of certainty can come to humanity.^[2]

It is in the True Prophet's teaching alone where truth is to be found. Indeed, his teaching represents the source for "truth" itself.^[3]

I am proposing in this study that the Homilist employs three distinct "external" criteria in order to elucidate the various passages of Scripture under consideration, the falsehoods in particular. I am suggesting that these three criteria are to be grouped together under "tradition" on the one hand and "philosophy" on the other. The True Prophet's teaching constitutes the first of these, and it belongs under the heading of "tradition." It is the goal of this chapter to consider how the *Homilies* present the general function and content of the True Prophet's teaching as an "external" criterion whereby the Scriptures are to be evaluated.

This section consists of two basic parts. First I will say a word about the general significance of "prophecy" in connection with the *Syzygienlehre*—the Homilist's "doctrine of pairs." Second, we will consider what can be said of the actual content of the True Prophet's teaching and how it functions as an "external" criterion in the exegesis of the Pentateuch. I will do this by examining a number of Jesus' sayings, as they appear in a sort of "sayings catalog" found in *Hom.* 3.50–57. As we shall see, this catalog of sayings gives us a sense of the True Prophet's teaching, teaching that

substantiates the Homilist's claim that the Pentateuch really does contain false interpolations. The sayings catalog also helps us see what sort of Scriptures are "false," (according to the True Prophet's own teaching). After the study of the sayings catalog, we will turn our attention to consider a few relevant parallels between *Hom.* and Ptolemy's *Flor.* in connection with the role of Jesus as the authoritative interpreter of the Scriptures. Just as Ptolemy and the Homilist advocate a similar theory of false interpolations in the Pentateuch, so also both advocate a similar orientation toward Jesus' role as the one who gives authoritative instruction for how to deal with those false passages. This circumstance warrants a comparison between the two texts of *Hom.* and *Flor.* ^[4] I begin first, however, with a discussion about "prophecy" in connection with the Homilist's doctrine of "opposite pairs."

4.2. PROPHECY, THE *SYZYGIENLEHRE*, AND THE “TRUE PROPHET”

The Homilist conceptualizes prophecy as an outworking of the *Syzygienlehre*—his “doctrine of pairs” (from συζυγία).^[5] The *Syzygienlehre* is based on a philosophical notion that God fashioned the universe by delineating everything into various sets of “pairs.” These pairs come in “opposites” like day/night, light/dark, life/death, male/female, and so on.

Scholars have indentified the Pseudo-Clementine *Syzygienlehre* as having Gnostic roots. As Georg Strecker puts it, “Die gnostische Wurzel dieses dualistischen Denkens dürfte deutlich sein.”^[6] (“The Gnostic root of this dualistic thinking should be clear.”) However, according to Hans Joachim Schoeps, “The Ebionite doctrine of the *syzygies* is to be interpreted as an answer to Gnostic dualism, particularly to the teaching of Marcion.”^[7] In fact, Schoeps understands the *Syzygienlehre* in *Hom.* not as Gnostic, “despite certain correspondences, but a formulation constructed by the Ebionites themselves which has Jewish roots in spite of syncretistic touches. . . . The doctrine of the syzygies, with its *male-female* polarization, is apparently an ancient rabbinic conception.”^[8] On this latter point, Schoeps follows Louis Ginzberg, who in turn identifies the *Syzygienlehre* as a “pagan conception” that passed into the kabbalah via the Talmud, though Ginzberg himself does not unpack this “pagan conception” as such, nor does he identify what those “pagan” conceptions might be.^[9]

Pagan notions of “opposites” have been discussed by G. E. R. Lloyd, who has written about “opposite pairs” in ancient Greek thought, and various philosophical and cosmological theories based on them.^[10] Lloyd remarks, “Opposites are, or are among, the principles or elements on which the cosmological theories of other Presocratic philosophers are based.”^[11] Examples Lloyd highlights include the theory of Anaximander (c. 610–540 bce) that the first principles were composed of pairs of opposing substances like hot/cold and flame/mist. The cosmogony of Parmenides (fl. c. 450 bce) began with “fire” and “night” as opposite (and equal) substances. The system put forth by Empedocles (c. 493–433 bce) imagined “love” and “strife” as opposites that generated the four elements. Anaxagoras (c. 500–428 bce) described an original mixture of opposite pairs like wet/dry, hot/cold, and bright/dark. Heraclitus (c. 535–c. 475 bce) emphasized the “unity” of similar opposites.^[12]

In addition to these examples discussed by Lloyd, when we move over to the Judeo-Hellenistic milieu, we find Philo himself asserting that it was Moses who discovered such “opposites” (τὰ ἐναντία), long before Heraclitus:

ἔν γὰρ τὸ ἐξ ἀμφοῖν τῶν ἐναντίων, οὗ τμηθέντος
γνώριμα τὰ ἐναντία. οὐ τοῦτ' ἐστίν, ὃ φασιν Ἕλληνες
τὸν μέγαν καὶ ἀοίδιμον παρ' αὐτοῖς Ἡράκλειτον
κεφάλαιον τῆς αὐτοῦ προστησάμενον φιλοσοφίας
αὐχεῖν ὡς ἐφ' εὐρέσει καινῇ; παλαιὸν γαρ. εὔρεμα
Μωυσέως ἐστὶ τὸ ἐκ τοῦ αὐτοῦ τὰ ἐναντία τμημάτων
λόγον ἔχοντα ἀποτελεῖσθαι, καθάπερ ἐναργῶς
ἐδείχθη.

For the two opposites together form a single whole, the division of which the opposites are known. Is not this the truth which according to the Greeks Heraclitus, whose greatness they celebrate so loudly, put in the forefront of his philosophy and vaunted it as a new discovery? Actually, as has been clearly shown, it was Moses who long ago discovered the truth that opposites are formed from the same whole, to which they stand in the relation of sections or divisions.^[13]

The philosophical notion of “opposite pairs” is well attested in Greek philosophical sources, including Philo, who wishes to credit Moses himself with its discovery.

When we turn to the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*, the *Syzygienlehre* evokes a conception of opposite pairs similar to what we find in Greek philosophical sources. Now, in *Hom.* 2.13–15, the Homilist draws on the notion of God’s “righteousness” in order to make his case for a future judgment.

ὅτι τοίνυν ὁ θεὸς δίκαιος, πρόδηλον ἡμῖν ἔστιν ὅτι καὶ κρίσις γίνεται.

Since God is righteous, it is fully evident to us that there is a judgment.^[14]

The phrase “God is righteous” in *Hom.2.13.4* functions rhetorically to formally introduce the *Syzygienlehre*:

εἰ δὲ ἔστιν εὐρεῖν ἐν ἀνθρώποις, πόσῳ μᾶλλον ἐν θεῷ;
εἰ δὲ οὐδαμοῦ, οὔτε παρὰ θεῷ οὔτε παρὰ ἀνθρώποις,
ἔστιν εὐρεῖν τὸ δίκαιον, πάντως οὐδὲ τὸ ἄδικον. ἀλλ’
ἔστιν τὸ δίκαιον· δικαιοσύνης γὰρ οὔσης τὸ ἄδικον
λέγεται (ὥσπερ παραβαλλομένης τῆς δικαιοσύνης
αὐτῇ καὶ ἐναντίως ἔχειν εὐρισκομένης ἀδικία λέγεται).

If [righteousness] is found among humankind, how much the more so with God! But if [righteousness] is nowhere to be found, neither with God nor with humankind, then neither is unrighteousness. But righteousness *does* exist. For “unrighteousness” is so called from the fact that “righteousness” actually exists (even as “unrighteousness,” when it is compared with “righteousness,” is found to be its “opposite.”^[15]

With this last phrase, Peter leads directly into his own discourse on the “opposite pairs” that are thought to characterize creation:

ἐνθεν γοῦν ὁ θεὸς διδάσκων τοὺς ἀνθρώπους, πρὸς
τὴν τῶν ὄντων ἀλήθειαν, εἷς ὢν αὐτός, διχῶς καὶ
ἐναντίως διεῖλεν πάντα τὰ τῶν ἄκρων, [ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς
αὐτὸς εἷς ὢν καὶ μόνος θεός,] ποιήσας οὐρανὸν καὶ

γῆν, ἡμέραν καὶ νύκτα, φῶς καὶ πῦρ, ἥλιον καὶ
σελήνην, ζωὴν καὶ θάνατον . . . ὃ καὶ τὰς τῶν
συζυγιῶν ἐνήλλαξεν εἰκόνας, μικρὰ τὰ πρῶτα
παραθέμενος αὐτῷ, μεγάλα δὲ τὰ δεύτερα, οἷον
κόσμον, αἰῶνα· ἀλλ' ὁ μὲν παρὼν κόσμος
πρόσκαιρος, ὁ δὲ ἐσόμενος αἰίδιος. πρώτη ἄγνοια,
δευτέρα γνῶσις. οὕτως καὶ τοὺς τῆς προφητείας
ἡγεμόνας διέταξεν.

God teaches humankind with regard to what is true about reality; though he himself is one in essence, he has delineated all the elemental principles in a twofold and opposite manner (though from the beginning he himself is the one and only God); he made heaven and earth, day and night, light and fire, sun and moon, life and death. . . . In [the case of humankind], God reconfigured the patterns of syzygies, setting before humankind the first things as less important, and the next things as more important, such as [the present] world, [and then] eternity. On the one hand, the present age is temporary, but the age to come is everlasting. First is ignorance, then knowledge. In this way God also configured the leaders of prophecy. [\[16\]](#)

Similarly,

οὗτος μόνος τὴν μίαν καὶ πρώτην μονοειδῆ οὐσίαν
τετραχῶς καὶ ἐναντίως ἔτρεψεν, εἶτα μίξας μυρίας
κράσεις ἐξ αὐτῶν ἐποίησεν, ἵνα εἰς ἐναντίας φύσεις
τετραμμέναι καὶ μεμιγμέναι τοῦ ζῆν ἡδονὴν ἐκ τῆς
ἀντισυζυγίας ἐργάσωνται.

[God] alone configured the singular, primary, uniform substance into sets of opposite pairs. Thus, by

mixing them he fashioned out of them myriads of combinations, in order that they, by being converted and combined, might effect the pleasure of living from the combination of opposite pairs.^[17]

It is with reference to this distinct doctrine of “pairs” that the Homilist describes the nature of prophecy itself.

Now, when it comes to modes of knowing, the *Homilies* vigorously defend prophecy as the superior form of knowledge:

πρὸς γὰρ προφητείαν οὐδὲν δύνανται οὔτε τέχναι
λόγων οὔτε σοφισμάτων ἐπίνοιαι, οὐ συλλογισμοί,
οὐκ ἄλλη τις μηχανή, ἐάν γε ὁ ἐπακούσας προφήτου
ἀληθοῦς ἀληθείας ὄντως ὀρέγεται καὶ οὐ προφάσει
ἀληθείας ἕτερόν τι περιβλέπεται.

For neither arts of discourses nor thoughts of sophisms, nor syllogisms, nor any other contrivance, can [stand up] to prophecy, provided that he who listens intently to the True Prophet really does yearn for truth, and is not looking around for something else under a mere pretence of truth.^[18]

As Karl Evan Shuve notes, “Central to the text’s epistemology is the decisive opposition between philosophy and prophetic revelation.”^[19]

Hence, those who would seek for the truth will find it not with sophistry but with prophecy; not with the pagan philosophers but with the True Prophet:

^[20]

διὰ τοῦτο ὅσοι ποτὲ ἀλήθειαν γινῶναι ἐπεθύμησαν,
παρὰ δὲ τούτου μαθεῖν αὐτὴν οὐκ εὐτύχησαν, μὴ
εὐρόντες ζητοῦντες ἐτελεύτησαν . . . πάντες μὲν οὖν
ὅσοι ποτὲ ἐζήτησαν τὸ ἀληθές, τὸ δύνασθαι εὐρεῖν

ἐαυτοῖς πιστεύσαντες ἐνηδρεύθησαν. τοῦτο ὅπερ
πεπόνθασιν καὶ οἱ τῶν Ἑλλήνων φιλόσοφοι καὶ
βαρβάρων οἱ σπουδαιότεροι.

Wherefore, as many as have ever desired to know the truth, but have not succeeded in learning it from him, such have died searching but not finding it. . . . Therefore all those who have sought the truth by trusting in themselves that they could find it, were caught in a trap. This is what both the Greek philosophers and the rather intelligent people of the other (non-Greek) nations suffered.^[21]

Even so, it is a peculiar feature of *Hom.* that, while prophetic revelation is taken as the superior form of knowledge, the Scriptures themselves are not seen as a reservoir of prophecies awaiting to be “fulfilled,” namely, with the arrival of Jesus. The exegesis of the Pentateuch is not characterized at all by any sort of “prophecy-fulfillment” method.^[22] The Scriptures do not in this way “define” Jesus. On the contrary, in a manner of speaking, the opposite is the case—the True Prophet’s teaching is what “defines” the Scriptures.

Jesus is therefore a central figure in the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*, but he is cast in a notably different light than he is in other extant sources. For example, hardly anything is said of Jesus’ life, his death on a Roman cross, or his resurrection from the dead; nor is any theological weight placed on them. The Pseudo-Clementines contain hardly any references to his messianism.^[23] J. Neville Birdsall observes, “These features show similarity to the rarity or absence of references to Jesus’ life in many of the apologists. It seems to be a mark of the second century in general, and presumably extended to Jewish Christianity.”^[24] Instead, the Pseudo-Clementines most consistently designate Jesus as the “True Prophet.”^[25] This epithet coheres with the general tenor of the *Hom.*

In *Hom.* 3.11–14, the writer compares and contrasts the kind of knowledge possessed by ordinary seers to that of the True Prophet. Unlike all other types of mantics, visionaries, seers, and so on, the (fore)knowledge of the True Prophet stretches far “into the age to come, and needs nothing

for its interpretation, not prophesying darkly and ambiguously,” requiring “another prophet for their interpretation,” but “clearly and simply.”^[26] Of all the prophets, only Jesus, as the True Prophet, is called “son of God.”^[27] Even so, although the True Prophet is *θειότητος γέμων*, “full of divinity,” Jesus is not himself “God,” as Peter himself confidently attests:

Ο κύριος ἡμῶν οὔτε θεοὺς εἶναι ἐφθέγγετο παρὰ τὸν
κτίσαντα τὰ πάντα οὔτε ἑαυτὸν θεὸν εἶναι
ἀνηγόρευσεν, υἱὸν δὲ θεοῦ τοῦ τὰ πάντα
διακοσμήσαντος τὸν εἰπόντα αὐτὸν εὐλόγως
ἐμακάρισεν.

Our Lord neither asserted that there are [other] gods besides the Creator of all, nor did he proclaim that he himself was God, but with good reason he blessed the one who called him the son of God—God who arranged the universe.^[28]

Furthermore, Jesus was not the only avatar of the True Prophet; the True Prophet is said to have appeared at various times and in various forms, as figures like Adam and Moses. But, according to *Hom.* 18.13.6, he has also *appeared to* various biblical figures like Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses. The Homilist names these figures (in various configurations) as “the seven pillars of the world.”^[29] Louis Ginzberg sees a significant connection between the “seven pillars” of *Hom.* and the “seven pillars of the earth” mentioned by the rabbis: “The Haggadah [*b. Hag.* 12b] also says that the world rests on seven pillars, but according to other authorities one pillar, *קדש* by name, supports the world [compare *Prov.* 10:25]. *Ἀναμάρτητος* (*קדש*) is, according to [*Hom.* 2.6], the True Prophet.”^[30] As Adam, the True Prophet foresaw the future deeds of his sons Cain and Abel. As Christ, he successfully predicted the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 70 and 135 ce.^[31] As Moses, he foresaw the turbulent fate the Torah would suffer in its written form, not least the lamentable accretion of false interpolations.

Only the True Prophet's teaching can enable the interpreter to successfully navigate through those "false passages" peppered throughout the Pentateuch.^[32] Han Jan Willem Drijvers observes that the True Prophet's teaching "is the main instrument in reaching [the] goal of presenting a coherent interpretation of the Scriptures, so that existing discordances will not confound the uninstructed multitudes."^[33] According to Georg Strecker, the author of the *Κηρύγματα Πέτρου* (one of the sources of the *Grundschrift*, in his view) borrowed the concept of the True Prophet from Gnostic Jewish Christians and represents the product of a gnosticizing Jewish Christianity.^[34] Drijvers takes a different route, proposing instead that "the doctrinal complex of the True Prophet and the false scriptural passages is an original anti-heretical construction of the author of [the *Grundschrift*], invented to refute the prevailing Marcionism in the Syrian area, where the author of [the *Grundschrift*] is to be sought."^[35] For now, however, questions about the historical origin and development of this "doctrine" are put aside. My focus is rather on how the *Homilies*, in their present form, understand the role of the True Prophet's teaching with reference to the exegesis of the Pentateuch. To this we now turn.

The discussion of the True Prophet first appears in *Hom.* 1.19.^[36] There the Homilist uses the analogy of a smoke-filled house to illustrate humanity's epistemological plight, and to introduce the necessity of the True Prophet's teaching to bring illumination. "Ten thousand evils" fill the world as smoke fills a house.^[37] The smoke obscures a person's vision, preventing them from looking upward and becoming acquainted with the Creator God. So someone from outside the house is needed "to open the door so that the light of the sun that is outside may be admitted into the house, to drive out the smoke."^[38] The person for this task is, of course, the True Prophet:

τὸν μὲν οὖν βοηθὸν ἄνδρα τὸν ἀληθῆ προφήτην λέγω,
ὃς μόνος φωτίσαι ψυχὰς ἀνθρώπων δύναται, ὥστ' ἂν
αὐτοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς δυνηθῆναι [ἡμᾶς] ἐνιδεῖν τῆς
αἰωνίου σωτηρίας τὴν ὁδόν . . . τούτου ἕνεκεν
προφήτου ἀληθοῦς ὅλον τὸ τῆς εὐσεβείας ἐδεήθη

πραγμα, ἵνα ἡμῖν ἐρεῖ τὰ ὄντα ὡς ἔστιν καὶ ὡς δεῖ περὶ πάντων πιστεύειν... διὸ πρὸ πάντων τὸν ἀληθῆ προφήτην ζητεῖν δεῖ, ὅτι ἄνευ τούτου βέβαιόν τι προσεῖναι ἀνθρώποις ἀδύνατον.

The helper is the man whom I call the True Prophet, who alone is able to enlighten the souls of humankind, so that with our own eyes we may be able to see the path of eternal salvation. . . . This is why the whole business of piety needed a True Prophet, that he might tell us the reality of things, as they are, and how we ought to believe concerning all things. . . . Wherefore before all else it is necessary to seek the True Prophet, because without this one it is not possible that any bit of certainty can come to humanity.^[39]

The True Prophet is therefore the source for truth, and his teaching works as part of an oral tradition:

οὐ δέδια μήπως σὺ περὶ τῆς παραδοθείσης σοι ἀληθείας διακριθῇς, [ἢ] εἰδὼς ὅτι ἐγὼ ἡττᾶσθαι ἔδοξα, οὐχὶ ἢ ὑπόθεσις ἢ διὰ τοῦ προφήτου παραδοθεῖσα ἡμῖν.

I do not fear that you would ever be in doubt concerning the truth that has been handed down to you, knowing that [even though] I seem to be defeated, but not the doctrine [ἢ ὑπόθεσις] that has been handed down to us from the Prophet.^[40]

If we were to summarize the True Prophet's teaching, it might look something like this:

ἔστιν δὲ αὐτοῦ τό τε βούλημα καὶ ἀληθὲς κήρυγμα ὅτι
εἷς θεός, οὗ κόσμος ἔργον, ὅς δίκαιος ὢν πάντως
ἐκάστῳ πρὸς τὰς πράξεις ἀποδώσει ποτέ.

This is [the True Prophet's] teaching and true
proclamation: God is one, whose work the cosmos is;
who, being entirely righteous, will render to each
person according to his actions. [\[41\]](#)

At the heart of the True Prophet's teaching, then, is the idea of God as the
“Creator” and God as the “righteous Judge.” This theme is then developed
further in *Hom.*3.45 (where God is “Creator”) and *Hom.*3.46 (where God is
called “Judge”).

For the Homilist, it is manifestly clear that the True Prophet's teaching
plays a vital role in the exegesis of the Pentateuch. As Robert M. Grant
remarks, “For the author of the *Clementine Homilies*, the sayings, or certain
sayings, of Jesus make it possible to identify uninterpolated teachings.
Interpolation obviously occurred when the Mosaic law was being written
and rewritten—not by Moses, whose death is described in Deuteronomy
34:5-6, but by someone who transcribed what seventy wise men had
transmitted, and later on in the course of transmission. [The True Prophet]
explains how to tell true from false.” [\[42\]](#) What, then, can we say about the
True Prophet's teaching regarding its *actual content*? The block of material
in *Hom.*3.50–57 provides us with a catalog of Jesus' sayings, several of
which are not found in the (now canonical) Gospels. The bulk of these
sayings specifically concern the theory of the false pericopes. So let us now
turn our attention to consider these, with a view to gaining a better sense for
the actual content of the True Prophet's teaching.

4.3. THE CONTENT OF THE TRUE PROPHET’S TEACHING AS AN “EXTERNAL” CRITERION

The subject is introduced in the form of a question put in the mouth of Simon:

Συνίημι ὅτι τὸν Ἰησοῦν ὑμῶν λέγεις ὡς αὐτὸν ὑπὸ τῆς
γραφῆς προφητευθέντα· δεδόσθω τοιγαροῦν οὕτως
ἔχειν. λέγε τοίνυν πῶς ὑμᾶς διακρίνειν τὰς γραφὰς
ἐδίδαξεν;

I understand that you speak of your Jesus as him
who was prophesied by Scripture. Therefore, let it be
granted that it is so. So tell us, then, how *did* he teach
you to evaluate the Scriptures?^[43]

And again Simon asks,

Ἐπειδὴ τὰ περὶ θεοῦ (ὡς ἔφη) ἐκ τῆς πρὸς τὴν κτίσιν
παραβολῆς ἔστιν νοῆσαι, πῶς τὰ λοιπὰ ἐν τῷ νόμῳ, ἐκ
παραδόσεως Μωυσέως ὄντα καὶ ἀληθῆ τυγχάνοντα
καὶ τοῖς ψευδέσιν μεμιγμένα ἐπιγνῶναί ἐστιν δυνατόν;

Since (as you say), we must understand the things
concerning God by comparing them to the creation,
how is it possible to detect the other things in the law,
which [really do derive] from the tradition of
Moses and are [actually] true and [yet] are enmeshed
with the falsehoods?^[44]

The material throughout *Hom.* 3.50–57 lays out the answer to Simon’s
questions. This unit contains twenty-four short sayings of Jesus. The
question—“how did Jesus teach you to handle the Scriptures?”—frames the

entire episode. We see it put forth here at *Hom.*3.49.3. Then, at the other end of the unit, the discussion concludes in 3.58.1 by saying how Simon was realizing that “Peter was leading him to use the Scriptures as Jesus taught” (Πέτρος αὐτὸν συνάγει ταῖς γραφαῖς χρῆσθαι ὡς Ἰησοῦς ἐδίδαξεν). These statements specifically concern the “correct” interpretation of the Scriptures (as well as “correct doctrine” more generally). Each saying is complemented by a brief “commentary” given by Peter.

As for the sayings of Jesus in *Hom.*, Leslie Kline has already done a thorough study of the subject.^[45] There is no need to repeat the results of that study. My goal here is simply to enumerate the relevant sayings that give form and content to the True Prophet’s teaching as they relate specifically to the exegesis of the Pentateuch. The first three under consideration appear in *Hom.*3.50.1–2. It is worth noting that two of these first three sayings are *agrapha*, and they both directly address the matter of the true and false pericopes:

1. Διὰ τοῦτο πλανᾶσθε, μὴ εἰδότες τὰ ἀληθῆ τῶν γραφῶν, οὗ εἵνεκεν ἀγνοεῖτε τὴν δύναμιν τοῦ θεοῦ.

For this reason you err, not knowing the true things of the Scriptures, which is why you are ignorant about God’s power.^[46]

This statement implies that there are true and false passages in the Pentateuch. In fact, Peter introduces this logion with the words “as to the mixture of truth with falsehood, I recall that one time . . .” Peter goes on to explain that when Jesus chides them (i.e., the Sadducees) about not knowing the “true things” of the Scriptures, it obviously follows that, since there are “true things,” there really are in them “false things” as well (ὡς ὄντων ψευδῶν). This saying and the next (listed below) also appear earlier in *Hom.*2.51, where both sayings refer specifically to the theory of the false pericopes.

2. Γίνεσθε τραπεζίται δόκιμοι.

Be prudent bankers.^[47]

This particular agraphon makes several appearances in the Pseudo-Clementines (here in 3.50.2; earlier in 2.51.1, where this saying represents the first utterance of Jesus presented in *Hom.*; and later in 18.20.4). This saying is widely attested in patristic literature; Alfred Resch lists sixty-nine occurrences.^[48] Every instance of this saying in *Hom.* appears with particular reference to the theory of the false pericopes. Schoeps calls attention to the significance of this logion. “In the latter saying we possess a logion typical of the Ebionite gospel, a logion which places the theory of the false pericopes back into the mouth of Jesus himself—on the occasion of his discourse against the Sadducees. This enables us to identify the theory—a secret teaching of Jesus—as a tradition from the early Jewish Christian community.”^[49] According to Peter, Jesus himself taught this because of the presence of authentic (δόκιμος) and spurious (κίβδηλος) passages in Scripture. We see this spelled out in *Hom.* 18.20.4:

διὸ δεῖ πάντα ἄνθρωπον σωθῆναι θέλοντα γενέσθαι,
ὥς ὁ διδάσκαλος εἶπεν, κριτὴν τῶν πρὸς πειρασμὸν
γραφεισῶν βίβλων. οὕτως γὰρ εἶπεν· Γίνεσθε
τραπεζίται δόκιμοι. τραπεζιτῶν δὲ χρεία, ὅτι τοῖς
δοκίμοις καὶ τὰ κίβδηλα ἀναμεμιγμένα.

Every man who wishes to be saved must become, as the Teacher said, a judge of the books which are written to test us. For he said, “*Be prudent bankers.*” Now the need for “bankers” is owing to the fact that the spurious passages are mixed in together with the authentic passages.

Kelley Coblentz Bautch notes the irony that the *Homilies* “identify inaccuracies in the ‘canon’ and remedy them in part by citing non-canonical

literature. Emblematic of the irony is the thrice-repeated saying of Jesus ‘Be wise money-changers,’ a reference to the ability to discern between Scripture’s true and false passages that is itself apocryphal and not canonical!”^[50]

3. Διὰ τί οὐ νοεῖτε τὸ εὖλογον τῶν γραφῶν;

Why do you not recognize that which is rational in the Scriptures?^[51]

Here is a second agraphon. In Kline’s estimation,

Although the words are cited as a saying of Jesus, the fact that they do not occur in the same context in H 2.51 or 18.20 nor are they cited by any other early Christian writer to my knowledge argues against their coming from H’s source or sources of sayings of Jesus. Rather they appear to be the *ad hoc* creation of the writer to fit his immediate context and argument on the false pericopes of Scripture.^[52]

According to Peter, by saying this, Jesus “substantiates the intuition of the person who, of his own initiative, makes a cogent assessment of the Scriptures” vis-à-vis the true and false passages.^[53] Thus true passages are those that are “rational.” Kline adds that “εὖλογος and εὐλόγως are frequently used terms” on the part of the Homilist.^[54] Indeed, the concern for “what is rational” (τὸ εὖλογον) occupies a significant place throughout *Hom.* 3 and 8. As we shall see in chapter 6, this notion of τὸ εὖλογον is indicative of the Homilist’s “rational” orientation in general, and it is integral to his evaluation of the Pentateuch in particular.

4. Οὐκ ἤλθον καταλῦσαι τὸν νόμον.

I have not come to destroy the law.^[55]

This saying is introduced by a reference to the “scribes and teachers of the existing Scriptures,” who are described as “those who knew the true things of the law” at that time. As Peter explains, the fact that he said this,

καὶ φαίνεσθαι αὐτὸν καταλύοντα σημαίνοντος ἦν ὅτι
ἃ κατέλυεν οὐκ ἦν τοῦ νόμου.

and yet he appeared to be destroying it is
[characteristic] of someone pointing out that which he
did destroy was not [actually part] of the law.^[56]

Also significant is the conspicuous absence from this saying of the second part of the Matthean original “Law or the Prophets” (ἤλθον καταλῦσαι τὸν νόμον ἢ τοὺς προφῆτας). This is important for my isolation of the Pentateuch in this study, as I noted in chapter 1. We might also add that this saying implies that, as for the “Prophets,” Jesus did in fact come to do away with those, along with the “false portions” of the Mosaic legislation. In this sense, the True Prophet did not come to “destroy” the law but to “purify” it. It is thought that Jesus was, in some sense, engaged in “excising” false passages from the Torah.

5. Ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ γῆ παρελεύσονται, ἰῶτα ἓν ἢ μία
κεραία οὐ μὴ παρέλθῃ ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου.

Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not a single
yod or dot shall pass from the law.^[57]

Peter explains that by saying this Jesus “indicated that those things which do pass away before heaven and earth do not belong to the law in reality”

(μὴ ὄντα τοῦ ὄντως νόμου). In this case, there is an implicit reference to the “harmony criterion” (the subject of chapter 6). The idea here is that, according to the harmony criterion, the True Prophet was pointing out that some things in the Pentateuch are not “in agreement with” physical reality, namely, the creation and the character of the Creator God.

6. Πᾶσα φυτεία, ἣν οὐκ ἐφύτευσεν ὁ πατήρ ὁ οὐράνιος, ἐκριζωθήσεται.

Every plant, which the heavenly father has not planted, shall be uprooted.^[58]

According to Peter, such “plants” connote certain institutions of Torah, which “have passed away” because they never actually belonged in the first place. For this reason, such “plants” have now in fact been “uprooted.” These include the monarchy, sacrifices, and false prophecies. Thus this saying, from Matt. 15:13, represents the True Prophet’s announcement concerning the “uprooting” of the false pericopes. As Peter explains it,

ἐπεὶ οὖν οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς ἔτι συνεστώτων παρήλθαν
θυσίαι, βασιλεῖαι, αἱ ἐν γεννητοῖς γυναικῶν προφητεῖαι
καὶ ὅσα τοιαῦτα, ὥς οὐκ ὄντα θεοῦ προστάγματα.

Since, then, while the heaven and the earth still stand, yet such things as sacrifices, royal dynasties, and prophecies “among those born of women” have all passed away, [this demonstrates] that these were not in reality ordinances from God.^[59]

Three specific categories are included in this saying: the sacrificial cultus, the Jewish monarchy, and prophecy (of the “female” type, according to the *Syzygienlehre*). These categories imply that entire episodes of the Jewish Scriptures are rejected as “false.”

7. Ἐγώ εἰμι ἡ πύλη τῆς ζωῆς· ὁ δι' ἐμοῦ εἰσερχόμενος εἰσέρχεται εἰς τὴν ζωὴν.

I am the gate of life; the one who enters through me enters into life.^[60]

For this particular saying, Strecker suggests dependence on the Gospel of John.^[61] As such, this is a slight divergence from the usual dependence upon Matthew's Gospel. Kline, however, deems the relationship between John and this saying as "tenuous at best."^[62] In any case, according to Peter, Jesus said this on the assumption that there is no other teaching able to save. On the basis of the sayings cataloged thus far, it would seem that in the present case the "teaching able to save" also specifically concerns the teaching about the "correct" interpretation of the Scriptures, not least the teaching about the falsehoods in Scripture.

8. Δεῦτε πρὸς μὲ πάντες οἱ κοπιῶντες.

Come to me, all who toil.^[63]

Here too those who "toil" are taken to mean those who are seeking the "truth"—that is, the true passages of Scripture—but have a difficult time discovering it. Jesus' words here represent the True Prophet's summons and invitation to those who are laboring to find what is true in the Scriptures to come to him for relief. Those who struggle—who toil in their effort to distinguish between what is true and what is false in the Scriptures—are invited to find rest by the knowledge obtained by the True Prophet's teaching.

9. Τὰ ἐμὰ πρόβατα ἀκούει τῆς ἐμῆς φωνῆς.

My sheep hear my voice.^[64]

This saying “must stand as another example of the use of John in [the *Homilies*].”^[65] In its present context, the “voice” of the True Prophet again represents his teaching. Thus the True Prophet’s “sheep” are of those who follow him and heed his instructions, presumably concerning the true and false passages of Scripture.

10. Ζητεῖτε καὶ εὕρίσκετε.

Seek and you shall find.^[66]

Peter explains that by saying this, Jesus was teaching that “the truth does not lie on the surface” (ὥς μὴ προδῆλως κειμένης τῆς ἀληθείας). This saying is not an invitation to engage in allegorical interpretation, however. We have already seen that the Homilist categorically rejects allegorism as a matter of principle. Furthermore, the general context of this sayings catalog demands that we understand this particular saying also with reference to the theory of the false pericopes. Thus it would seem that in this case the True Prophet is simply saying that those Scriptures that are “true” are not always readily apparent.

11. Πολλοὶ προφῆται καὶ βασιλεῖς ἐπεθύμησαν ἰδεῖν, ἃ ὑμεῖς βλέπετε, καὶ ἀκοῦσαι, ἃ ὑμεῖς ἀκούετε, καὶ ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, οὔτε εἶδον οὔτε ἤκουσαν.

Many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, and to hear what you hear; truly I tell you, they neither saw nor heard.^[67]

This saying displays clear signs of a harmony between Matthew and Luke. “But we lack parallels to a harmonized form of this saying in patristic sources.”^[68] In its present context, the “prophets” are used as a metonym for those false passages of Scripture from which Jesus’ interlocutors were

trained and upon which they based their arguments. For as Peter himself explains:

καὶ πρὸς τούτοις ἐπὶ πλεῖον αὐτοὺς πεπλανημένους
ἐλέγξαι θέλων τοὺς προφήτας, παρ' ὧν δὴ
μεμαθηκέναι ἐβεβαίουν, ἐπιθυμοῦντας ἀληθείας καὶ
μὴ μεμαθηκότας τελευτήσαντας.

In addition to these things, Jesus intended to confute those same prophets as all the more mistaken—the prophets from whom they [i.e., Jesus' interlocutors] claimed to have learned. [By saying this,] Jesus announced that they died desiring the truth but not having attained it.^[69]

12. Ἐγὲ εἰμι περὶ οὗ Μωυσῆς προεφήτευσεν εἰπών·
Προφήτην ἐγερεῖ ὑμῖν κύριος ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν ἐκ τῶν
ἀδελφῶν ὑμῶν ὥσπερ καὶ ἐμέ· αὐτοῦ ἀκούετε κατὰ
πάντα. ὅς ἂν δὲ μὴ ἀκούσῃ τοῦ προφήτου ἐκείνου,
ἀποθανεῖται.

I am the one concerning whom Moses prophesied, saying, The Lord our God will raise up for you from among your brothers a prophet like me. Listen to him in every respect; whoever will not listen to that Prophet shall die.^[70]

Nowhere in the New Testament Gospels does Jesus *himself* make this claim. Later, of course, in the *Acts of the Apostles*, his followers will identify Jesus as the very “Prophet like Moses.”^[71] So it is significant that, as our passage would have it, the claim that Jesus is the “Prophet like Moses” comes not from his disciples but from the very mouth of Jesus himself.^[72] This “Prophet like Moses” is thus the True Prophet himself. Peter then says in *Hom.3.54.1*,

ὅθεν ἀδύνατόν ἐστιν ἄνευ τῆς τούτου διδασκαλίας
ἀληθεία σωζούσῃ ἐπιστῆναι . . . ἣν δὲ καὶ ἔστιν ἐν τῷ
Ἰησοῦ ἡμῶν λόγῳ.

Whence it is impossible, apart from the True
Prophet's teaching, to be versed in saving truth . . . but
[saving truth] was and is in the teaching [that comes]
from our Jesus.

13. Μωυσῆς κατὰ τὴν σκληροκαρδίαν ὑμῶν
ἐπέτρεψεν ὑμῖν· ἀπ' ἀρχῆς γὰρ οὕτως οὐκ ἐγένετο. ὁ
γὰρ κτίσας ἀπ' ἀρχῆς τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἄρσεν καὶ θῆλυ
ἐποίησεν αὐτόν.

Moses gave you commandments according to your
hard-heartedness; from the beginning it was not this
way. For he who created humankind at first made him
as male and female.^[73]

This saying derives from Jesus' words as they appear in Matt. 19:3-9 // Mark 10:2-10, where Jesus is speaking with some Pharisees about the "certificate of divorce" issued by Moses (Deut. 24:1-4). But in *Hom.* 3.54.2, Jesus is speaking with the *Sadducees* (Matt. 22:23-33 // Mark 12:18-27) concerning the question of "marriage" at the "final resurrection." In any case, Peter explains that Jesus said this with reference to the "true things" of the law (τὰληθῆ τοῦ νόμου), represented by the "authentic" passage from Genesis, in contradistinction to the "false things" of the law, represented by the "certificate of divorce." Thus, according to Peter, this saying too constitutes part of the content of the True Prophet's teaching on the false pericopes. It would seem, then, that the "certificate of divorce" of Deut. 24:1-4 is thought to be a spurious interpolation that had crept into the written Torah.^[74]

14. Ἐστω ὑμῶν τὸ ναὶ ναί, τὸ οὐ οὐ· τὸ γὰρ περισσόν
τούτων ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ ἐστίν.

Let your yes be yes, and your no be no; for anything
beyond this is from the evil one.^[75]

According to Peter's comment on this saying, Jesus addresses those who (erroneously) suppose that God actually takes oaths. Thus, since God does not actually take oaths, passages in Scripture that say otherwise are recognized as being false, coming from the evil one. This is one of six sayings enumerated in the present list that contain the specific formula "as the Scriptures teach" (ὡς αἱ γραφαὶ διδάσκουσιν), or the similar phrase, "as the Scriptures say" (ὡς αἱ γραφαὶ λέγουσιν), introducing a particular saying of Jesus.^[76] In such cases, this phrase functions to pit Jesus' saying specifically against a "false" pericope that might otherwise be useful to Simon's arguments. These six cases are adduced to refute the following false notions: (1) that God takes oaths—as though God would need to swear by some higher authority; (2) that God tempts/tests people; (3) that God does not see all things; (4) that the Creator God is not "good," as though the "good" God were a different entity, and not the Creator himself; (5) that God is evil; (6) that there are many gods.

15. Οὐκ ἔστιν θεὸς νεκρῶν, ἀλλὰ ζώντων.

He is God not of the dead, but of the living.^[77]

This saying receives only brief comment. Peter merely cites it to correct the "false" notion, held by Jesus' interlocutors, that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are dead.

16. Ὁ πονηρὸς ἐστίν ὁ πειράζων.

The tempter is the wicked one.^[78]

This saying is another agraphon, attested only here.^[79] Peter explains that, with this, Jesus makes clear that God himself does not actually test people, that is, in order to discover something about them that he did not already know. For God knows all things. So the “tempter” is not God; the tempter is the “wicked one.” Concordantly, the True Prophet teaches that those Scriptures which say otherwise are therefore false.

17. Οἶδεν γὰρ ὁ πατήρ ὑμῶν ὁ οὐράνιος ὅτι χρήζετε
τούτων ἀπάντων, πρὶν αὐτὸν ἀξιώσετε.

For your heavenly father knows that you need all
these things before you expect them.^[80]

Like the saying above, the issue at stake here is the question of God’s foreknowledge. According to Peter, this saying unambiguously illustrates the True Prophet’s teaching that God knows all things in advance. The doctrine that God is all-knowing is a *fundamentum* for adjudicating true from false passages of Scripture.

18. Ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ εὔχεσθε . . . καὶ ὁ πατήρ ὑμῶν ὁ
βλέπων τὰ κρυπτὰ ἀποδώσει ὑμῖν.

Pray in secret . . . your father who sees the secret
things will reward you.^[81]

The Homilist substitutes τὰ κρυπτα for the Matthean ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ. This is “a tendentious or dogmatic change which fits well with the concern in H with the ‘secret things.’”^[82] Included in such “secret things” is the knowledge of the “mystery of the Scriptures” (τὸ μυστήριον τῶν γραφῶν, *Hom.*2.40.4), namely, the True Prophet’s teaching on the false pericopes. In addition, according to the True Prophet’s teaching, God is also all-seeing. This confutes passages in the Scriptures that say otherwise. When he created the first man, the Creator invested the human with the Creator’s

own divine foresight and foreknowledge. These ideas come to play especially in the exegesis of Adam and the tree of knowledge as it is presented in *Hom.* 3.42–43.

19. Τίνα ὑμῶν αἰτήσῃ υἱὸς ἄρτον, μὴ λίθον ἐπιδώσῃ αὐτῷ; ἢ καὶ ἰχθὺν αἰτήσῃ, μὴ ὄφιν ἐπιδώσῃ αὐτῷ; εἰ οὖν ὑμεῖς, πονηροὶ ὄντες, οἴδατε δόματα ἀγαθὰ διδόναι τοῖς τέκνοις ὑμῶν, πόσῳ μᾶλλον ὁ πατὴρ ὑμῶν ὁ οὐράνιος δώσῃ ἀγαθὰ τοῖς αἰτουμένοις αὐτὸν καὶ τοῖς ποιοῦσιν τὸ θέλημα αὐτοῦ;

If a son of yours asks for bread, who among you would give him a stone instead? Or if he asks for a fish, who would give him a snake instead? If you, who are wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your father in heaven give good things to those who ask him and who do his will! ^[83]

This saying illustrates a point of emphasis throughout *Hom.*, namely, that the Creator God, the God of the Pentateuch, is “good.” The “goodness” of the Creator God is fundamentally opposed by Simon (and those whom he represents). Marcion in particular famously denied the “goodness” of the Creator god. Marcion held that it was the other, unknown God that was “supremely good.” As Tertullian reports:

Certi Marcionem dispare deos constituere, alterum iudicem, ferum, bellipotentem, alterum mitem, placidum et tantummodo bonum atque optimum.

We are aware that Marcion sets up unequal gods, the one a judge, fierce and warlike, the other mild and peaceable, solely kind and supremely good. ^[84]

20. Μὴ ὁμόσητε τὸν οὐρανόν, ὅτι θρόνος θεοῦ ἐστίν,
μήτε τὴν γῆν, ὅτι ὑποπόδιον τῶν ποδῶν αὐτοῦ ἐστίν.

Do not swear by heaven, because it is God's throne,
nor by the earth, because it is his footstool.^[85]

I have noted that the Homilist characteristically rejects certain anthropomorphisms (and especially anthropopathisms) as false.^[86] In this case, Jesus' saying confutes the notion that God ever really dwelt in an actual physical temple. Thus scriptural texts that have to do with the temple and its cultus constitute a significant category of false pericopes.^[87] This assessment is also based, in part, on the proximity to the next saying in our list.

21. Ὁ θεὸς ἔλεος θέλει καὶ οὐ θυσίας, ἐπίγνωσιν
αὐτοῦ καὶ οὐχ ὀλοκαυτώματα.

God desires mercy and not sacrifice; knowledge of
him and not whole burnt offerings.^[88]

According to this saying, the True Prophet taught that God is not pleased with animal sacrifices. As I noted in chapter 3, scriptural passages that promote the sacrificial cultus are characteristically rejected as "false," for God never instituted them in the first place.^[89]

The rejection of sacrifices probably helps explain the complete absence of any "sacrificial" or "atoning" value of Jesus' own death.^[90] According to the Homilist, humanity experiences "salvation" through baptism and the True Prophet's teaching, but not by Jesus' "sacrificial" death.^[91] Scriptural passages that advocate sacrifices are consistently identified throughout *Hom.* as false pericopes.^[92] The locus classicus for this assessment is *Hom.* 3.45.1–2. Peter cites the story in Num. 11:32–34 about God's provision of the quail meat for the Israelites as proof that God never desired sacrifices of animals in the first place. Strecker identifies the

rejection of the sacrificial cultus (in the *Κηρύγματα Πέτρου*) with a rejection of blood-impurity.^[93] Moreover, the sacrificial system was of course connected with the Jerusalem temple. This particular association likely contributed to the fierce aversion to sacrifices. Since God never commanded Moses to construct a temple in the first place, the temple (and its sacrificial system) itself would have been seen as a “false interpolation.” Indeed, the destruction of the temple in 70 and 135 ce was taken as proof that, like animal sacrifices, God never desired it in the first place.^[94] After all, the True Prophet himself clearly foresaw its destruction (*Hom.*3.15).

22. Μή με λέγε ἀγαθόν· ὁ γὰρ ἀγαθὸς εἷς ἐστίν.

Do not call me good; for “the Good” is one.^[95]

A substantial element of the True Prophet’s teaching emphasizes that there exists only one true God—the good Creator God. As such, this saying reinforces the notion that “God” (= “the Good”) is a term reserved for the Creator alone, and is not to be applied to any other, not even the True Prophet himself.

Origen articulates a similar concern for reserving the designation of “the good” (ὁ ἀγαθός) as a term appropriate for God:

ὁ τοίνυν μεγαλοφυέστερον κἂν ὀλίγην τούτων
περίνοιαν εἰληφὼς εὐλαβήσεται ἄλλα ἄλλοις
ἐφαρμόζειν ὀνόματα πράγμασι, μήποτε ὅμοιον πάθῃ
τοῖς τὸ θεὸς ὄνομα ἐσφαλμένως φέρουσιν ἐπὶ ὕλην
ἄψυχον, ἢ τὴν τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ προσηγορίαν κατασπῶσιν
ἀπὸ τοῦ πρώτου αἰτίου ἢ ἀπὸ τῆς ἀρετῆς καὶ τοῦ
καλοῦ ἐπὶ τὸν τυφλὸν πλοῦτον καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν σαρκῶν καὶ
αἱμάτων καὶ ὀστέων συμμετρίαν ἐν ὑγείᾳ καὶ εὐεξίᾳ, ἢ
τὴν νομιζομένην εὐγένειαν.

Any one, therefore, who has a nobler (or even slight) grasp of these things, will take good care to apply different names to different things, lest he suffer as they who erroneously give the name of God to inanimate stuff, or pull the designation of “the Good” down away from the First Cause, or from virtue and honour, and [put it] upon a blind Pluto, and upon the proportions of flesh and blood and bones required for health and strength, or to what is thought to be a good pedigree.^[96]

In the form of the saying above, the True Prophet utters a direct command (μή με λέγε αγαθόν). In this way, the Homilist’s form of the saying is more forceful and direct than its various forms in the Synoptic Gospels, where Jesus does not speak a command, but asks a question (τί με λέγεις αγαθόν;). The True Prophet’s command to reserve calling God alone “the Good” is in keeping with the Homilist’s “adoptionist” Christology. Indeed, the fact that the True Prophet commands his hearers not to call anyone (not even himself) “good” but “God” accords with Peter’s words elsewhere, where Peter says in effect that Jesus did not claim himself to be divine:

Ο κύριος ἡμῶν οὔτε θεοὺς εἶναι ἐφθέγγετο παρὰ τὸν
κτίσαντα τὰ πάντα οὔτε ἑαυτὸν θεὸν εἶναι
ἀνηγόρευσεν, υἱὸν δὲ θεοῦ τοῦ τὰ πάντα
διακοσμήσαντος τὸν εἰπόντα αὐτὸν εὐλόγως
ἐμακάρισεν.

Our lord [i.e., Jesus, the True Prophet] neither claimed that there were gods other than the Creator of all, nor did he proclaim that he was God. Rightly did he bless the person who called him a son of the God who made all things.^[97]

23. Γίνεσθε ἀγαθοὶ καὶ οἰκτίρμονες ὡς ὁ πατὴρ ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς, ὅς ἀνατέλλει τὸν ἥλιον ἐπ’ ἀγαθοῖς καὶ πονηροῖς καὶ φέρει τὸν ὑετὸν ἐπὶ δικαίοις καὶ ἀδίκους.

Be good and merciful, like your father in the heavens, who makes the sun shine on good and wicked people, and brings the rain on the just and unjust.^[98]

This saying represents something of a mix between Matthew and Luke. As Kline indicates, the saying “comes from the Sermon on the Mount/Plain and shows a preference for Lucan wording where there is both a Matthean and a Lucan form of the saying involved. The latter half of the saying is known only from Matthew however.”^[99] In his discussion of this saying, Kline compares it to the saying as it appears in the writings of seven other church fathers. It is interesting to note that of the seven Kline lists, Hilary of Poitiers comes very close to the precise wording of the Homilist:

Estote boni sicut Pater vester qui est in coelis, qui solem suum oriri facit super bonos et malos, et pluit super justos et injustos.^[100]

Be good, like your father in the heavens, who makes his sun shine upon good and wicked people, and brings the rain upon the just and unjust.

Only Hilary quotes Jesus as opening with “be good,” *estote boni* (= the Homilist’s γίνεσθε ἀγαθοὶ).^[101] The only item missing from Hilary is an equivalent phrase for the Homilist’s “and merciful,” καὶ οἰκτίρμονες. Otherwise, the saying is nearly identical in both Hilary and in the Homilist. Similar to sayings xxii and xix above, Peter understands this saying as a demonstration, contra Simon, that the Creator God is not evil—“as the (false) Scriptures say”—but that he is in fact “good” and “merciful.”^[102]

24. Ἀκουε Ἰσραήλ, κύριος ὁ Θεὸς ὑμῶν κύριος εἷς ἐστίν.

Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is one Lord.^[103]

The catalog of the True Prophet's sayings contained in *Hom.* 3.50–57 concludes with the Shema. The Shema is put forth as a final word to refute those false Scriptures that say there are many gods. I noted above that this block of material is framed at each end by the question of how Jesus, as the True Prophet, taught his followers to evaluate the Scriptures properly. In the end, after the conclusion of the sayings catalog, we read in *Hom.* 3.58.1 how Simon “realizes that Peter was leading him to use the Scriptures as Jesus taught” (συνιδὼν ὅτι Πέτρος αὐτὸν συνάγει ταῖς γραφαῖς χρῆσθαι ὡς Ἰησοῦς ἐδίδαξεν).

In sum, the sayings catalog enumerated above gives us a sense of some of the actual content of the True Prophet's teaching. At the heart of the True Prophet's teaching is the idea that the Pentateuch in its written form contains certain false interpolations. In addition to this, the sayings catalog also provides general instruction on just what sort of scriptural passages might constitute false interpolations. These include passages dealing with the sacrificial cultus, the temple, the Jewish monarchy, and prophecy of the “female” sort (*Hom.* 3.52; 3.56.3–4); passages saying that God makes vows (*Hom.* 3.55.1), or that God “tempts”; that God is neither prescient nor omniscient; or that the Creator God is not “good” (*Hom.* 3.55.2–4; 3.56.1–2). According to the True Prophet's teaching, all such scriptural passages constitute false interpolations that have crept into the Pentateuch in its written form. At no point, however, does the True Prophet advocate anything that comes close to allegorical interpretation of such passages. This is consistent with my findings on the rejection of allegorism discussed in chapter 2.

In this chapter, I have made a few general observations about “prophecy” and the character of the True Prophet in the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*. I have also examined what is available of the actual content of the True Prophet's teaching, and how his teaching therefore functions as an “external” exegetical criterion applied to the interpretation of the

Pentateuch. For the remaining portion of the present chapter, I wish to discuss Ptolemy's *Letter to Flora* (hereafter *Flor.*) in connection with my findings here. For both *Hom.* and *Flor.* share a similar orientation toward the role of Jesus as the authoritative interpreter of the Scriptures, with particular reference to the theory of the false pericopes.

4.4. EXCURSUS: PARALLELS IN PTOLEMY'S *LETTER TO FLORA*

In the previous chapter, I discussed *Flor.* in connection with *Hom.* regarding the theory of the false pericopes. At a fundamental level, both texts advocate a similar theory that the Pentateuch contains false interpolations, though the particulars of their respective theories on this point differ at key points. In the case of *Flor.*, it “amounts to a rational critique which eliminates large sections of the Torah from Christian consideration and encourages the allegorical interpretation of others, taking its clue from the words of Jesus.”^[104] Thus, in addition to the theory of the false pericopes, both *Hom.* and *Flor.* share a common emphasis on the authoritative words of Jesus, either as Ptolemy's “savior” or the Homilist's “True Prophet.” Both the Homilist and Ptolemy assert that Jesus' teachings provide the proper means to adjudicate between true and false portions of Scripture. Ptolemy attributes the highest authority to the “words of the Savior.” As Ptolemy says in 3.8,

ῥηθησομένον ἡμῖν τὰς ἀποδείξεις ἐκ τῶν τοῦ σωτῆρος
ἡμῶν λόγων παριστῶντες δι' ὧν μόνον ἔστιν
ἀπταιστως ἐπὶ τὴν κατάληψιν τῶν ὄντων ὁδηγεῖσθαι.

We shall draw the proofs of our statements from the words of our Savior, which alone can lead us without stumbling to the comprehension of what really exists.

Though the preferred epithet given to Jesus in *Hom.* is usually the “True Prophet,” and not “the Savior,” the basic sentiment expressed here is the same throughout *Hom.*^[105] This is illustrated by *Hom.* 3.54.1:

ἀδύνατον ἔστιν ἄνευ τῆς τούτου διδασκαλίας ἀληθείας
σωζούσῃ ἐπιστῆναι . . . ἣν δὲ καὶ ἔστιν ἐν τῷ Ἰησοῦ
ἡμῶν λόγῳ.

It is impossible without his teaching to attain to saving truth . . . but [saving truth] was and is in the word of our Jesus.

In a similar manner, Ptolemy himself goes on to say:

Πρῶτον οὖν μαθητέον ὅτι ὁ σύμπας ἐκεῖνος νόμος ὁ ἐμπεριεχόμενος τῇ Μωσέως πεντατεύχῳ οὐ πρὸς ἐνός τινος νενομοθέτηται, λέγω δὴ οὐχ ὑπὸ μόνου θεοῦ, ἀλλ' εἰσὶ τινες αὐτοῦ προστάξεις καὶ ὑπ' ἀνθρώπων τεθεῖσαι. Καὶ τριχῇ τοῦτον διαιρεῖσθαι οἱ τοῦ σωτῆρος λόγοι διδάσκουσιν ἡμᾶς. Εἰς τε γὰρ αὐτὸν θεὸν καὶ τὴν τούτου νομοθεσίαν διαιρεῖται, δὲ καὶ εἰς τὸν Μωσέα (οὐ καθὰ αὐτὸς δι' αὐτοῦ νομοθετεῖ ὁ θεός, ἀλλὰ καθὰ ἀπὸ τῆς ἰδίας ἐννοίας ὁρμώμενος καὶ ὁ Μωσῆς ἐνομοθέτησέν τινα) καὶ εἰς τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους τοῦ λαοῦ διαιρεῖται, [οἷ] καὶ πρῶτον εὐρίσκονται ἐντολὰς τινὰς ἐνθέντες ἰδίας.

The first thing, then, to be learned is that the entire law encompassed by Moses' Pentateuch was not laid down by a single Lawgiver, I mean God alone, but some of its precepts were also established by humans. The words of the Savior teach us that [the law] is divided into three parts: it is divided into God himself and his legislation; then into Moses (not in the sense that God legislated through Moses, but that Moses himself, starting from his own reflections, established certain ordinances); then it is also divided into the elders of the people, who first were found to have introduced certain precepts on their own. [\[106\]](#)

In this passage, Ptolemy isolates “our Savior” as (1) the reference point for the validity of his present argument and (2) the source for the teaching

about the law's "tripartite division." Similarly, the *Homilies* isolate Jesus the True Prophet as (1) the source of truth itself and (2) the source for the teaching about the false pericopes. Ptolemy maintains that only some parts of the Pentateuch were rejected by the Savior (e.g., the *lex talionis*). Other passages (e.g., the Decalogue) were either "fulfilled" by the Savior or they must be subject to allegorical exegesis, as in the case of cultic matters. On this point, Ptolemy and the Homilist differ. For Ptolemy is willing to employ a small amount of allegorical interpretation, while the Homilist rejects the allegorical method across the board.

I conclude this section of the chapter by looking at *Hom.* 3.54.1–2 together with *Flor.* 4.3–4. The amount they share in common is noteworthy. Indeed, as Gilles Quispel has remarked,

Il est clair que ce passage [*Hom.* 3.54] contient exactement la même pensée que celui de Ptolémée.

[107]

It is clear that this passage [*Hom.* 3.54] contains exactly the same thought as that of Ptolemy.

We read in *Hom.* 3.54.1–2:

ὅθεν ἀδύνατόν ἐστιν ἄνευ τῆς τούτου διδασκαλίας
ἀληθεία σωζούσῃ ἐπιστῆναι, κἂν τὸν αἰῶνά τις ζητῇ
ἐνθα τὸ ζητούμενον οὐκ ἔστιν. ἦν δὲ καὶ ἔστιν ἐν τῷ
Ἰησοῦ ἡμῶν λόγῳ. πλὴν τᾶληθῇ τοῦ νόμου εἰδὼς
Σαδδουκαίοις πυνθανομένοις καθ' ὃν λόγον Μωυσῆς
ἐπὶ τὰ συνεχώρησεν γαμεῖν, ἔφη· Μωυσῆς κατὰ τὴν
σκληροκαρδίαν ὑμῶν ἐπέτρεψεν ὑμῖν· ἀπ' ἀρχῆς γὰρ
οὕτως οὐκ ἐγένετο. ὁ γὰρ κτίσας ἀπ' ἀρχῆς τὸν
ἄνθρωπον ἄρσεν καὶ θῆλυ ἐποίησεν αὐτόν.

It is impossible without his teaching to experience saving truth, even though one perpetually seeks the

object where it is not. But it was, and is, [found] in the word of our Jesus. He knows the parts of the law that are true, and he told Sadducees, when they inquired why it was that Moses made a concession for marrying seven, “Moses gave you commandments according to your hardness of heart; for from the beginning it was not this way. For he who created man in the first place, made him as male and female.”^[108]

Then, we read in *Flor*.4.3–4:

Πῶς οὖν τοῦτο οὕτως ἔχον ἐκ τῶν τοῦ σωτῆρος
δείκνυται λόγων, μάθοις δ’ ἂν ἤδη. διαλεγόμενός που
ὁ σωτὴρ πρὸς τοὺς περὶ τοῦ ἀποστασίου συζητοῦντας
αὐτῷ, ὃ δὴ ἀποστάσιον ἐξεῖναι νενομοθέτητο, ἔφη
αὐτοῖς ὅτι Μωυσῆς πρὸς τὴν σκληροκαρδίαν ὑμῶν
ἐπέτρεψεν τὸ ἀπολύειν τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ. Ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς
γὰρ οὐ γέγονεν οὕτως. Θεὸς γάρ, φησί, συνέζευξε
ταύτην τὴν συζυγίαν.

That this holds true is shown from the words of the Savior; how so you may learn straight away. Once when he was in a discussion with people who debated with him about which kind of divorce the law allowed, the Savior said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed a man to divorce his wife. But from the beginning it was not this way. For God,” [Scripture] says, “joined these two into one pair.”^[109]

The similarities are readily apparent. Quispel detects the Jewish-Christian coloring of these two texts:

En nous basant sur ce passage et sur d'autres passages parallèles, nous admettons, suivant une indication de Hilgenfeld, que Ptolémée a emprunté son explication à des cercles palestino-chrétiens.^[110]

Basing ourselves on this and other parallel passages, we accept, following a piece of information from Hilgenfeld, that Ptolemy borrowed his explanation from some Palestinian-Christian circles.

In both texts, priority is given to Jesus' authoritative words. Both texts mention Jesus' interlocutors, and both employ the quotation from Matt. 19:8. Moses' certificate of divorce is Ptolemy's first representative example of "false legislation."^[111] Ptolemy uses this quotation from Matthew as an example of that legislation which, according to Ptolemy's unique tripartite schema, is "secondary"—that is, the legislation that derives not from God but from Moses himself. The Homilist likewise maintains that the certificate of divorce was not an original part of the Mosaic legislation. For, according to Peter, Jesus had said this with reference to the "true things" of the law (τὰληθῆ τοῦ νόμου), represented here by the "authentic" Scripture from Genesis, in contradistinction to the "false things" of the law, represented by the "certificate of divorce." The "certificate of divorce" (of Deut. 24:1-4) is thought to be a spurious interpolation that had crept into the written Torah. Jesus was calling the "Sadducees" to task for relying on this "false pericope."

4.5. CONCLUSION

I noted earlier in chapter 2 that the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* maintain general concern for the *sensus literalis* of the Scriptures. As such, allegorical interpretation is not accepted. We saw that when it comes to Greek myth, allegorism is deemed irrelevant, but when it comes to the Pentateuch, allegorism is altogether *rejected*, owing in part to its association with pagan myth and the fact that the method constitutes imposing foreign material onto the text of Scripture. Coupled with the rejection of the allegorical method is the theory of the false pericopes, a theory that is to be understood (in part) as the Homilist's particular understanding of how the Pentateuch came to exist in written form. The difficult and/or troublesome passages of Scripture are not to be subject to the allegorical approach. Rather, the Scriptures are to be evaluated by the application of a set of three distinct criteria. In the present chapter, I have considered the first of these, namely, the True Prophet's teaching. I have examined a number of key sayings in the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* in order to gain some understanding of the content and nature of the True Prophet's teaching in this regard. My survey of the True Prophet's sayings accords with Grant's observation when he says, "For the author of the *Clementine Homilies*, the sayings, or certain sayings, of Jesus make it possible to identify uninterpolated teachings. . . . The 'true prophet' explains how to tell true from false."^[112] We are now in a position to address the second external criterion applied in the service of the discovery and maintenance of a "correct" interpretation of Scripture. The object of our attention in the next chapter, then, is the role of a certain "oral tradition" in this endeavor.

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1. For which, see *Hom.* 1.18–19, 20; 2.4–12; 3.11–15, 17, 21, 28, 52; 8.10.1; 8.22.4. For Georg Strecker's discussion of the True Prophet in the Pseudo-Clementines, see *Das Judenchristentum in den Pseudoklementinen*, 2nd ed., TUGAL (Berlin: Akademie, 1981), 145–53.^[1]
 2. *Hom.* 1.19.8.^[2]
 3. We learn from *Hom.* 1.21.4–6 that prophecy prevails triumphantly over all other forms of knowing. According to *Hom.* 15.5.3, "there is a great difference . . . between the principles of piety and those of philosophy; for

the former receives its proof from prophecy, while the latter, offering us beautiful sentences, seems to furnish proofs from mere conjecture.” See also *Hom.*2.10.1–3. [↩](#)

4. See Gilles Quispel, *Ptolémée, Lettre A Flora*, SC (Paris: Cerf, 1966), 24; and Strecker, *Das Judenchristentum*, 167. [↩](#)
5. Giovanni Battista Bazzana (“Eve, Cain, and the Giants: The Female Prophetic Principle and Its Succession in the Pseudo-Clementine Novel,” in *Nouvelles intrigues pseudo-clémentines—Plots in the Pseudo-Clementine Romance: Actes du deuxième colloque international sur la littérature apocryphe chrétienne*, ed. Frédéric Amsler et al. [Lausanne: Editions du Zebre, 2008], 315) notes that “the term συζυγία is a favourite one of the Homilist, who employs it many times in constructing narrative transitions and conceptual connections in its text.” Strecker (*Das Judenchristentum*, 154) considers the *Syzygienlehre* to be part of the (hypothetical) Κηρύγματα Πέτρου source. The “rule of conjunction” appears in 2.33.1; 3.16.2; 3.23; 3.42.1. For other relevant passages on the syzygies, see *Hom.*2.15–18; 2.33–34; 3.22–23.2; 3.25–26; 7.11.4. For a general overview of the “syzygies,” see also Alain Le Boulluec, “Roman pseudo-clémentin: *Homélies*,” in *Écrits apocryphes chrétiens*. ed. Pierre Geoltrain and Jean-Daniel Kaestli, (Paris: Gallimard, 2005), 1207–9. [↩](#)
6. Strecker, *Das Judenchristentum*, 155. For its connections with the Valentinian system, see Irenaeus, *Haer.*1.1.1–8, 6 *apud* Epiphanius, *Pan.* 31.9.1–27; Forester, Werner, and R. Mcl Wilson, *Gnosis: A Selection of Gnostic Texts* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), 123. [↩](#)
7. Hans Joachim Schoeps, *Jewish Christianity: Factional Disputes in the Early Church*, trans. Douglas R. A. Hare (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), 125. [↩](#)
8. *Ibid.*, 88–89. Cf. Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte des Judenchristentums* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1949), 116–17. [↩](#)
9. Louis Ginzberg, *On Jewish Law and Lore* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1955), 190. See also Ginzberg, “Cabala,” in *The Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York, 1903), 3:461. [↩](#)
10. G. E. R. Lloyd, “Right and Left in Greek Philosophy,” *JHS*82 (1962): 56–66; Lloyd, *Polarity and Analogy: Two Types of Argumentation in Early Greek Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 41–43. [↩](#)
11. *Ibid.*, 16. [↩](#)
12. References are given in *ibid.*, 16–17. [↩](#)
13. Philo, *Her.* 213–14. The English translation given here is that of F. H. Colson, *On the Confusion of Tongues. On the Migration of Abraham. Who Is the Heir of Divine Things? On Mating with the Preliminary Studies*, LCL (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1932). See also

Philo, *Her.* 137–40; *Gig.* 3, 41–42. “Pairs and opposites” are also attested in Sir. 33:15, καὶ οὕτως ἔμβλεπον εἰς πάντα τὰ ἔργα τοῦ ὑψίστου δύο δύο ἐν κατέναντι τοῦ ἐνός.

14. *Hom.* 2.13.4.
15. *Hom.* 2.14.2–4.
16. *Hom.* 2.15.1–3.
17. *Hom.* 3.33.1.
18. *Hom.* 1.21.5–6. Cf. *Hom.* 15.5.3. See also the remarks in C. Jedan, “Philosophy Superseded? The Doctrine of Free Will in the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions*,” in *The Pseudo-Clementines*, ed. Jan N. Bremmer (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 201–3.
19. Karl Evan Shuve, “The Doctrine of the False Pericopes and Other Late Antique Approaches to the Problem of Scripture’s Unity,” in *Nouvelles intrigues pseudo-clémentines—Plots in the Pseudo-Clementine Romance: Actes du deuxième colloque international sur la littérature apocryphe chrétienne*, ed. Frédéric Amsler et al. (Lausanne: Editions du Zebre, 2008), 440. See also Nicolle Kelley, “What is the Value of Sense Perception in the Pseudo-Clementine Romance?,” in Amsler et al., *Nouvelles intrigues pseudo-clémentines*, 361–69.
20. See Nicole Kelley, “Problems of Knowledge and Authority in the Pseudo-Clementine Romance of *Recognitions*,” *JECS* 13 (2005): 315–48.
21. *Hom.* 2.6.3, 2.7.1.
22. The exception to this is Gen. 49:10 in *Hom.* 3.49.1 and (possibly) Isa. 9:6 in *Hom.* 16.14.1. But these exceptions only prove the rule.
23. But see *Hom.* 3.19; 11.20.4. See J. Neville Birdsall, “Problems of the Clementine Literature,” in *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways A.D. 70 to 135*, ed. James D. G. Dunn (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 347–61. Schoeps argues that the anti-Pauline attitude within the Pseudo-Clementines derives from the rejection of Jesus as “the atoning sacrifice.” See his *Jewish Christianity*, 83. Charles A. Gieschen (“The Seven Pillars of the World: Ideal Figure Lists in the True Prophet Christology of the Pseudo-Clementines,” *JSP* 12 [1994]: 48n3) notes, “A complicated redaction history in [*Hom.*] makes a systematic Christology for this literature difficult to ascertain.”
24. Birdsall, “Problems,” 356.
25. See Strecker, *Das Judenchristentum*, 145–53, for his discussion of the True Prophet.
26. In *Hom.* 3.15, the destruction of the temple (which Jesus is said to have predicted) is adduced as verification that Jesus is indeed the True Prophet.
27. See *Hom.* 16.14.3.

28. *Hom.* 16.15.2. See also *Hom.* 18.13.3–5. Schoeps observes (*Jewish Christianity*, 72) that “the True Prophet and not the God-Man is the bearer of the divine will for the Ebionites.”[↩](#)
29. *Hom.* 18.14.1 (see also *Hom.* 8.5, 12.12; *Rec.* 1.35; 7.12–13, 26; 8.29). See especially Gieschen, “Seven Pillars,” 49–50.[↩](#)
30. Louis Ginzberg, “Clementina,” in *Jewish Encyclopedia*, 4:114.[↩](#)
31. See *Hom.* 3.25.1–26.6; 3.47.4; and 3.15.1–3 respectively. On the destruction of the temple, see also *Hom.* 2.17.4.[↩](#)
32. See *Hom.* 1.9; 2.10.[↩](#)
33. Han Jan Willem Drijvers, “Adam and the True Prophet in the Pseudo-Clementines,” in *History and Religion in Late Antique Syria* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1994), 315.[↩](#)
34. Strecker, *Das Judenchristentum*, 151–53.[↩](#)
35. Drijvers, “Adam and the True Prophet,” 318. See also F. Stanley Jones, “The Pseudo-Clementines: A History of Research, Part I and Part II,” in *The Second Century 2*, ed. E. Ferguson (New York: Londress, 1982), 8–14; Strecker, *Das Judenchristentum*, 259–67.[↩](#)
36. Other discussions of the True Prophet appear in *Hom.* 2.5–12; 3.17–28.[↩](#)
37. *Hom.* 1.18. See Schoeps, *Jewish Christianity*, 66–67. This is somewhat reminiscent of Origen’s analogy about “the locks and the keys” (*Philoc.* 2.3), an analogy he claims he got from “a Hebrew.” See also Dio Chrysostom, *Dei cogn.* 12:39–47.[↩](#)
38. *Hom.* 1.18.4. Cf. *Hom.* 2.6.2; 2.8.2.[↩](#)
39. *Hom.* 1.19.1, 4, 8. Cf. *Hom.* 3.11–15, 54.[↩](#)
40. *Hom.* 1.20.6.[↩](#)
41. *Hom.* 2.12.3.[↩](#)
42. Robert M. Grant, *Heresy and Criticism: The Search for Authenticity in Early Christian Literature* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 45.[↩](#)
43. *Hom.* 3.49.3. The Scripture Jesus is said to have fulfilled is Gen. 49:10.[↩](#)
44. *Hom.* 3.48.1.[↩](#)
45. Leslie Kline, *The Sayings of Jesus in the Pseudo-Clementine Homilies* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1975). See also Erwin Preuschen, *Antilegomena: Die Reste der Außerkanonischen Evangelien und urchristlichen Überlieferungen* (Gießen: Töpelmann, 1905).[↩](#)
46. *Hom.* 3.50.1. This saying appears to follow, or loosely quote, Matt. 23:29. See also *Hom.* 18.20.3.[↩](#)
47. *Hom.* 3.50.2. Agraphon 87 in Alfred Resch, ed., *Agrapha: Aussercanonische Schriftfragmente* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1967), 112, 114–15. This agraphon is also discussed by Kline, *Sayings of Jesus*, 158–59.[↩](#)

48. This observation is noted *ibid.*, 158. See the discussion in Resch, *Agrapha*, 112–28. [↩](#)
49. Schoeps, *Jewish Christianity*, 79. [↩](#)
50. Kelley Coblentz Bautch, “‘Using the Scriptures as Jesus Taught’: The Pseudo-Clementine Homilies’ Approach to Interpreting Biblical Texts” (Catholic Biblical Association Annual Meeting, August 2004), 15. I wish to thank Prof. Coblentz Bautch for her kind generosity in sharing with me a copy of her paper. [↩](#)
51. *Hom.* 3.50.2. Cf. Aristotle’s principle of ἄλογον (*Poetics* 25); *Hom.* 12.32.1. [↩](#)
52. Kline, *Sayings of Jesus*, 167. See also Strecker, *Das Judenchristentum*, 134; Arthur J. Bellinzoni, *The Sayings of Jesus in the Writings of Justin Martyr* (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 131–38. This saying is not included in Resch’s *Agrapha*. [↩](#)
53. καὶ τῷ εἰπεῖν . . . βεβαιότερον τοῦ ἀθαιρέτως εὐγνωμονοῦντος τίθησιν τὸν νοῦν. [↩](#)
54. Kline, *Sayings of Jesus*, 167n1. [↩](#)
55. *Hom.* 3.51.2; cf. Matt. 5:17. [↩](#)
56. *Hom.* 3.51.2. [↩](#)
57. *Hom.* 3.51.3; cf. Matt. 5:18. [↩](#)
58. *Hom.* 3.52.1; cf. Matt. 15:13. Schoeps suggests this saying occurred in the “Ebionite gospel.” He attributes the origins of the theory of the false pericopes to Ebionite exegesis of this text: “Thus the Ebionite gospel or the Ebionite exegesis of this gospel will have derived the theory of the false pericopes from Matthew 15:1-4.” See his *Jewish Christianity*, 77–78. [↩](#)
59. *Hom.* 3.52.1. [↩](#)
60. *Hom.* 3.52.2; cf. John 10:9. [↩](#)
61. Strecker, *Das Judenchristentum*, 127. [↩](#)
62. Kline, *Sayings of Jesus*, 163. [↩](#)
63. *Hom.* 3.52.3; cf. Matt. 11:28. [↩](#)
64. *Hom.* 3.52.3; cf. John 10:3. [↩](#)
65. Kline, *Sayings of Jesus*, 133. [↩](#)
66. *Hom.* 3.52.3; cf. Matt. 7:7. [↩](#)
67. *Hom.* 3.53.2; cf. Matt. 13:17. [↩](#)
68. Kline, *Sayings of Jesus*, 62. [↩](#)
69. *Hom.* 3.53.2. [↩](#)
70. *Hom.* 3.53.3; cf. Deut. 18:15-19. [↩](#)
71. On this, see Acts 3:22; 7:37. This circumstance does not, however, imply that the Homilist was dependent on the book of Acts. See Kline, *Sayings of Jesus*, 148n4. [↩](#)

72. *Rec.* 1.36.2 retains the saying about a “true prophet” as the words of Moses. [↩](#)
73. *Hom.* 3.54.2. [↩](#)
74. Moses’ certificate of divorce is the first example of a “false law” according to the schema put forth in *Flor.* 4.1. This is discussed further below. [↩](#)
75. *Hom.* 3.55.1; cf. Matt. 5:37. As Kline puts it (*Sayings of Jesus*, 67), “The order of the saying is Marcan but the wording is Matthean.” [↩](#)
76. See below, at sayings xvi, xviii, xix, xxii, and xxiv in this list. [↩](#)
77. *Hom.* 3.55.2; cf. Matt. 22:32 and parallels. [↩](#)
78. *Hom.* 3.55.2, Agraphon 80 in Resch, *Agrapha*, 105. The belief that God does not test/tempt is also found in the New Testament book of James at 1:13. See also E. DeLuca, “Le ‘Dieu Tentateur’ dans l’Épître de Jacques et dans les Homélies pseudo-clémentines,” in Amsler et al., *Nouvelles intrigues*, 337–49. [↩](#)
79. See Kline (*Sayings of Jesus*, 165), “Lacking other attestation to H’s wording one cannot determine H’s source. . . . Therefore we can only list the saying in H as otherwise unknown.” [↩](#)
80. *Hom.* 3.55.3; cf. Matt. 6:8, 32. [↩](#)
81. *Hom.* 3.55.4; cf. Matt. 6:6. [↩](#)
82. Kline, *Sayings of Jesus*, 112. [↩](#)
83. *Hom.* 3.56.1–2; cf. Matt. 7:9–11. [↩](#)
84. Tertullian, *Marc.* 1.6.1. The translation give here is that of Ernest Evans, *Tertullian: Adversus Marcionem* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 7. [↩](#)
85. *Hom.* 3.56.3; cf. Matt. 5:34–35. [↩](#)
86. It should be noted that anthropomorphisms *per se* are not always rejected as false. The Pseudo-Clementines do indeed retain several rather bold anthropomorphisms. Anthropopathisms, however, are less palatable for the Homilist. [↩](#)
87. On the taxonomy of false pericopes, see Schoeps, *Jewish Christianity*, 82–94; Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte*, 155–76; Strecker, *Das Judenchristentum* 166–85. [↩](#)
88. *Hom.* 3.56.4; cf. Matt. 9:13; 12:7, quoting LXX Hos. 6:6. For a brief discussion of this saying, see Kline, *Sayings of Jesus*, 142. [↩](#)
89. See, for example, the treatment of Num. 11:33–35 in *Hom.* 3.45–6. [↩](#)
90. Schoeps (*Jewish Christianity*, 83) explains this absence as a determining factor in the “anti-Pauline” tenor of *Hom.* [↩](#)
91. Of the *Homilies*’ twenty books, most conclude with Peter baptizing people (see, e.g., *Hom.* 3.7.1–3). [↩](#)
92. See, e.g., *Hom.* 3.45.1–2; 3.52.1; 18.19.1–3. [↩](#)

93. Strecker, *Das Judenthum*, 182. See *Hom.* 3.24.1. [↩](#)
94. See Schoeps, *Jewish Christianity*, 86–87. [↩](#)
95. *Hom.* 3.57; cf. Mark 10:18; Matt. 19:17. For a discussion of this saying, see Kline, *Sayings of Jesus*, 46–50. [↩](#)
96. Origen, *Philoc.* 17.1.39–46. (= *Cels.* 1.24–25), discussed by M. Harl in *Origène: Philocalie 1–20*, SC (Paris, 1983), 129n2. Philo (*Leg.* 3.86) remarks that there are some things that are advantageous to people—like health, wealth, an honorable reputation—which can be called, “speaking roughly” (καταχρηστικῶς), “good” things. [↩](#)
97. *Hom.* 16.15.2. [↩](#)
98. *Hom.* 3.57; cf. Matt. 5:44–5 // Luke 6:36. [↩](#)
99. Kline, *Sayings of Jesus*, 42. [↩](#)
100. Hilary of Poitiers, *Tract. in Ps.* 118 (PL 9:559). [↩](#)
101. One exception to this is Macarius, *Hom.* 19.2 (PG 34:644), γίνεσθε ἀγαθοὶ καὶ χρηστοί, καθὼς καὶ ὁ Πατὴρ ὑμῶν ὁ οὐράνιος οἰκτίρων ἐστὶ. [↩](#)
102. See Philo, *Mut.* 28–29. [↩](#)
103. *Hom.* 3.57; cf. Mark 12:29 (some witnesses), citing Deut. 6:4. This quotation of the Shema of Deut. 6:4 substitutes the second-person plural “your God” (ὑμῶν) in place of the first-person plural “our God” (ἡμῶν). We might also add to our list Jesus’ saying in *Hom.* 8.7.4: “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and yet you do not do what I say?” However, this saying sits in the context of Peter’s discussion that Moses and Jesus both brought one and the same teaching, and that “God accepts him who has believed either of these” (*Hom.* 8.6.2). And in the case of *Hom.* 8.6.2, Jesus’ saying does not concern the false pericopes but refers to the fact that “doing” what he (and Moses) teach is what “benefits” the people of God. [↩](#)
104. Karlfried Froehlich, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 12. [↩](#)
105. Strecker (*Das Judenthum*, 167) notes this comparison. [↩](#)
106. *Flor.* 3.8; 4.1–2. [↩](#)
107. Quispel, *Ptolémée*, 24. [↩](#)
108. The Homilist changes Matthew’s αὐτούς into τὸν ἄνθρωπον . . . αὐτόν, perhaps because the plural αὐτούς would not make the Homilist’s point. According to Kline (*Saying of Jesus*, 67), this move “must certainly be a dogmatic change to conform to the theory that Adam was androgynous.” The notion that Adam was originally created as “androgynous” and then later separated into male and female appears in *Gen. Rab.* 8:1; 17:6; *b.Ber.* 61a. Eusebius (*Praep. ev.* 12.12) reports that Plato (*Symp.* 189d, 190d) was familiar with a similar tradition. [↩](#)

109. It is noteworthy that *Hom.* 3.22.1 describes the first man's female companion as a σύζυγος. See Quispel (*Ptolémée*, 86), "C'est un terme technique des valentiniens qui, à la place indiquée, ne se trouve pas dans l'évangile. Les valentiniens avaient une *conception romantique* du mariage qui était considéré comme un reflet de la polarité divine. . . . Par une faute de mémoire Ptolémée a introduit ce mot qu'il aimait dans le texte sacré." ↵
110. Quispel (*Ptolémée*, 85) cites Hilgenfeld, "Der Gnostiker Valentinus und seine Schriften," *ZWT* (1880): 229. But cf. also Quispel (*Ptolémée*, 24): "Ceci nous avertit qu'une telle conception peut naître spontanément. Il n'est donc pas nécessaire que Ptolémée l'ait empruntée aux traditions judéo-chrétiennes." ↵
111. Cf. Deut. 24:1-4. ↵
112. Grant, *Heresy and Criticism*, 45. ↵

Oral Tradition as an Exegetical Criterion

5.1. INTRODUCTION

I have noted that the Homilist takes a “literalist” approach to the interpretation of the Pentateuch. Allegorism is therefore categorically rejected. I am proposing that, according to the Homilist, a proper management of Scripture requires the use of three “external” criteria. In the previous chapter, I discussed the first of these, according to which the True Prophet’s teaching functions as an “external” criterion for adjudicating true and false pericopes. The focus of the present chapter is on the significance of an “oral tradition” as another necessary exegetical criterion for the proper interpretation of the Pentateuch.

In order to achieve and secure the correct interpretation of Scripture, the Homilist claims, one must look “outside of” the Pentateuch to a certain “oral tradition.” Now, this oral tradition is thought to exist as a body of teaching independent of the True Prophet’s own teaching. That this is so emerges clearly from a passage like *Hom.* 16.14.3–5:

ἡμῖν δὲ εἷς θεός, εἷς ὁ τὰς κτίσεις πεποιηκὼς καὶ
διακοσμήσας τὰ πάντα, οὗ καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς υἱός, ᾧ
πειθόμενοι ἀπὸ τῶν γραφῶν τὰ ψευδῆ ἐπιγινώσκομεν.
ἔτι δὲ καὶ ἐκ πατέρων ἐφοδιαζόμενοι τῶν γραφῶν τὰ
ἀληθῆ ἓνα μόνον οἶδαμεν τὸν πεποιηκότα τοὺς τε
οὐρανοὺς καὶ τὴν γῆν, θεὸν Ἰουδαίων καὶ πάντων τῶν
σέβειν αὐτὸν αἰρουμένων. τοῦτον καὶ θεοφιλεῖ
λογισμῷ ἀληθῆ δογματίσαντες οἱ πατέρες παρέδωκαν
ἡμῖν, ἵνα εἰδῶμεν ὅτι, εἴ τι κατὰ τοῦ θεοῦ λέγεται,
ψευδὸς ἐστίν.

But in our case there is one God, one who made creation and ordered the universe, whose son is the Messiah. We come to recognize the falsehoods of the Scriptures as we obey him [i.e., the Messiah]. What is more, being equipped by our ancestors with the truths of the Scriptures, we know that there is only One who has made the heavens and the earth—the God of the

Jews—and of all who choose to worship him. Our fathers, with a rational love for God, setting out true teachings, transmitted [orally] this belief to us, in order that we may know that if anything is said against God, it is a falsehood.

The Greek phrase ἔτι δὲ καὶ denotes a distinction between the True Prophet's teaching on the one hand and the oral tradition on the other. And while the True Prophet is not himself a recipient of that oral tradition, the oral tradition and the True Prophet's teaching work in tandem.^[1] As such, one must be privy to *both* the oral tradition *and* the True Prophet's teaching in order to secure a correct interpretation of Scripture.

This chapter will proceed in the following way. First, I will begin by describing in general terms the notion of an oral tradition characteristic of rabbinic Judaism, as we know it from some of the relevant sources that have come down to us. Second, I will show how an oral tradition that serves a regulative function, somewhat similar (generically) to that in rabbinic Judaism, is appropriated in the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*.^[2] Third, an analysis is offered of the *Letter of Peter to James* (hereafter *ep. Petr.*), in which I will consider in greater detail several important features of *ep. Petr.* This document is remarkable for its unambiguous recognition of, and appreciation for, the necessity of an oral tradition in order to secure the correct interpretation of Scripture. Finally, I will address how the *Homilies* conceptualize this oral tradition as an external criterion for the proper interpretation of the Pentateuch. Other important concepts like the “seat of Moses” and the “mystery” will also be discussed in connection with patristic and rabbinic exegetical sources. As we begin this chapter on the oral tradition, a word is in order about the concept of oral tradition in rabbinic Judaism.^[3]

5.2. ORAL TRADITION IN RABBINIC EXEGETICAL SOURCES

According to a rabbinic interpretation of Exod. 34:27, the words על פי in the Hebrew text indicate that God gave orally to Moses another body of legislation beyond the written one. God thus enjoined Moses not to record these oral teachings but to deliver them to the people “by mouth” (על פי).^[4] The written Torah was made accessible to all the people of Israel. The “oral Torah” was transmitted first to Moses, who repeated it to Joshua. After Joshua, the oral tradition was delivered to the elders, the biblical prophets, and then on to successive generations of the great rabbinic sages. In later haggadic tradition, the sum total body of Jewish tradition, both exoteric and esoteric lore and legislation, is said to have been revealed to Moses on Sinai. Rabbi Joshua ben Levi, a Palestinian amora of the first half of the third century ce, taught that this was so.^[5] Beginning in the mid-second century ce, the rabbis “redacted” the oral traditions—that is, they committed them to writing. The final result of this “redaction” of oral traditions is the Mishnah, achieved under the leadership of Rabbi Judah the Patriarch.^[6]

According to this rabbinic notion of oral tradition, it is not possible to discover and correctly observe God’s will apart from it. As A. J. Avery-Peck explains, “The Written Torah, available to all of Israel, contains only half of God’s revelation. Access to the written Scriptures alone does not provide the people with all the information needed to properly observe the law. Correct observance is possible only under the guidance of rabbinic authorities, who have the revealed key to understanding the written Scripture. The concept of oral tradition described here is uniquely rabbinic. Other postbiblical Jewish writings know nothing comparable.”^[7] While it may be true that “other postbiblical Jewish writings know nothing comparable,” it is a remarkable feature of the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* that the authors not only know about it but also seek to emulate and possess an oral tradition of this sort as their own. It is the goal of this chapter, therefore, to explore this circumstance further.

5.3. THE ORAL TRADITION IN THE PSEUDO-CLEMENTINES

As a point of entry into the topic, we might look to a passage like *Hom.* 3.1–37. This section contains Peter’s exordium, the extended introduction to his debates with Simon. Just prior to these debates, Peter explains that

ὁ Σίμων ταῖς ψευδέσιν τῶν γραφῶν περικοπαῖς
ὥπλισμένος πολεμεῖν ἡμῖν προσέρχεται.

Simon is coming to do battle with us, armed with
the false pericopes of the Scriptures.^[8]

Peter, however, remains confident that he and his comrades will be able to stand their ground against Simon. For they, and not Simon, are the recipients of a “twofold” ancestral tradition:

καὶ ἡμῖν μὲν τοῖς ἐκ προγόνων παρειληφόσιν τὸν τὰ
πάντα κτίσαντα σέβειν θεόν, ἔτι δὲ καὶ τῶν ἀπατᾶν
δυναμένων βίβλων τὸ μυστήριον, οὐδὲν δυνήσεται.

And indeed, with us who have had handed down
from our ancestors the [proper] worship of the Creator
God, as well as the mystery of the books that can
deceive, [Simon] will be unable to do anything.^[9]

This passage (as well as *Hom.* 16.14.4–5 above) reminds us that, as Karl Evan Shuve puts it, “The true content of the divinely-revealed Torah can indeed be known but only by those to whom the Torah has been directly handed down. To those outside the proper line of transmission, the truth in Scripture is accessible only in corrupted form.”^[10] In this regard, it is worth noting what is said at the end of *Rec.* 10.42.1–4, where it makes mention of the ancestral tradition:

et ideo oportet ab eo intellegentiam discere
scripturarum, qui eam a maioribus secundum
veritatem sibi traditam servat, ut et ipse posit ea quae
recte suscepit, competenter aderere.

So therefore it is necessary to learn the correct
interpretation of the Scriptures from the one who
preserves it *according to the ancestral
tradition handed down to him*, in order that he can
properly declare that which he has correctly received.

Recall that this particular passage from *Rec.* 10 is situated within the general context of a discussion concerning Greek mythology and the allegorical method of interpretation. One of the significant features of this passage is that it suggests a close connection between the rejection of allegorism, as well as an affirmation of the need for the “ancestral tradition” to secure and maintain correct interpretation. Thus *Rec.* 10.42 illustrates the general importance of the oral tradition for proper exegesis. Furthermore, *Hom.* 16.14.4–5 and *Hom.* 3.4.1 describe the importance of an oral tradition particularly in connection with the theory of the false pericopes. Beyond these texts, however, perhaps the clearest description of the need for an oral tradition to secure the proper interpretation of Scripture is found in the *Letter of Peter to James*.

5.4. ORAL TRADITION IN THE *LETTER OF PETER TO JAMES*

The importance of an ancestral tradition first appears in *ep. Petr.* In its present form, *ep. Petr.* serves as a sort of “cover letter” for the *Homilies*. In fact, *ep. Petr.* is one of three prefatory documents that now introduce the *Homilies* in both of the extant Greek codices (P and O).^[11] In *ep. Petr.*, Peter exhorts James to emulate an “oral tradition” of the sort employed by their Jewish contemporaries in an effort to ensure the proper interpretation of Scripture. It begins as follows:

Εἰδὼς σε, ἀδελφέ μου, εἰς τὸ κοινῇ πᾶσιν ἡμῖν
συμφέρον σπεύδοντα προθύμως ἀξιῶ καὶ δέομαι τῶν
ἐμῶν κηρυγμάτων ἃς ἔπεμψά σοι βίβλους μηδενὶ τῶν
ἀπὸ τῶν ἐθνῶν μεταδοῦναι μήτε ὁμοφύλῳ πρὸ πείρας,
ἀλλ’ ἐάν τις δοκιμασθεὶς ἄξιος εὕρεθῇ, τότε αὐτῷ
κατὰ τὴν ἀγωγὴν παραδοῦναι, καθ’ ἣν καὶ τοῖς
ἐβδομήκοντα ὁ Μωυσῆς παρέδωκε τοῖς τὴν καθέδραν
αὐτοῦ παρειληφόσιν.

Knowing that you, my brother, eagerly strive for what is mutually beneficial for us all, I earnestly beseech you not to share with any of the Gentiles the books of my preachings which I send to you, nor with anyone of our own people before [a period of proper] examination. But if, after being examined, someone is proven worthy, then you may hand them over to him according to the method of instruction whereby Moses also delivered [παραδίδωμι] [*the Torah with its solutions*] to the seventy men who inherited [παραλαμβάνω] his seat.

I wish to address an aspect of the syntax of the last clause of this section, namely, the direct objects of παραδίδωμι and παραλαμβάνω. The problem can be seen in the different approaches taken by several contemporary

translations of the passage. For example, consider first the translation given by Georg Strecker: “But if some one of them has been examined and found to be worthy, then you may hand them over to him in the same way as Moses handed over *his office of a teacher* to the seventy.”^[12] According to this translation, the direct object of παραδίδωμι is understood to be Moses’ καθέδρα, which Strecker translates here as Moses’ “office of a teacher.” Strecker’s translation is problematic, however, in that it does not sufficiently account for the direct object of παραλαμβάνω at the end of the clause. For if the direct object of the earlier παραδίδωμι is Moses’ καθέδρα, as Strecker translates it here, where does that leave παραλαμβάνω? Since παραλαμβάνω is a transitive verb (here as a participle) it requires its own direct object. Yet Strecker’s translation leaves παραλαμβάνω for the most part untouched, leaving it without a direct object.

A solution to the problem was offered some time ago in the older English translation given by Thomas Smith. “But if any one has been proved and found worthy, then to commit them to him, after the manner in which Moses delivered *his books* to the Seventy who succeeded to his chair.”^[13] According to Smith’s translation, the direct object of παραλαμβάνω in the last clause is Moses’ καθέδρα. Thus, whereas Strecker leaves παραλαμβάνω without a direct object of its own, Smith fills that gap, but then leaves παραδίδωμι without its own direct object. Hence, the phrase “*his books*” functions as the “supplied direct object” for παραδίδωμι; the italics connote what is actually “missing” in the Greek text. The more recent French translation provided by Alain Le Boulluec takes a somewhat similar approach:

mais si quelqu’un, après cette épreuve, en est trouvé digne, alors confie-*les*-lui selon le mode de transmission dont usa Moïse au benefice des Soixante-dix *qui recurrent sa chaire en succession*.^[14]

But if someone, after this event, is found worthy, then entrust them to him according to the mode of transmission which Moses used for the benefit of the Seventy who inherited his chair in succession.

Le Boulluec’s translation, like that of Smith, takes Moses’ καθέδρα as the direct object of παραλαμβάνω. But Le Boulluec leaves παραδίδωμι for the most part untouched. Indeed, the French “*user*” is a rather free paraphrase for παραδίδωμι.

Thus it would seem that the Greek of *ep. Petr.* presents its readers with a bit of a syntactical problem. The dimensions of the problem can be stated in the following way:

1. The two key verbs, παραδίδωμι and παραλαμβάνω, are both transitive and therefore both require a direct object for the syntax to work.
2. Translators have tended to understand Moses’ καθέδρα as the direct object for either παραδίδωμι (Strecker) or παραλαμβάνω (Smith and Le Boulluec). Thus Strecker’s translation fails to account for the direct object for παραλαμβάνω. The translations offered by Smith and Le Boulluec correctly understand Moses’ καθέδρα as the direct object of παραλαμβάνω, but they do not sufficiently account for the (implied) direct object of παραδίδωμι.
3. The result of this circumstance is that one or the other—either παραδίδωμι or παραλαμβάνω—is left without the direct object it requires. So the question remains: How should we understand the direct object of παραδίδωμι? What exactly was it that Moses “handed over,” according to *ep. Petr.*?

I wish to propose the following. First, Moses’ καθέδρα best fits as the direct object of παραλαμβάνω (following Smith and Le Boulluec). This is the most straightforward sense of the syntax in the last clause. Second, there is an implied direct object for παραδίδωμι, the identification of which becomes apparent when we take into consideration two other important parallel texts found elsewhere in the *Homilies*. The first passage to consider is *Hom.* 3.47.1:

Ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ νόμος διὰ Μωυσέως ἐβδομήκοντα σοφοῖς
ἀνδράσιν ἀγράφως ἐδόθη παραδίδοσθαι, ἵνα τῇ

διαδοχῇ πολιτεύεσθαι δύνηται.

The Torah of God, which was given orally from Moses to seventy wise men, was transmitted in order that by means of this succession it would be possible to [preserve] the Jewish mode of life.

Two important similarities between *Hom.*3.47.1 and *ep. Petr.* are worth noting. First, both mention Moses in connection with the Seventy. Second, both contain the verb παραδίδωμι. Furthermore, *Hom.*3.47.1. goes beyond *ep. Petr.* when it explicitly identifies the object of Moses' transmission: the Torah (ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ νόμος). What is more, it is the Torah that Moses gave orally (ἀγράφως). This, too, is a significant parallel to what we find in *ep. Petr.*, where Peter exhorts James to deliver the "books of Peter's preachings" in a manner keeping with a rabbinic type of oral tradition. Likewise, here in *Hom.*3.47.1, the oral tradition plays an integral role in the preservation of the "Jewish mode of life" (πολιτεία). Indeed, *ep. Petr.* also displays the author's admiration for this very thing:

τὸν γὰρ αὐτὸν οἱ πανταχῇ ὁμόεθνοι τῆς μοναρχίας καὶ πολιτείας φυλάσσουσι κακόν.

For the people of Moses everywhere continue to maintain the same rule for both their belief in one sovereign God, as well as their distinct way of life.

Therefore, a passage like *Hom.*3.47.1 suggests that the implied direct object of παραδίδωμι in *ep. Petr.* is none other than the Torah, which was given "orally" (ἀγράφως). If so, a more accurate translation would look like the following: "Then you may hand them over to him according to the method of instruction whereby Moses also delivered *the Torah* to the seventy men who inherited his seat." Such a translation sufficiently accounts for the implied direct object of παραδίδωμι on the basis of a relevant parallel, in this case from *Hom.*3.47.1.

Another relevant parallel passage in the *Homilies* that sheds further light on the matter is *Hom.*2.38.1:

τοῦ προφήτου Μωυσέως γνώμη τοῦ θεοῦ ἐκλεκτοῖς
τισιν ἑβδομήκοντα τὸν νόμον σὺν ταῖς ἐπιλύσεσιν
παραδεδωκότος πρὸς τὸ καὶ αὐτοὺς ἐφοδιάζειν τοῦ
λαοῦ τοὺς βουλομένους.

The prophet Moses, by the will of God, transmitted the law with its solutions to seventy certain chosen men in order that they might equip those among the people who wish [to teach].

Once again, the significant elements are easily recognized. In particular, Moses is mentioned in connection with the Seventy, and the verb παραδίδωμι appears in connection with the Torah. Indeed, in this case, the Torah is explicitly the direct object of παραδίδωμι. Furthermore, *Hom.*2.38.1 provides us with one more significant detail: the Torah was transmitted “with its solutions” (σὺν ταῖς ἐπιλύσεσιν). The “solutions” (from ἐπίλυσις) refer to that which interpreters need in order to “solve” various exegetical “problems” (προβλήματα) and “discordances in the Scriptures” (τὰ τῶν γραφῶν ἀσυμφωνά).^[15] This accords with the description in *ep. Petr.* of Scripture’s “sinewy” quality (from νεῦρον), connoting especially Scripture’s “polysemous” character, which can pose a (potential) problem to securing a “correct” interpretation. And beyond this “polysemous” aspect, of course, is the additional irritant of the “false pericopes.” In the case of *Hom.*2.38.1 above, the “solutions” are to be understood in direct connection with the “problem” of these “false pericopes.”

Having looked at relevant parallels in *Hom.*3.47.1 and 2.38.1, we are now in a better position to appreciate the thrust of the section from *ep. Petr.* under consideration. The result of these findings warrants the following translation:

Εἰδὼς σε, ἀδελφέ μου, εἰς τὸ κοινῇ πᾶσιν ἡμῖν
συμφέρον σπεύδοντα προθύμως ἄξιῶ καὶ δέομαι τῶν
ἐμῶν κηρυγμάτων ἅς ἔπεμψά σοι βίβλους μηδενὶ τῶν
ἀπὸ τῶν ἐθνῶν μεταδοῦναι μήτε ὁμοφύλῳ πρὸ πείρας,
ἀλλ' ἐάν τις δοκιμασθεὶς ἄξιος εὑρεθῇ, τότε αὐτῷ
κατὰ τὴν ἀγωγὴν παραδοῦναι, καθ' ἣν καὶ τοῖς
ἐβδομήκοντα ὁ Μωυσῆς παρέδωκε τοῖς τὴν καθέδραν
αὐτοῦ παρειληφόσιν.

Knowing that you, my brother, eagerly strive for
what is mutually beneficial for us all, I earnestly
beseech you not to share with any of the Gentiles the
books of my preachings which I send to you, nor with
anyone of our own people before [a period of proper]
examination. But if, after being examined, someone is
proven worthy, then you may hand them over to him
according to the method of instruction whereby
Moses also delivered [*the Torah with its solutions*] to
the seventy men who inherited his seat.

The remaining portion of *ep. Petr.* is important and worth citing in full here:

διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ὁ καρπὸς τῆς ἀσφαλείας μέχρι τοῦ
δεῦρο φαίνεται. τὸν γὰρ αὐτὸν οἱ πανταχῇ ὁμόεθνοι
τῆς μοναρχίας καὶ πολιτείας φυλάσσουσι κανόνα,
κατὰ μηδένα τρόπον ἄλλως φρονεῖν [ἢ] ὑπὸ τῶν
πολλὰ νευρουσῶν γραφῶν ἐξοδευθῆναι δυνηθέντες.
κατὰ γάρ τὸν παραδοθέντα αὐτοῖς κανόνα τὰ τῶν
γραφῶν ἀσυμφωνά πειρῶνται μεταρρυθμίζειν, εἰ δὴ
τις τυχὸν μὴ εἰδὼς τὰς παραδόσεις ναρκᾷ πρὸς τὰς
τῶν προφητῶν πολυσήμους φωνάς. οὗ ἕνεκεν οὐδενὶ
διδάσκειν ἐπιτρέπουσιν, ἐὰν μὴ πρότερον μάθῃ πῶς
δεῖ ταῖς γραφαῖς χρῆσθαι. διὰ τοῦτο παρ' αὐτοῖς εἷς

θεός, εἷς νόμος, μία ἐλπίς. ἵνα γοῦν τὸ ὅμοιον καὶ παρ’
ἡμῖν γένηται, τοῖς ἐβδομήκοντα ἡμῶν ἀδελφοῖς τὰς
βίβλους μου τῶν κηρυγμάτων δὸς μετὰ τοῦ ὁμοίου
τῆς ἀγωγῆς μυστηρίου, ἵνα καὶ τοὺς βουλομένους τὸ
τῆς διδασκαλίας ἀναδέξασθαι μέρος ἐφοδιάζειν
ἐφοδιάζωσιν.

It is for that reason the fruit of Moses’ caution is evident down to this day. For the people of Moses everywhere continue to maintain the same rule for both their belief in one sovereign God, as well as their distinct way of life. They can in no way be compelled to think otherwise, nor can they be much led astray by the “sinewy” [i.e., multivalent or ambiguous] quality of the Scriptures. For they go about resolving the discordances of the Scriptures on the basis of this rule that has been handed down to them, whenever someone—because he happens not to know the [oral] traditions—is dumbfounded by the polysemous oracles of the Prophets.^[16] This is why they entrust the responsibility of teaching to no one unless he first learns how the Scriptures must be handled. And so [the people of Moses] maintain among themselves one God, one law, one hope. Therefore, in order that the same thing may happen among us as in the case of those seventy men, give to our brothers the books of my preachings, along with the same secret instruction. Do this in order that our brothers may equip those who intend to share the responsibility of teaching.^[17]

Several significant features about this passage deserve our attention. The Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* themselves are introduced by this letter, which displays a sincere appeal to emulate an oral tradition of a rabbinic type. The significance of this appreciation for a rabbinic sort of oral tradition is put

into sharper relief when we consider the fact that (what would become) orthodox Christianity was not without an “oral tradition” of its own:

The blessed apostles, then, having founded and built up the Church, committed into the hands of Linus the office of the episcopate. Of this Linus, Paul makes mention in the Epistles to Timothy. To him succeeded Anacletus; and after him, in the third place from the apostles, Clement was allotted the bishopric. . . . In this order, and by this succession, the ecclesiastical tradition from the apostles, and the preaching of the truth, have come down to us. And this is most abundant proof that there is one and the same vivifying faith, which has been preserved in the Church from the apostles until now, and handed down in truth.^[18]

That the Homilist was aware of this sort of *regula fidei* espoused by Irenaeus (c. 130–200 ce) is suggested by a passage like *Hom.*3.60.1, where Peter addresses an assembly of his companions:

ἐπεὶ οὖν δεῖ τινα ὀρίσαι ἀντ’ ἐμοῦ τὸν ἐμὸν
ἀναπληροῦντα τόπον, μὶα προαιρέσει τοῦ θεοῦ
δεηθῶμεν οἱ πάντες, ὅπως τῶν ὄντων ἐν ἡμῖν τὸν
κρείττονα αὐτὸς πρόδηλον ποιήσῃ, ἵνα ἐπὶ τῆς
Χριστοῦ καθέδρας καθεσθῆις τὴν αὐτοῦ ἐκκλησίαν
εὐσεβῶς οἰκονομῇ.

Since, therefore, it is necessary to set apart someone to fill my place, let us all in one accord request of God, that he himself would make clear who among us is best, in order that, occupying the seat of Christ, he might regulate his church in a pious manner.

Similarly, we read the following in *Hom.* 3.70.1–3:

πλὴν τοῦ ἐπισκόπου ὑμῶν ἀκούετε καὶ τιμὴν πᾶσαν
αὐτῷ ἀπονέμοντες μὴ κάμητε, εἰδότες ὅτι προφάσει τῇ
πρὸς αὐτὸν εἰς Χριστὸν φέρεται, ἀπὸ δὲ Χριστοῦ εἰς
θεὸν ἀναφέρεται. . . . θρόνον οὖν Χριστοῦ τιμήσετε·
ὅτι καὶ Μωυσέως καθέδραν τιμᾶν ἐκελεύσθητε, κἂν οἱ
προκαθεζόμενοι ἁμαρτωλοὶ νομίζωνται.

But obey your overseer, and do not grow weary
from according every honor to him, since you know
that when honor is brought to him, by doing so it is
brought to Christ, and from Christ it is offered up to
God. . . . Therefore honor the throne of Christ, because
you were commanded to honor the seat of Moses,
even though [some of] those who occupied it were
regarded as sinners.

In this passage, the “seat of Moses” is in some sense identified with the “apostolic” succession described by Irenaeus. Even so, elsewhere the Homilist uses the “seat of Moses” to mean something quite different from the apostolic succession (as we shall see below). At the present, however, let us return to the discussion of *ep. Petr.* In light of the words of Irenaeus and the passages from *Hom.* mentioned just above, several significant features of *ep. Petr.* stand out in sharp relief, for it displays the following features: (1) In *ep. Petr.*, there is an appeal to follow the “method of instruction whereby Moses also delivered [the Torah with its solutions] to the seventy men who inherited his seat.” (2) *Ep. Petr.* reveals a recognition of the success his Jewish contemporaries have enjoyed, evidenced by the way in which they “continue to maintain the same rule [κανὼν] for both their belief in one sovereign God, as well as their distinct way of life” with the result that the people of Moses “maintain among themselves one God, one law, one hope.” (3) The writer of *ep. Petr.* genuinely admires how the oral tradition succeeds in continuing to keep other Jews from being “much

led astray by the sinewy quality of the Scriptures,” owing to its ability to resolve “the discordances of the Scriptures on the basis of this rule that has been handed down to them.” Furthermore, it is significant that no appeal is made to an “apostolic succession” for the purpose of preserving the correct interpretation of Scripture. Rather, James is exhorted to follow the method taken by Moses and, by extension, continued by the rabbis.

But in what sense is this usage of the concept of an oral tradition “rabbinic,” and in what sense is it not? On the one hand, we have seen that the tradition is conceptualized as being connected with Moses at Sinai, the elders, and passed down orally (ἀγραφῶς) by succession. In this sense, the concept is really quite similar to that of the rabbis. On the other hand, the oral tradition in the Pseudo-Clementines lacks any real *halakic* (i.e., “legal”) content to speak of. That is to say, where “legal” or “normative” discussions do take place, they are carried on without reference to an oral tradition. For example, in *Hom.* 7.8, Peter gives a set of instructions to some people of Sidon. He exhorts them to worship God only and trust the True Prophet; to be baptized; to abstain from the table of devils (i.e., abstain from eating food offered to idols); to abstain from carrion, and from the meat of suffocated animals; and to abstain from blood. Such prohibitions are likely based on Acts 15:20.^[19] Peter exhorts them also to wash after intercourse (ἀπὸ κοίτης γυναικὸς) and that their women should “observe the law of menstruation” (ἄφεδρον φυλάσσειν).^[20] None of these instructions (or “norms”), however, are connected in any way with an oral tradition.^[21] In this sense, then, the concept of an oral tradition as it is seen in *Hom.* is not fully rabbinic.

Now, during Peter’s stay at Tripolis, he gives an extended discourse, beginning in *Hom.* 11.1, on the necessity of living a holy life (περὶ τοῦ δεῖν ἀγνεύειν). At one point during his discourse, Peter makes reference to the biblical law of *niddah*:

λέγω δὴ τὸ καθαρεύειν, τὸ ἐν ἀφένδρῳ οὔσῃ τῇ ἰδίᾳ
γαμετῇ μὴ κοινωνεῖν, ὅτι τοῦτο ὁ θεοῦ κελεύει νόμος.

I mean purification, namely, the avoidance of
intercourse with one’s own wife during her time of

menstruation, because this is what the law of God commands.^[22]

In this context of Peter's discussion of "purification" (τὸ καθαρεύειν), reference is made to the Pharisees and the scribes.^[23] Peter relates how the True Prophet had once said that the Pharisees were entrusted with the seat of Moses but that the True Prophet chastised some of them as "hypocrites." The presence of "the seat of Moses" and the Pharisees might naturally evoke halakic associations with a "rabbinic" type of oral tradition. But in this case, Peter's words here do not in fact warrant such associations:

φωτισθέντος γὰρ τοῦ νοῦ τῇ γνώσει ὁ μαθὼν δύναται ἀγαθὸς εἶναι, ὃ παρέπεται τὸ καθαρὸν γενέσθαι. ἐκ τῆς ἔσω γὰρ διανοίας ἢ τοῦ ἔξω σώματος ἀγαθὴ γίνεται πρόνοια, ὡς ἀπὸ γε τῆς κατὰ τὸ σῶμα ἀναισθησίας τῆς διανοίας πρόνοια γενέσθαι οὐ δύναται. οὕτως ὁ καθαρὸς [καὶ] τὸ ἔσω καὶ τὸ ἔξω καθᾶραι δύναται.

When the mind is illumined by knowledge, the disciple is able to be good, and thereupon purity follows; for from the understanding within, a good care of the body without is produced. As from negligence with respect to the body, care of the understanding cannot be produced. Thus the pure man can purify both that which is without and that which is within.^[24]

Indeed, the oral tradition does not at all enter the discussions of purity in this text. Furthermore, the emphasis here is on "external bodily purity" as something that emerges from "internal illumination" (φωτισμός τοῦ νοῦ τῇ γνώσει). We could say that "purity" here is less a question of *halakha* and more a matter of *haskala*.

The notion of an oral tradition as it appears in the Pseudo-Clementines conveys not independent halakic/legal rulings, but exegetical instructions (i.e., λύσεις), possibly with reference to halakic content, though certainly with reference to the theory of the false pericopes. By virtue of the fact that *ep. Petr.* serves as the “cover letter” to the *Homilies*, the significance of an oral tradition’s function as an exegetical criterion is underscored, giving the general orientation of the *Homilies* its distinct stamp. At this point, let us proceed, then, to a further consideration of how the notion of an oral tradition functions as an external exegetical criterion.

5.5. ORAL TRADITION AS AN “EXTERNAL” CRITERION

The author of *ep. Petr.* recognizes that the Scriptures are not always readily understood. Indeed, as I noted above, the Scriptures are said to possess a certain sinewy quality. By “sinewy,” the author refers to Scripture’s complex interconnections, ambiguities, and “multivalent elasticity.”^[25] “Sinewy” also here connotes the “discordances” or “contradictions” in Scripture (τὰ τῶν γραφῶν ἀσύμφωνα) to which I alluded above. One is reminded here of the rabbinic description that the Torah is “obscure” (סתומה), while the “words of the sages” explain the Torah.^[26] Torah’s sinewy quality, as it is described in *ep. Petr.*, should be understood particularly in reference to the theory of the false pericopes. The following text also displays a recognition of Scripture’s polyvalent quality:

πάντα γὰρ αἱ γραφαὶ λέγουσιν, ἵνα μηδεὶς τῶν
ἀγνωμόνως ζητούντων τὸ ἀληθὲς εὕρη, ἀλλ’ ὃ
βούλεται, τοῦ ἀληθοῦς τοῖς εὐγνώμοσιν τετηρημένου.

For the Scriptures are polyvalent, so that no one who searches them in a senseless manner will discover the truth, but [only] what he wishes to find, since the truth is preserved for the prudent.^[27]

It is this state of affairs which requires that interpreters of Scripture follow a certain “rule” (κανὼν) that has been “handed down,” in order to achieve and preserve correct interpretation in general, and especially for the purpose of evaluating the false pericopes in particular.^[28]

Albert I. Baumgarten suggests that we should understand this “rule” mentioned here in *ep. Petr.* as “the perfect literal and contextual translation of the Hebrew *middah*, the term employed by the Rabbis for their own hermeneutical rules.”^[29] Baumgarten goes on, “The *kanōn* itself was “handed down” (*paradothenta*), raising the possibility that *kanōn* and *paradoseis* are to be identified—an identification which is particularly plausible since *kanōn* and *paradoseis* have the same function (protecting one

from being misled by the ambiguous passages in Scripture).”^[30] According to *ep. Petr.*, the interpreter of Scripture must be privy to a certain “oral tradition,” delivered from Moses to the seventy elders who inherited his seat, and without which one will inevitably be “dumbfounded by the ambiguous oracles of the Prophets.” In the words of Shuve, “The *Homilies* appear to be influenced by the Rabbinic doctrine of the oral Torah . . . whereby a line of oral transmission is established that connects the Rabbis directly to Moses and the revelation at Sinai.”^[31] An important concept the text employs for connoting the oral tradition is expressed by the particular expression “the seat of Moses.” A word is in order about this “seat of Moses” (ἡ καθέδρα Μωυσέως) as it is used in the Pseudo-Clementines.^[32]

In the Pseudo-Clementine literature the “seat of Moses” is a clear reference to an “oral tradition” of a “rabbinic” type. For those who sit on the seat of Moses have authority to teach and interpret the Scriptures. We learn that in *Hom.* 11.29.1 obedience was to be given to some of the Pharisees because they were entrusted with this very “seat of Moses,” which according to *Hom.* 3.18.2 and *Hom.* 3.70.2, accords with Jesus’ words as they appear in Matt. 23:2-3.^[33] Similarly, *Rec.* 1.54.7 states plainly that the tradition of the Pharisees goes all the way back to Moses.^[34]

The legitimacy of a (secret) oral tradition is recognized already in antiquity, as evidenced by, for example, Hilary of Poitiers (c. 315–368 ce), a rough contemporary of the Homilist. In his *Tractatus Super Psalmos* (2.2–3), Hilary makes his case for the superiority of the Greek version of the LXX by arguing that the seventy translators inherited a secret oral tradition stretching back to Moses.^[35] In the case of Hilary, the oral tradition is associated with the “mystery,” which he identifies with the Greek version of the Pentateuch. Although the Homilist does look to the Torah in its Greek form, *ep. Petr.* makes no such link between the “seat of Moses” and the LXX *per se*. Even so, in both Hilary and the Pseudo-Clementines, the “seat of Moses” connotes (by way of metonymy) some sort of a secret, oral tradition. For Hilary, this is secret oral tradition was *embodied within* the Greek version of the Seventy; for the Homilist, the “seat of Moses” connotes an oral tradition *external to* the Pentateuch, and at the same time plays an important role in securing its proper interpretation, particularly in connection with the false pericopes.

A related term used in connection with the oral tradition and the “seat of Moses” is “mystery” (μυστήριον). While we are not likely to discover much of the specific contents of the “mystery” in any precise detail (after all, it would hardly be “secret” if we could), we can still get a sense of its general character. In the case of *Hom.*, the “mystery” includes especially the teachings about the false pericopes and the “syzygies.” This is illustrated in *Hom.2.15.1–5*, where Peter identifies the syzygies with a certain “mystery”:

τοῦτο δὲ τὸ μυστήριον εἰ ἠπίσταντο οἱ ἐν θεοσεβείᾳ
ἄνθρωποι, οὐκ ἂν ποτε ἐπλανήθησαν.

If pious men had understood this mystery, they
would never have gone astray.^[36]

In the context of this passage, “mystery” refers specifically to the *Syzygienlehre*. Elsewhere, Peter mentions how he and his comrades are the recipients of a twofold ancestral tradition (ἐκ προγόνων): the worship of the Creator God and the “mystery [τὸ μυστήριον] of the books that can deceive [τῶν ἀπατᾶν δυναμένων βίβλων].” The second part of the oral ancestral tradition—the mystery of the books that can deceive—is a clear reference to the false pericopes. Thus it becomes clear that “mystery” is unambiguously linked with the theory of the false pericopes, and according to *Hom.3.28.2*, the True Prophet is the guardian of this “mystery,” a mystery whose esoteric quality is detected by Le Boulluec,

Une telle règle est présentée comme un “mystère.”
Elle est donc objet d’initiation, matière
d’enseignement ésotérique. Cette doctrine singulière
tient une place de premier plan dans les *Homélies*.^[37]

Such a rule is presented as a “mystery.” It is
therefore an object of initiation, a subject matter of
esoteric teaching. This peculiar doctrine plays a
leading role in the *Homilies*.

5.6. THE ORAL TRADITION AND MYSTHPION

Marc Bregman has noted that “both Pauline Christianity and rabbinic Judaism each claimed for its adherents the title ‘sons of God’ as an epithet for ‘the true Israel,’ and that this claim was based on each group’s exclusive possession of some mysterious [i.e., “secret,” or “esoteric”] teaching.”^[38] Bregman cites these words from Rabbi Yehudah ben Shalom, a Palestinian amora of the fifth generation:

R. Yehudah b. Shalom said: Moses requested that the Mishnah be in writing. But the Holy One, blessed be He, foresaw that the nations would translate the Torah and would be reading it in Greek and would be saying, We are Israel! The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him, Behold, Moses! In the future the nations will be saying, We are Israel; we are the sons of God. And Israel will be saying, We are the sons of God. And until now the scales are balanced. The Holy One, blessed be He, said to the nations, What is this that you are saying? That you are my sons? I do not know. But he who possesses my Mystery . . . he is my son. They said to him, And what is your Mystery? He replied to them, It is the Mishnah.^[39]

Bregman also includes a parallel passage which adds, “For the Mishnah is the Mystery of the Holy One, blessed by He. And the Holy One, blessed be He, transmits his Mystery only to one righteous, as it says: *The secret of the Lord is for those who fear Him (Ps. 25:14).*”^[40] According to this passage, God would acknowledge as his children only those who possess his “mystery,” and this “mystery” is identified and defined as the Mishnah. “Mishnah” here is to be understood in the broader sense of the entire oral tradition.^[41] So important to Rabbi Yehudah ben Shalom was the claim to possess this esoteric, oral tradition that without it even the God of Israel

might no longer be able to distinguish his “legitimate sons” (Jews) from those Christians who claimed to be the “new Israel.” Bregman suggests,

This illustrates that the term “mystery” indicates, at least occasionally, some teaching, the possession of which distinguishes between those who belong to a certain select group and those who do not belong to that group . . . this usage of the term “mystery” is precisely the way the word is used in rabbinic tradition that describes the “Mishnah” (i.e. the Oral Torah) as a “mystery,” the possession of which is what allows God to distinguish between the Jewish “Israel” and Christians claiming “We are Israel.”^[42]

Bregman goes on to say, “It is also possible to further clarify the anti-Christian polemic inherent in the tradition attributed to Rabbi Yehudah B. Shalom.”^[43] To do so, Bregman then cites Hilary of Poitiers’s *Tractatus Super Psalmos* 2.2-3 (mentioned above), as it has been discussed by Adam Kamesar.^[44] Hilary claims that the “mystery”—the oral tradition of the sort mentioned by Rabbi Yehudah ben Shalom—“had already passed over to the Church, for it was the foundation of the LXX.”^[45] It was the view of Rabbi Yehudah ben Shalom that the “mystery” refers to the Mishnah. While for Hilary of Poitiers, the “mystery” refers to the Greek translation of the seventy, and was “in a certain sense, embedded within it.”^[46] Kamesar has described Hilary’s position as a “particularly sophisticated response” to the claim attributed to Rabbi Yehudah ben Shalom.^[47] Moreover, as Adam Kamesar has written, “The parallels that best explain Hilary’s main contribution, i.e. the concept of an oral tradition, are to be found in the Pseudo-Clementine literature.”^[48] This circumstance warrants further consideration of the oral tradition in *Hom.* and in connection with Hilary.

In his *Tractatus*, Hilary explains how Moses committed the words of the law to writing. But Moses also “communicated separately, from hidden sources, certain more secret mysteries of the law to seventy elders, who would continue as teachers after him.”^[49] The term *mysteria* in this passage

from Hilary describes the secret teachings that were transmitted orally and incorporated by the seventy into their translation. Hilary goes on to explain that Jesus mentions these teachings in the Gospels.^[50] It is Hilary's claim that

hi itaque seniors libros hos transferentes et spiritalem
secundum Moysi traditionem occultarum cognitionum
scientiam adepti ambigua linguae Hebraicae dicta et
varia quaedam ex se nuntiantia secundum virtutes
rerum certis et propriis verborum significationibus
transtulerunt doctrinae scientia multimodam illam
sermonum intellegentiam temperantes.

accordingly, the elders, when translating these
books, had acquired the higher knowledge of these
hidden teachings in conformity with the Mosaic
tradition, and were able to translate words and
expressions which in Hebrew are ambiguous and in
themselves indicate different realities with an
unambiguous and nonmetaphorical use of words, so as
to indicate the [true] properties of the things signified.
They were able to “control” the polysemous aspect of
the [Hebrew] words by their knowledge of the [oral]
teaching.^[51]

The Homilist explains how those who were responsible for committing the Torah to writing (again, sometime after Moses' death) were not themselves “prophets”:

οἱ δὲ γράψαντες τῷ τὸν ἀφανισμόν μὴ προεγνωκέναι
ἐπ' ἀγνωσίας ἐλεγχθέντες, προφήται οὐκ ἦσαν.

But those who did write [the Torah] were not
prophets, given they were tried and found guilty on

the charge of ignorance because they did not foresee its disappearance.^[52]

Something similar to this notion is also found in Hilary, according to whom subsequent translators of the Pentateuch who were not privy to the “mystery” ended up producing

diversis modis interpretantes magnum gentibus
adtulerint errorem, dum occultae illius et a Moyse
profectae traditionis ignari ea quae ambigue lingua
hebraea commemorata sunt, incerti suis ipsis
ediderunt.

many a misleading translation to the Gentiles. For being ignorant of that secret tradition that originated from Moses, they rendered with uncertainty, relying only on their own notions, that which had been expressed in a polysemous fashion in Hebrew.^[53]

Both this passage and the one from *Hom.* 3.47.4 above mention the “ignorance” of those who either committed the Torah to writing (in the case of *Hom.*) or made subsequent translations of the Torah (in the case of Hilary). Furthermore, we read in *ep. Petr.* that the “mystery” serves in part to “manage” or “control” the polysemous character of the Scriptures. In a similar way, Hilary says that their knowledge of the oral tradition enabled the seventy translators to “control” the polysemous aspect of the [Hebrew] words. Yet for Hilary, the concern is *correct translation* of the Pentateuch from Hebrew into Greek, while the concern of *ep. Petr.* is for the correct *interpretation* of the Greek Pentateuch itself. The important points of comparison between Hilary and *Hom.* may be illustrated in the following way:

The Oral Tradition in	The Oral Tradition in <i>Hom.</i>
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Hilary's <i>Tractatus</i>	
Moses himself wrote the Torah.	Moses did not himself write the Torah; he communicated it in an "unwritten" form.
Moses also communicated additional "secret mysteries" to the seventy elders.	Moses delivered the Torah "with its solutions" to the elders.
The "seat of Moses" is identified with these teachings.	The "seat of Moses" is not identified with "these teachings" but with the authority to teach. That authority is then <i>enabled</i> by the oral transmission of correct teachings.
The elders were links in a chain of succession.	The elders were links in a chain of succession.
The elders who received the oral tradition continued as teachers (<i>qui doctores deinceps manerent</i>).	The elders who received the oral tradition continued as teachers (ἐφοδιάζειν τοῦ λαοῦ τοὺς βουλομένους).
The oral tradition was <i>incorporated into</i> the Greek version of the seventy and therefore substantiates the authority of that version.	The oral tradition remains <i>external</i> to the Torah and therefore functions as a "criterion" for correct interpretation, that is, to evaluate the false pericopes.
The oral tradition enabled the seventy translators to "control" the polysemous or ambiguous character of the Hebrew language.	The oral tradition serves to clarify the polysemous or ambiguous character of the Torah in its written form.
Subsequent translators produced "erroneous" translations because they were ignorant of the "that	Those who transcribed the Torah (after Moses' death) were not "prophets," which accounts for the "erroneous"

secret tradition which originated from Moses.”	passages that gradually crept in.
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Thus the concept of an oral/esoteric tradition having a regulative function vis-à-vis written Scripture is employed by both writers for similar purposes, but with different goals in mind. The Homilist is clearly aware of the broad claims of rabbinic oral tradition, and he adapts this (“rabbinic-type”) concept of an oral tradition to suit his own exegetical purposes, whereby it functions as an “external” criterion for evaluating Scripture.

5.7. EXCURSUS: PARALLELS IN PTOLEMY’S *LETTER TO FLORA*

As this chapter draws to a close, it is worth recalling how, as we saw in chapter 3, *Flor.* and *Hom.* share in common the view that the Pentateuch contains false Scripture. The notion of oral tradition also occupies an important place for both Ptolemy and the Homilist. When it comes to the role of an oral, ancestral tradition, however, the two diverge greatly. In this section, I wish to discuss how *Flor.* and *Hom.* diverge in their respective assessments of the notion of “oral tradition.”

In the words of Anne Pasquier, Ptolemy subscribes to a “hermeneutical principle of graduated inspiration.”^[54] According to Ptolemy’s “tripartite division” of the Pentateuch, the “lowest level” is identified with the traditions of the elders:

καὶ εἰς τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους τοῦ λαοῦ διαιρεῖται οἱ καὶ
πρῶτον εὐρίσκονται ἐντολὰς τινὰς ἐνθέντες ἰδίας . . .
ὅτι δὲ καὶ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων εἰσὶν τινες
συμπεπλεγμένοι παραδόσεις ἐν τῷ νόμῳ, δηλοῖ καὶ
τοῦτο ὁ σωτήρ.

And there are finally the elders of the people who, as we find, first introduced some of the precepts on their own. . . . Furthermore, the Savior makes it plain that there are also some traditions of the elders interwoven with the law.^[55]

As the basis for his claim that some traditions of the elders are interwoven with the law, Ptolemy cites Jesus’ words as in Matt. 15:6-9, where Jesus chastises some Pharisees and scribes—the “elders”—from Jerusalem for putting the “tradition of the elders” before the law of God, thereby violating the command to honor one’s father and mother. As Ptolemy sees it, the elders’ oral tradition (ἡ παράδοσις τῶν πρεσβυτέρων) is thus collapsed into and identified with “false Scripture,” which has been “interwoven” or “enmeshed” (συμπεπλεγμένα) with the Pentateuch. On this point, Ptolemy’s

view—that portions of the law have been compromised because they are “enmeshed” with the traditions of the elders—is thus completely inverted in *Hom.* For according to *Hom.*, the false pericopes are recognized as such precisely because they do not accord with the ancestral tradition. That is, the law was transmitted in a more “pure form”—orally—from Moses to the elders, and in an unbroken chain of succession. The law was not transcribed until sometime after the exile. The interim between the “pure” oral transmission of the law and its written transcription sometime after the exile is when the false passages crept in. But according to Ptolemy’s tripartite schema, the ancestral traditions are relegated to the bottom level. The *Homilies*, however, elevate the ancestral tradition to a much higher level, where it functions as the source of “solutions” by which the Pentateuch as a whole is evaluated.

Furthermore, both the Homilist and Ptolemy share a common predilection for Jesus’ authoritative words, although the two diverge when it comes to their respective positions on the role of the ancestral tradition. We have seen in this chapter how the Homilist looks to Jesus’ words in Matt. 23:2-3. Ptolemy, however, looks to Jesus’ words in Matthew 15.^[56] On the one hand, for the Homilist, who holds the “seat of Moses” in very high esteem, the ancestral tradition serves to help guide and evaluate what belongs to the Pentateuch and what does not. On the other hand, Ptolemy, on the basis of Jesus’ words as they appear in Matthew 15, detects a very close relationship between the ancestral traditions and the law of Moses, in that they are too close together and should be separated. The distance between *Flor.* and *Hom.* on this point—how differently the two seem to understand the function of the ancestral traditions—prompts Strecker to deny any dependence of either author on the other:

Gegen eine Abhängigkeit beider Autoren voneinander ist vor allem die Funktion der israelitischen Ältesten anzuführen: Bei Ptolemäeus begründen sie die dritte, niedrigste Stufe des Gesetzes, in den *KTT* sind sie dagegen die Repräsentanten des mündlichen, allein wahren Gesetzes.^[57]

Above all else, the *function* of the Israelite elders argues against an interdependence between both authors: in Ptolemy they constitute the third, lowest level of the law; in the *KII*, however, they are the representatives of the oral law, the only one that is true.

Nevertheless, we have seen how the Homilist and Ptolemy both advocate a theory that the Pentateuch contains certain false interpolations. We have also seen how both are emphatic about the authority of Jesus' words in connection with the proper interpretation of Scripture. In addition to this, it is significant that both the Homilist and Ptolemy employ a similar "harmony criterion," as I designate it, which I will discuss in the next chapter.^[58] On the basis of this circumstance, therefore, it would seem that the Homilist is indeed aware of Ptolemy's *Flor.* and even writes in response to it. According to the Homilist, the ancestral tradition functions exegetically both to discover and to protect the correct interpretation of Scripture. While Ptolemy claims that the oral tradition *contaminated* the Scriptures, the Homilist claims it *conserves* them.

5.8. CONCLUSION

I began this chapter with a general discussion about the notion of an oral tradition as we know it from some of the relevant sources that have come down to us. I then examined how a rabbinic type of oral tradition is appropriated in *Hom.*, after which I offered an analysis of *ep. Petr.*, highlighting a few of its more significant features. It is worth emphasizing once more the significance of *ep. Petr.* for how it unambiguously recognizes and displays a genuine appreciation for the necessity of an oral tradition in order to preserve the correct interpretation of Scripture. To the degree that we have before us a (Jewish-) Christian composition, it is all the more remarkable that the author desires to appropriate the “seat of Moses”—an oral tradition—and not, say, the *regula fidei* for such an important task. Moreover, the oral tradition, as it was generally understood by the Homilist, would play an important role in Hilary’s case for the superiority of the Greek version of the seventy.

Having discussed how the oral tradition functions as a distinct external criterion by which a proper interpretation of Scriptures is ensured, we are now ready to discuss the final external criterion, which I have designated as the “harmony criterion.” According to the harmony criterion, there are some Scriptures that, more than others, are thought to be “in harmony” (from συμφωνεύω) with the natural world. The Homilist will tell us in what sense this is so.

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1. The True Prophet’s own teaching, however, is also transmitted orally. The technical terminology—*παραδιδόναι*—in *Hom.* 1.20.6 suggests as much: “I do not fear that you would ever be in doubt concerning the truth, which has been handed down to you, knowing that [even though] I seem to be defeated, but not the doctrine that has been *handed down* to us from the Prophet” (οὐ δέδια μήπως σὺ περὶ τῆς παραδοθείσης σοι ἀληθείας διακριθῇς, [ἢ] εἰδὼς ὅτι ἐγὼ ἡττᾶσθαι ἐδοξα, οὐχὶ ἢ ὑπόθεσις ἢ διὰ τοῦ προφήτου παραδοθεῖσα ἡμῖν).⁴¹
 2. In rabbinic Judaism, the *content* of “oral tradition” initially is understood to be *halakhot* that do not appear in the written Torah, and that supplement them and/or stand autonomous of them. See *m. Hag.*, 1:8, where *halakhot* are contrasted with *miqra*.⁴²

3. See Martin Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth: Writing and Oral Tradition in Palestinian Judaism 200 BCE–400 CE* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); H. L. Strack and G. Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1996). See also S. D. Fraade, *Legal Fictions: Studies of Law and Narrative in the Discursive Worlds of Ancient Jewish Sectarians and Sages* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 370–78. [↩](#)
4. *B. Git.* 60b; *y. Meg.* iv. 74a; see also *4 Ezra* 14:26, 44–47 (although *4 Ezra* is not a rabbinic source). [↩](#)
5. See *y. Pe'ah* ii. 17a. See also *b. Ber.* 5a, ascribed to Rabbi Levi bar Hama in the name of Rabbi Shim'on bar Laquish. [↩](#)
6. See *b. Git.* 59a; *t. Sanh.* 11.8, which express praise for Judah the patriarch (though they do not explicitly state that the Mishnah was edited under Judah's leadership). [↩](#)
7. A. J. Avery-Peck, "Oral Tradition (Early Judaism)," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1996), 5:35. [↩](#)
8. *Hom.* 3.3.3. [↩](#)
9. *Hom.* 3.4.1. I will discuss more about this "ancestral tradition" and this "mystery" Below. [↩](#)
10. Karl Evan Shuve, "The Doctrine of the False Pericopes and Other Late Antique Approaches to the Problem of Scripture's Unity," in *Nouvelles intrigues pseudo-clémentines—Plots in the Pseudo-Clementine Romance: Actes du deuxième colloque international sur la littérature apocryphe chrétienne*, ed. Frédéric Amsler et al. (Lausanne: Editions du Zebre, 2008), 439. [↩](#)
11. The relationship between *ep. Petr.* and *Hom.* has been discussed in different ways. See the summary provided by Graham Stanton, "Jewish Christian Elements in the Pseudo-Clementine Writings," in *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries*, ed. Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007), 310–11. [↩](#)
12. Georg Strecker, trans., "The Kērygmata Petrou," in *New Testament Apocrypha* vol. 2, *Writings Related to the Apostles; Apocalypses and Related Subjects*, ed. E. Hennecke and W. Schneemelcher (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1975), 111 (italics mine). [↩](#)
13. Thomas Smith, "Epistle of Peter to James," in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 8:215 (italics original; the underlining is mine). [↩](#)
14. Alain Le Boulluec, "Épître de Pierre à Jacques," in *Écrits apocryphes chrétiens*, 1215 (italics mine). [↩](#)
15. See Robert M. Grant, *The Letter and the Spirit* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009), 127–28. See also A. Gudeman, *Ἀύσεις*, *PREi.* 13.2 (1927),

- cols. 2511–29. A parallel to the “solutions” in *ep. Petr.* is discernible in *Num. Rab.* 14.4. [↩](#)
16. That these traditions are “oral” is suggested by the very tenor of this passage, though additional support for this can be found specifically in *Hom.* 3.47.1. [↩](#)
 17. *Ep. Petr.* 1.3–2.1. See, e.g., *m. Avot* 1–5; *Sifre Deut.* 351; *y. Pe’ah* 2.6; *Pesiq. Rabb.* 14b. For the development of the idea of oral Torah, see Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth*, 84–92, 140–52. [↩](#)
 18. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.3.3. The translation given here is that of A. Roberts and W. Rambaut, from the *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1950), p. 416. A fuller treatment of the apostolic “tradition,” the “succession” of bishops, and the relationship between tradition and Scripture in Irenaeus can be found in Jean Daniélou, *Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture* (London: Darton, Longmann and Todd, 1973), 139–56. [↩](#)
 19. See the *apparatus criticus* to *Hom.* 3.19.1 in B. Rehm’s *Die Pseudoklementinen. I. Homilien*, (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1992), 63. See also *Hom.* 8.19, 23. [↩](#)
 20. *Hom.* 7.8.2. Probably based on Lev. 12:2, 5. [↩](#)
 21. See *Hom.* 13.4.1–4. [↩](#)
 22. *Hom.* 11.28.1. See also *Hom.* 11.30.1; Lev. 15:19; 18:19. [↩](#)
 23. The Homilist attests to a traditional understanding of the term “Pharisees” (פרושים)—as those who “separate” themselves—as derivative of פרוש when he glosses the name Pharisees as οἱ εἰσὶν ἀφωρισμένοι (*Hom.* 11.28.4). [↩](#)
 24. *Hom.* 11.29.3–4. [↩](#)
 25. See also *Hom.* 16.10.2. [↩](#)
 26. See Adam Kamesar, “Hilary of Poitiers, Judeo-Christianity, and the Origins of the LXX: A Translation of *Tractatus Super Psalmos* 2.2-3 with Introduction and Commentary,” *VC* 59 (2005): 278. On the term סתומ, see Wilhelm Bacher, *Die exegetische Terminologie der jüdischen Traditionsliteratur* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1905), 1:137–38, 2:144–45. [↩](#)
 27. *Hom.* 3.10.4. [↩](#)
 28. See also *Hom.* 14.5.2. [↩](#)
 29. Albert I. Baumgarten, “Literary Evidence for Jewish Christianity,” in *The Galilee in Late Antiquity*, ed. Lee Levine (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1992), 45. [↩](#)
 30. *Ibid.*, 45. In support of this, we should also note how these key terms appear in a chiasmic fashion within *ep. Petr.* itself. See also *Hom.* 14.5; 16.14. The rabbis use *kanōn* in the plural to refer to the hermeneutical

- rules by which Scripture is to be interpreted, while the Homilist uses *kanōn* in the singular to refer to a generalized interpretive rule of thumb.
31. Shuve, “Doctrine of the False Pericopes,” 441.
 32. For the expression “seat of Moses,” see *Hom.* 3.4.1; 3.18.2; 3.70.2; For “mystery,” see *Hom.* 3.28.2; 3.29.1; for “chair of Christ,” see *Hom.* 3.60.1; “throne of Christ” in *Hom.* 3.70.2. For “tradition,” see *Hom.* 14.5.2.
 33. In Matt. 23:2-3, ἡ καθέδρα τῆς Μωϋσέως refers to the recognized authority to teach and legislate that has been transmitted in a line of succession directly from Moses. In the context of Matt. 23:2-3, “oral tradition” refers especially to the mode of transmission of the *knowledge* that is required to perform this function and the specific *content* that is to be taught. In other words, the relationship between “seat of Moses” and “oral tradition” is metonymic. The apostolic succession/ecclesiastical tradition in early Christianity parallels the rabbinic “chain of tradition,” but it is not referred to in patristic literature as an “oral tradition” with the same inflection as it is in rabbinic Judaism. I thank Richard Sarason for the clarification on this point.
 34. See also Georg Strecker, *Das Judenchristentum in den Pseudoklementinen*, 2nd ed., TUGAL (Berlin: Akademie, 1981), 163–66.
 35. For an important discussion of these Jewish-Christian concepts in Hilary, see especially Kamesar, “Hilary of Poitiers,” 264–85. See also Albert Baumgarten, “Literary Evidence,” 39–50.
 36. *Hom.* 2.15.5.
 37. Alain Le Boulluec, “Roman pseudo-clément: Introduction aux *Homélies*,” in *Écrits apocryphes chrétiens*, ed. Pierre Geoltrain and Jean Daniel Kaestli (Paris: Cerf, 2005), 1208. See *Hom.* 19.20.1.
 38. Marc Bregman, “Mishnah and LXX as Mystery: An Example of Jewish Christian Polemic in the Byzantine Period,” in *Continuity and Renewal: Jews and Judaism in Byzantine-Christian Palestine*, ed. Lee I. Levine (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi Press, 2004), 336. See also Aristotle’s “unwritten doctrine,” which complements Plato’s dialogues, discussed by Robert Lamberton, “The Ἀπορρήτος Θεωρία and the Roles of Secrecy in the History of Platonism,” in *Secrecy and Concealment: Studies in the History of Mediterranean and Near Eastern Religions*, ed. Hans Gerhard Kippenberg and Guy S. Strousma (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 139–52.
 39. *Pesiq. Rab.* 5; the translation given here is that of Marc Bregman, “Mishnah and LXX as Mystery,” 333–34.
 40. *Ibid.*, 335.
 41. Bregman, “Mishnah and LXX,” 333n4. See also 337–38n22, 23, where he points out that in the Tanhuma-Yelammedenu midrashim, among those

commandments identified as “mysteries” are the eating of the Passover sacrifice and circumcision. Though there does not seem to be anything particularly “secret” about the *content* of these two, the *performance* of them “does distinguish between Jew and non-Jew even more than other commandments.”

42. Ibid., 338.
43. Ibid.
44. “Hilary of Poitiers,” 264-85.
45. Ibid., 265.
46. Kamesar, “Hilary of Poitiers,” 265.
47. Adam Kamesar, *Jerome, Greek Scholarship, and the Hebrew Bible: A Study of the Quaestiones Hebraicae in Genesim* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), 31. Bregman (“Mishnah and LXX,” 340), on the other hand, is less sure on this point: “This is not to say that one of them must necessarily have been aware of the other’s position. Nor need we determine conclusively if we are dealing here with a specific Christian response to a Jewish claim or vice versa.” See also the remarks of William Horbury, who claims that the Jews found no reason to compete with Christian modes of exegeting the Scriptures since there is little information on the subject among the rabbinic writings. See his “Jews and Christians on the Bible: Demarcation and Convergence [325-451],” in *Christliche Exegese Zwischen Nicaea und Chalcedon*, ed. J. van Oort and U. Wickert (Kampen: Kok Pharos 1992), 74–76.
48. Kamesar, “Hilary of Poitiers,” 265.
49. All translations of Hilary given here are those of Adam Kamesar.
50. Hilary quotes Matt. 23:2-3.
51. Hilary, *Tract. in Psalm.2.2* (Kamesar, “Hilary of Poitiers,” 271).
52. *Hom.3.47.4*.
53. *Tract. in Psal., 2.2*; see Kamesar, “Hilary of Poitiers,” 271.
54. Anne Pasquier, “The Valentinian Exegesis,” in Charles Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity*, ed. Charles Kannengiesser (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 461.
55. *Flor.4.2*, 11. The translation given here is that of Karlfried Froehlich, trans. and ed., *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church, Sources of Early Christian Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 38–39.
56. *Flor. 4.4*.
57. Strecker, *Das Judentum*, 171n1.
58. See *Flor.3.4*; *Hom.3.42.3*.

The Harmony Criterion

6.1. INTRODUCTION TO THE HARMONY CRITERION: CREATION, CREATOR, AND THE SCRIPTURES

The present study seeks to offer a coherent account of the exegetical theory put forth in the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*. So far, I have examined the Homilist's rejection of allegorism. We have seen that the Homilist also postulates the existence of various false pericopes embedded within the Pentateuch. I am proposing that, according to the Homilist, these "false pericopes" are to be evaluated by the application of three distinct external criteria. Of these three criteria, I have thus far examined two: the True Prophet's teaching and the oral tradition. We come now to the third and final criterion in this study, which I designate as the "harmony criterion." 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. From the oral tradition, we discover something of the Homilist's "Jewish" affinities, whereby appeal is made to an oral tradition akin to that of the rabbis in order to ensure correct interpretation of the Scriptures. Finally, the harmony criterion—the focus of this chapter—is an expression of the Homilist's philosophical outlook, his cosmopolitan sensitivities, and his ethical orientation. All three criteria—the True Prophet's teaching, the oral tradition, and the harmony criterion—are employed by the Homilist in his unique approach to the Pentateuch in general and in his evaluation of its falsehoods in particular.

The very fact that falsehoods exist in Scripture in the first place is explained, in part, by the Homilist with reference to the harmony criterion. For as we read in *Hom.*3.46,

οὕτως αἱ τοῦ τὸν οὐρανὸν κτίσαντος θεοῦ διάβολοι
φωναὶ καὶ ὑπὸ τῶν σὺν αὐταῖς ἐναντίων φωνῶν
ἀκυροῦνται καὶ ὑπὸ τῆς κτίσεως ἐλέγχονται· οὐ γὰρ
ὑπὸ χειρὸς προφητικῆς ἐγράφησαν, διὸ καὶ τῇ τοῦ τὰ
πάντα κτίσαντος θεοῦ χειρὶ ἐναντία φαίνονται.

The sayings [i.e., the “false pericopes”] accusatory of God who made the heaven are both rendered void by the opposite sayings which are alongside them, and are *censured by creation*, for they were not written by a prophetic hand. For this reason, they also appear opposite to the hand of God who made all things.^[1]

Since the Pentateuch’s falsehoods derive from the hands of men who were not prophets, they also conflict with creation, the “hand of God” (θεοῦ χεῖρ). The “hand of god” in this passage is a clear reference to creation (κτίσις), that is, the natural world. *Hom.3.47* goes on to say that the Mosaic legislation was originally transmitted “without writing” from Moses to the seventy wise men. Accordingly, the Torah in its written form acquired falsehoods, owing to the fact that those who eventually did transcribed it (*after* Moses’ death, *after* the exile) “were not prophets.”^[2] Consequently, as *Hom.3.46* above says, because certain passages of Scripture “were not written by a prophetic hand” (οὐ ὑπὸ χειρὸς προφητικῆς ἐγράφησαν), they also conflict with and are censured by the very “handwriting of God” (τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ χειρόγραφον), by which the Homilist means “creation” itself.^[3] Thus, because the Torah in its present *written* form has accumulated material that comes from the handwriting of men who were not prophets, the written Torah is now to be “checked against” God’s own handwriting, his creation.

The notion that certain texts are “censured by creation” (ὑπὸ τῆς κτίσεως ἐλέγχεσθαι) is based on the fundamental assumption that the “true” Scriptures are, in some sense, “in agreement” with God’s creation. That the Pentateuch is “in agreement with” creation and can therefore be “checked against” creation represents the essence of what I am designating as the harmony criterion. Furthermore, it should also be noted that the Homilist assumes a distinction between the Creator and the *creation*, a characteristic distinction maintained within Hellenistic Judaism.^[4] In keeping with this distinction, therefore, the harmony criterion can also be said to consist of two basic parts. At one level, the harmony criterion will refer to the *creation*. At another level, the harmony criterion will refer to the

Creator. When it is necessary for us to make the same distinction, let us for sake of convenience designate “agreement with *creation*” as the primary element of the harmony criterion and “agreement with the Creator” as the secondary element.

On the whole, the harmony criterion is a good example of what Georg Strecker has described more generally as *rationalistische Erwägungen* (“rationalistic considerations”) in the Pseudo-Clementines.^[5] Or, as Hans Joachim Schoeps has noted, “It must be observed that the biblical criticism of the *Kērygmata Petrouis* thoroughly permeated with rationalism, its distinctive feature. One could in fact refer to it as a sample of an ancient Enlightenment.”^[6] Part of my goal here is to shed a bit more light on the general observations of Schoeps and Strecker in this regard. For such “rationalistic considerations” remain to be identified more clearly, and a close examination of what I am calling the harmony criterion affords the opportunity to do so. I will begin this chapter by looking briefly to Philo of Alexandria and the Gnostic Ptolemy, both of whose writings contain relevant parallels to the general idea underlying the Homilist’s harmony criterion. For, like the Homilist, both Philo and Ptolemy regard the Mosaic legislation as being in some sense “in agreement” with creation and/or with the Creator.

Now, the recognition that the Scriptures in some sense “agree” with creation and/or with God presupposes a certain degree of knowledge about God. In fact, the Homilist claims that humanity’s knowledge of God can be obtained from two sources: from the natural world (creation), and from “sacred revelation” (in the form of the Scriptures and also in the form of the True Prophet’s teaching). I will also direct my attention to the Homilist’s theoretical formulation of the harmony criterion in the interpretation of Scripture, by looking at (1) several explicit statements that articulate the notion that the Scriptures are “in agreement with” creation and also (2) those statements concerning Scripture’s agreement with the Creator.

Finally, it then remains to be seen how the harmony criterion works “in practice.” We are fortunate in that the Homilist does indeed give us a couple of examples where the harmony criterion is applied in a “practical” fashion. I will focus on two such cases: the problem of polytheism and the problem of animal sacrifices. If it is the case that the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* can be said to have a certain “rationalism” as their “distinctive

feature” (as Schoeps has said of the *Κηρύγματα Πέτρου*), or if they are noted for their “rationalistic considerations” (as Strecker puts it), then it is the Homilist’s use of the concept τὸ εὖλογον, “what is rational,” that perhaps best represents such rationalism. Indeed, the harmony criterion itself can be seen as an expression of “what is rational.” Therefore, an examination of the Homilist’s use of this important term τὸ εὖλογον (in both its exegetical usage and its ethical usage) is also in order.

In order to better appreciate the Homilist’s notion of the harmony criterion, it is worthwhile to consult relevant antecedents in other sources. Thus we might step back and look at parallels found in, for example, the first-century Philo of Alexandria and the second-century Ptolemy. Such sources as these offer fitting representations of the broader conceptual context within which the Homilist is situated, at least when it comes to his view of the Scriptures and how the Scriptures are “in agreement” with creation and/or with the Creator.

The notion that the Scriptures accord with the natural world can be seen in Philo, our most important source for Hellenistic Judaism. In the opening words of *De Opificio Mundi*, Philo describes the first chapters of Genesis as a grand proem to the Mosaic legislation. It is Philo’s opinion that the Mosaic legislation “speaks in harmony with” (from συνάδειν) the natural world:

ἡ δ’ ἀρχή, καθάπερ ἔφην, ἐστὶ θαυμσιωτάτη,
κοσμοποιίαν περιέχουσα, ὥς καὶ τοῦ κόσμου τῷ
νόμῳ καὶ τοῦ νόμου τῷ κόσμῳ συνάδοντος, καὶ τοῦ
νομίμου ἀνδρὸς εὐθὺς ὄντος κοσμοπολίτου, πρὸς τὸ
βούλημα τῆς φύσεως τὰς πράξεις ἀπευθύνοντος, καθ’
ἣν ὁ σύμπας κόσμος διοικεῖται.

The beginning is, as I just said, quite marvelous. It contains an account of the making of the cosmos, the reasoning for this being that the cosmos is in harmony with the law and the law with the cosmos, and the man who observes the law is at once a citizen of the cosmos, directing his actions in relation to the rational

purpose of nature, in accordance with which the entire cosmos also is administered.^[7]

Philo's words here offer a good conceptual parallel to the Homilist's harmony criterion. For both Philo and the Homilist imagine that there exists some sort of "harmonious" relationship between the Mosaic legislation on the one hand and the natural world on the other. The two differ in that Philo does not really apply this "harmony" as an exegetical criterion. Furthermore, whereas Philo is wont to allegorize difficult biblical texts, the Homilist will "check them against" creation in order to verify which are the "true" passages of Scripture—that is, which Scriptures are "in agreement with creation." Instead of allegorizing them, he rejects as "false" those Scriptures that do not agree with creation.

Another relevant parallel to the Homilist's harmony criterion can be seen in Ptolemy's *Letter to Flora* (hereafter *Flor.*). Previously in this study, I have noted a few other important parallels between *Flor.* and *Hom.* First, we saw in chapter 3 how Ptolemy espouses a theory of false pericopes akin to that of the Homilist. Second, in my discussion of the True Prophet's teaching (in chapter 4) I noted how Ptolemy, like the Homilist, emphasizes the authoritative words of Jesus in connection with discerning true from false Scripture. Third, we also saw in chapter 5 how the concept of an oral tradition plays a significant role in both Ptolemy's and the Homilist's respective approaches to the Pentateuch. These three circumstances warrant further inquiry into whether Ptolemy offers any relevant information in connection with the harmony criterion. As it turns out, something akin to the Homilist's harmony criterion is indeed discernable in Ptolemy's *Flor.* Toward the opening of his letter, Ptolemy makes the assertion that

Οὐτε γὰρ ὑπὸ τοῦ τελείου θεοῦ καὶ πατρὸς φαίνεται
τοῦτον τεθεῖσθαι (ἐπόμενος γὰρ ἐστίν), ἀτελῆ τε ὄντα
καὶ τοῦ ὑφ' ἑτέρου πληρωθῆναι ἐνδεῆ, ἔχοντά τε
προστάξεις ἀνοικείας τῇ τοῦ τοιούτου θεοῦ φύσει τε
καὶ γνώμῃ.

it is clear that [the law] was not established from the perfect God and Father (for it is secondary); not only is it insufficient and needs to be completed by someone else, but it also contains precepts that are *incongruous with the nature and intent* of this sort of God.^[8]

Ptolemy claims that the written Torah contains passages that are “incongruous” (from ἀνοίκειος) with the “nature and intent” of God. The conceptual overlap here between Ptolemy and the Homilist is readily apparent. For Ptolemy’s words here accord with what I am calling the secondary element of the harmony criterion, namely, “agreement with God.” Both Ptolemy and the Homilist attest to the notion that in particular God’s “intent” (ἡ γνώμη) functions as a standard against which the Scriptures can be checked:

τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ χειρόγραφον (λέγω δὲ τὸν οὐρανόν)
καθαράν καὶ βεβαίαν τὴν τοῦ πεποιηκότος δείκνυσιν
γνώμην.

God’s handwriting (I mean the heaven) displays *the intent* of the One who made [the heaven] exact and constant.^[9]

Now, according to Ptolemy’s “levels,” or “gradations,” of authentic Scripture, the Pentateuch is itself subdivided into three parts: the “pure legislation,” the “second legislation,” and the “typological legislation.” Ptolemy describes the “second legislation” as follows:

Πάλιν δὲ δὴ τὸ ἓν μέρος, ὁ αὐτοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ νόμος, διαιρεῖται εἰς τρίνα τινά· εἷς τε τὴν καθαρὰν νομοθεσίαν τὴν ἀσύμπλοκον τῷ κακῷ, ὅς καὶ κυρίως νόμος λέγεται, ὃν οὐκ ἤλθε καταλῦσαι ὁ σωτὴρ ἀλλὰ πληρῶσαι (οὐ γὰρ ἦν ἀλλότριος αὐτοῦ ὃν ἐπλήρωσεν, <ἔδει δὲ πληρώσεως>· οὐ γὰρ εἶχεν τὸ τέλειον) καὶ εἰς τὸν συμπελεγμένον τῷ χείρονι καὶ τῇ ἀδικίᾳ, ὃν ἀνεῖλεν ὁ σωτὴρ ἀνοίκειον ὄντα τῇ ἑαυτοῦ φύσει.

Furthermore, the one part, namely, the law of God himself, is divided into three parts: into the pure legislation not mixed with evil. This is called “law” in the etymologically primary sense. This part the savior did not come to abolish but to fulfill (for the law he fulfilled was not foreign to him, but required fulfillment because it lacked completion); and [second, it is divided] into the legislation enmeshed with the inferior and with injustice. This is the part the Savior abolished because it was *incongruous* with his own nature.^[10]

Here Ptolemy says the second part of the law is “incongruous” (from ἀνοίκειος) in connection with the “nature” of Jesus. By “nature” (φύσις) here, I do not think Ptolemy is referring to Jesus’ “divinity” but rather his “mercy” or his “compassion.” For Ptolemy adduces the *lex talionis* as his specific example of the “second part” of the law, that is, the part enmeshed with “what is inferior” and with “injustice”—and this is the part the Savior abolished.^[11] Ptolemy likely has in mind Jesus’ words as they appear in Matthew 5:38-48, where Jesus champions mercy and forgiveness over against revenge and retaliation. In any case, the main point to be noted here is that, in Ptolemy’s thinking, the law of God (or at least sections of it) is said to have “congruity” or “incongruity” with something external to it. Here in *Flor.* 5.1, Ptolemy says the second part of the law is incongruous with the nature of Jesus. As I noted above, Ptolemy says in *Flor.* 3.4 that the

law is incongruous with the “nature and intent” of God. Finally, in *Flor.5.5* Ptolemy sums up his remarks on the “second part” of the law by saying that

ἀνοίκειον δὲ τῇ τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν ὅλων φύσει τε καὶ
ἀγαθότητι.

It is incongruous with the nature and supreme
goodness of the Father of all.

Thus the “secondary” nature of certain precepts in the law is determined by the way in which they are deemed to be “incongruous” (ἀνοικείας) with God’s nature. Ptolemy thus evaluates the law with reference to God’s nature (φύσις) and intent (γνώμη).^[12] Both Ptolemy and the Homilist, therefore, show concern for the extent to which the law “accords with” the nature of the Creator God. To be sure, the terminology is not identical; Ptolemy’s οἰκεῖος is not the same as the Homilist’s συμφωνία. Even so, there is sufficient overlap of semantic range and conceptual parallels to warrant the comparison.

In sum, both Philo and Ptolemy envision that in some sense creation and the Scriptures are in harmony with each other. The antecedents in Philo and in Ptolemy give us a sense of the broader conceptual (and exegetical) environment within which the Homilist’s harmony criterion can be understood. We find in Philo’s thinking the idea that the Mosaic legislation speaks in agreement (συνάδειν) with the cosmos. We find in Ptolemy’s thinking that the Pentateuch contains sections that are “incongruous” with God’s nature and intent (ἀνοικείας τῇ τοῦ τοιούτου θεοῦ φύσει τε καὶ γνώμῃ), the assumption being that the “pure” or “true” portions of the divine legislation are indeed in agreement with God’s nature. In Philo, the Pentateuch accords with the creation, and in Ptolemy the Pentateuch accords with the Creator. As we shall see, it is the Homilist’s contention that the Pentateuch’s true passages accord with both the creation (as for Philo) and the Creator (as for Ptolemy).

Now, as the foregoing discussion indicates, a proper understanding of the harmony criterion requires a closer examination of a number of other interlocking issues. These issues include such things as how the Homilist articulates the question of humanity's knowledge about God and the role of human reason in that endeavor. In order to lay the necessary groundwork for my examination of the harmony criterion, therefore, I will deal with each of these topics in order, beginning with the questions of humanity's knowledge about God as seen from the Homilist's perspective. To this we now turn.

6.2.1. KNOWLEDGE OF GOD GAINED FROM “NATURAL REVELATION”

The Homilist asserts that God has indeed taken steps to make knowledge of God attainable:

εὐκολωτέραν γὰρ τὴν περὶ αὐτοῦ εὔρεσιν ὁ θεὸς
τέθεικεν πᾶσιν ὥς πάντων κηδεμών, ἵνα μήτε
βάρβαροι ἐξασθενῶσιν αὐτὸν μήτε Ἕλληνες
ἀδυνατῶσιν εὔρεῖν. ῥαδία μὲν οὖν ἡ περὶ αὐτοῦ
εὔρεσις ὑπάρχει.

For God, because he cares for all, has left it rather easy to discover him in order that barbarians would not be weak, and Greeks would not be powerless, to find him. Indeed, discovering God is a ready possibility.^[13]

But how is God made known? The Homilist envisions two basic modes whereby knowledge about God is possible. One is through what can be called (1) “natural revelation” and the other is through what can be called (2) “sacred revelation.” The goal of this section is to address the question of natural revelation as it is seen from the Homilist’s perspective. In the following sections, I will address how the Homilist conceptualizes sacred revelation and how he describes the role of human reason in connection with both. Once I have addressed these themes, I will give my attention more fully to the harmony criterion itself.

By “natural revelation” I am referring to what knowledge humans can have about God from their observations of creation, that is, the physical world. What does creation tell humans about God? For the Homilist, creation reveals to humans the knowledge that the Creator God is singular (i.e., not a plurality) and that God’s creation exists for the benefit of humans.^[14] In addition to this, natural revelation for the Homilist functions

to (1) confirm Jewish monotheism; (2) elicit “piety” and “ethics”; (3) invite repentance/warn of judgment; and (4) refute idolatry.^[15]

Now, at the outset, it should be noted that there exists in the Homilist’s thinking a distinction between “nature” (φύσις) in a Stoic sense and “creation” (κτίσις) in a Jewish and Christian sense, and that the harmony criterion operates with reference to the latter. Bertil Gärtner has pointed out that “κτίσις is a word no Stoic could possibly use to describe the regulation of the universe.”^[16] When the Homilist talks about the “natural world,” he usually speaks of κτίσις or κόσμος, and almost never φύσις.^[17] Indeed, in the vast majority of cases, the Homilist uses φύσις in the more general sense of “quality,” “property,” or “trait.”^[18] There are only a few exceptions to this rule, the most important example of which can be seen in *Hom.* 6.19.1–5, a passage that appears in the context of the Clement-Appion debate, where Clement responds to Appion as follows:

ἀπάντων δὲ τῶν θεῶν τὴν ποιητικὴν ἀλληγορίαν οὐκ ἀκόλουθον εὐρίσκομεν. αὐτίκα γοῦν ἐπὶ τῆς διακοσμήσεως τῶν ὅλων ποτὲ μὲν φύσιν λέγουσιν ποιηταί, ποτὲ δὲ νοῦν ἀρχηγὸν γενέσθαι τῆς ὅλης δημιουργίας. ἐκ φύσεως μὲν γὰρ τῶν στοιχείων τὴν πρώτην κίνησιν καὶ σύμμιξιν γεγονέναι, ὑπὸ δὲ τῆς τοῦ νοῦ προνοίας διακεκοσμηθῆναι. καὶ ἀποφηνάμενοι μὲν φύσει δεδημιουργῆσθαι τὸ πᾶν, μὴ δυνάμενοι δὲ ἀνεπιλήπτως τοῦτο ἀποδεικνύναι διὰ τὸ τῆς δημιουργίας ἔντεχνον, παρεμπλέκουσιν καὶ τοῦ νοῦ τὴν πρόνοιαν, ὥς συναρπάσαι καὶ τοὺς πάνυ σοφοὺς δυνάμενοι. ἡμεῖς δὲ φαμεν πρὸς αὐτούς· Εἰ μὲν ἐξ αὐτομάτου φύσεως ὁ κόσμος γέγονεν, πῶς ἔτι ἀναλογίαν καὶ τάξιν εἴληφεν; ἅπερ ὑπὸ μόνης ὑπερβαλλούσης φρονήσεως γενέσθαι δυνατόν ἐστιν καὶ καταληφθῆναι ὑπὸ ἐπιστήμης τῆς μόνης ταῦτα ἀκριβοῦν δυναμένης. εἰ δὲ φρονήσει τὰ πάντα τὴν σύγκρασιν καὶ διακόσμησιν εἴληφεν (ὅπερ ἀνάγκη μὴ ἄλλως ἔχειν), πῶς ἔτι ἐκ τοῦ αὐτομάτου συμβῆναι ταῦτα γενέσθαι δυνατόν ἦν;

We find the poetic allegory about the gods inconsistent. For example, as for the ordering of the universe, one moment they say “nature,” then another moment they say “mind” was the first cause of the whole creation—that the first movement and mixture of the elements came from nature, but that it was put in order by the foresight of “mind.” When they claim that “nature” fashioned the universe, since they are unable to show this faultlessly on account of the artistic aspect of creation, they also interweave “the foresight of mind” in such a way that they are able to snare even the wisest. But we say to them: if the cosmos came about from self-moved nature, how did it ever obtain proportion and shape, which can only come from a surpassing wisdom, and can be comprehended only by knowledge, which alone can accurately investigate such things? If, on the other hand, it is by wisdom that all things subsist and maintain order (it cannot be otherwise), how is it possible that those things arose from self-moved [chance]?

Clement’s words here reveal the Homilist’s conviction that a “surpassing wisdom” (ὑπερβαλλούση φρόνησις) in contradistinction to “nature” (φύσις) is responsible for the ordering of the cosmos. But the Homilist employs the term φύσις here only because he is reporting the positions of others with whom he disagrees.^[19] But the most common use of φύσις in *Hom.* by far is in the more general sense of “quality,” “property,” or “trait.”

Thus natural revelation for the Homilist is not conceptualized with reference to φύσις as it is often used in a Stoic sense. Knowing this about the Homilist’s use of φύσις helps make better sense of his words when he has Peter say to Clement:

δίκαιος δέ ἐστιν ἐκεῖνος ὁ τοῦ εὐλόγου ἔνεκα τῇ φύσει
μαχόμενος.

The righteous person is the one who, for the sake of
what is reasonable, *contends with* nature.^[20]

On the one hand, Stoic terminology is recognized here by the terms τὸ
εὖλογον and ἡ φύσις:

Κλεάνθης . . . οὕτως ἀπέδωκε· τέλος ἐστὶ τὸ
ὁμολογουμένως τῇ φύσει ζῆν.

Cleanthes put it this way: the goal is to live *in*
harmony with nature.^[21]

But on the other hand, the Homilist simply does not share the Stoic view of
φύσις. When the Homilist mentions “nature” here, he is doing so in the
more general sense of “*human* nature.” For in the very same conversation
between them, Clement confesses to Peter,

ἐχθροὺς δὲ εὐεργετεῖν, πᾶσαν αὐτῶν ὑποφέροντα
ἐπήρειαν, οὐκ οἶμαι δυνατόν ἀνθρωπείᾳ προσεῖναι
φύσει.

But doing good to enemies, enduring all their abuse,
I do not think can possibly exist within *human* nature.
^[22]

What he means by this becomes clearer when we consider what Peter had
said to Clement a little earlier in *Hom.* 12.32.1:

οἷον πᾶσιν πρόσεστιν ἐκ φύσεως φιλοῦντας φιλεῖν,
δίκαιος πειρᾶται καὶ ἐχθροὺς ἀγαπᾶν καὶ
λοιδοροῦντας εὐλογεῖν, ἔτι μὴν καὶ ὑπὲρ ἐχθρῶν
εὐχεσθαι.

Everyone naturally loves those who [reciprocate]
love, but the just person attempts to love even
enemies, to bless those who rail against him, and even
to pray on behalf of [his] enemies.^[23]

According to the Homilist, the attainment of what is “ethically rational” requires moving beyond *human* nature.^[24] The Homilist seems to have in mind something akin to, for example, what St. Augustine would call more stridently a “fallen” or “debased” human nature. Augustine lists “error” and “distorted love” as two different consequences of Adam’s fall. For Augustine, love is led astray if it is directed to oneself instead of to one’s neighbor.^[25] For the Homilist’s part, the “contending with nature” in *Hom.* 12.32.1 above specifically refers to the attempt (τὸ πειρᾶν) to extend the so-called Golden Rule beyond love for one’s neighbor to include love for one’s enemies. That is, love seeking *reciprocity* comes “naturally” (ἐκ φύσεως) for people, while love toward one’s enemies requires greater exertion because it does not come “naturally” (τῇ φύσει μάχεσθαι). The righteous person loves his enemies and blesses them for the sake of what is “ethically rational” (τὸ εὐλογον).^[26] Therefore, when τὸ εὐλογον is thought to conflict with “nature,” the conflict is with “*human* nature” and not the “physical world” of nature. For when the Homilist refers to the natural world (or when he appeals to “natural” revelation), he normally does so using terms like κτίσις, οὐρανός, or κόσμος, but not φύσις.

We turn now to consider the question of the Homilist’s perspective on natural revelation itself, returning to *Hom.* 3.45.4, a passage we have seen before:

τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ χειρόγραφον (λέγω δὲ τὸν οὐρανόν)
καθαρὰν καὶ βεβαίαν τὴν τοῦ πεποιηκότος δείκνυσιν
γνώμην.

God's handwriting (I mean the heaven) displays the
intent of the One who made [the heaven] exact and
constant.

According to the Homilist, knowledge about God can be inferred from the natural world. This knowledge has little to do with arguments for God's existence *per se* and far more to do with *characterizations* of God. This circumstance illustrates how, as far as the Homilist is concerned, the general *function* of natural revelation is very much in line with Old Testament and Jewish understandings of natural revelation.^[27] The Homilist is never very interested in proving God's existence. His main interest in appealing to natural revelation is to highlight that God is *one* and that creation exists for the benefit of humans. With regard to the latter, in passages like *Hom.* 2.45 and *Hom.* 3.33–36, the Homilist celebrates the natural world for its variety, order, and utility for humans:

ὦ τῆς μεγάλης θεοῦ φρονίμου χειρός, τῆς ἐν πᾶσιν
πάντα ποιούσης. μυρίος γὰρ ὄχλος πτηνῶν ὑπ' αὐτοῦ
γεγένηται καὶ οὗτος ποικίλος, πρὸς τὸν ἕτερον κατὰ
πάντα ἐξηλλαγμένος . . . πόσαι δὲ καὶ φυτῶν διάφοροι
ιδέαι, χρώμασιν καὶ ποιότησιν καὶ ὁδμαῖς ἀπείροις
διωρισμένοι. πόσα δὲ τῆς χέρσου ζῶα καὶ τῶν ἐν
ὑδασιν, ὧν ἀδύνατον εἰπεῖν σχήματα, μορφάς, θέσεις,
χρώματα, βίους, γνώμας, φύσεις, ὄχλον. ἔτι τε ὁρέων
πλήθη καὶ ὕψη, λίθων διαφοράς, μυχοὺς φοβερούς,
πηγάς, κτλ.

O the great hand of the wise God, which makes
altogether everything. For a countless multitude of

birds have been made by him, with variety at that, differing from one another in every respect . . . and how many different species of plants, distinguished by endless variations of colors, qualities, and scents! How many animals on land and in water, whose figures, forms, habitats, color, food, senses, natures, and multitude it is impossible to speak! Even more, the multitude and height of mountains, the varieties of stones, terrible caverns, springs, etc.^[28]

Both the Homilist's "rational outlook" and his "anthropocentric" view of creation is evident in the following passage:

ἐάν τις τὸ πᾶν ἀκριβῶς λογισμῷ συνίδῃ, εὐρήσει δι' ἄνθρωπον τὸν θεὸν πεποιηκότα· οἱ γὰρ ὄμβροι καρπῶν ἕνεκα γίνονται, ἵνα ἄνθρωπος μεταλάβῃ καὶ ζῶα τραφῇ ὅπως ἄνθρωπῳ χρησιμεύῃ—καὶ ἥλιος φαίνει καὶ τὸν ἀέρα εἰς τέσσαρας τροπὰς τρέπει, ἵνα ἕκαστος καιρὸς τὰ ἴδια ἄνθρωπῳ παράσχη—καὶ πηγαὶ βρύουσιν, ἵνα πόμα ἀνθρώποις δοθῇ.

If anyone should step back and look at the whole creation, accurately and *with reason*, he will find that God has made it all *for the sake of man*. For showers fall for the sake of fruits, that man may partake and living creatures be nourished, so that they may be of use to man. And the sun shines, that it may turn the air into four seasons, and that each season may render *its own service to man*. And the fountains gush, so that drink may be given to man.^[29]

Conversely, the creation can turn against, or be "hostile" toward, those who dishonor the Creator, as we see in a text like *Hom.* 11.10.2–5:

ὥς οὖν πάντων μείζων ὁ θεός, οὕτως μείζονα ὑφέξει
κόλασιν ὁ εἰς αὐτὸν ἀσεβήσας . . . πάσης τῆς κτίσεως
ἐπὶ τούτῳ ἀγανακτοῦσης καὶ φυσικῶς ἐπεξερχομένης.
οὐ γὰρ δώσει τῷ βλασφήμῳ οὐχ ἥλιος τὸ φῶς, οὐ γῆ
τοὺς καρπούς, οὐ πηγὴ τὸ ὕδωρ . . . ὁπότε καὶ νῦν . . .
παραγανακτεῖ πᾶσα ἡ κτίσις. διὸ οὔτε τελείως
οὐρανὸς ὑετοὺς παρέχει οὔτε γῆ τοὺς καρπούς, διὸ οἱ
πλείονες λυμαίνονται. ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ ἀῆρ θυμῷ
ὑπεκκαιόμενος πρὸς λοιμώδη κρᾶσιν μεταβάλλεται.
πλὴν ὅσων ἀπολαύομεν ἀγαθῶν, τῷ αὐτοῦ ἐλέῳ εἰς
τὴν ἡμετέραν φιланθρωπίαν βιάζεται τὴν κτίσιν.
οὕτως ὑμῖν τοῖς ἀτιμάζουσιν τὸν τῶν ὅλων
δημιουργὸν ἡ πᾶσα κτίσις χαλεπαίνει.

Just as God is greater than all, likewise a man who
is impious against God shall endure a more severe
punishment. . . . The whole creation is angry with him,
and naturally goes out against him. For the sun will
not give its light to the blasphemer, nor the earth its
fruits, nor the spring its water . . . since even now . . .
the whole creation is quite vexed with [an impious
man]. This is why the sky does not yield sufficient
rains, nor the earth fruits; this is why so many perish.
Indeed, even the air itself, hot with anger, is changed
to such harsh temperatures. Still, whatsoever good
things we do enjoy, [God] in his mercy compels the
creation [in a favorable way] with a view to man's
benefit. And so the entire creation is hostile toward
you who dishonor the Creator of all.

Now, although the Homilist does not explicitly infer from creation the fact
of God's existence per se, his general perspective on creation—particularly
his anthropocentric interest and his belief in a well-ordered, rationally
coherent cosmos—does accord with a Stoic view of nature and what
knowledge of God it can reveal to humans. For example, in *Nat. d.* 2.13-15

Cicero reports Cleanthes's four causes of humanity's innate conceptions of God (*notiones deorum*). These arise from (1) foreknowledge of future events; (2) abundant benefits derived from fertile soil and temperate climate; (3) the terror one feels from storms and other such natural wonders; and (4) the uniform motion of the stars and planets.^[30] Although the Homilist does not specifically discuss humanity's "preconceptions" of God (προλήψεις = *notiones deorum*), general points of contact can be detected between a Stoic view of "nature" and the Homilist's view of "creation." These observations suggest that if the Homilist's remarks about natural revelation are to be understood correctly, we should look at them with reference to Old Testament conceptions of the relationship between the divine revelation and creation, and with the Stoic one of that between God and the cosmos.^[31] Gärtner's work is particularly helpful in this regard. In *The Areopagus Speech and Natural Revelation*, he has studied in detail the matrices and function of the famous speech in Acts 17, examining the background to natural revelation as it emerges from Old Testament, Jewish, and Stoic texts.^[32] To this we now turn.

Gärtner investigates Old Testament conceptions of God's self-disclosure testified to by the creation. By the testimony of nature, humans can know that God is the Creator, and can also understand in part *who* God is, since they can know, from creation, certain attributes of God. Gärtner identifies three spheres that declare God's natural revelation: (1) the creation and God's maintenance of that which is created; (2) history, the lives of the nations; and (3) humanity's absolute dependence on God for life, for being.^[33] The God of Israel "can be known in the revelations which are gained from nature and from history, from the destinies of the nations. . . . Yahweh reveals himself in creation and in his annual re-creation and preservation of all created things, thereby imparting to mankind a knowledge of himself and his power."^[34] What does creation reveal about God? Examples Gärtner gives include the thunder and lightning, which show God's power (Psalm 29); the magnificence of the universe, which bears witness to him (Psalm 33); creation's crying out to humanity, from the beginning of the world, of the living and almighty God of Israel (Isaiah 40). "All these revelations are frequently summarized in the word כבוד.^[35]"

Gärtner suggests that in the Old Testament, reference to creation has three special functions. First, God's revelation in creation is associated with

the cult festivals, “the intention being to show Yahweh as the One who both gives seedtime and harvest, and upholds the world order and the Covenant.”^[36] Second, the intention of natural revelation in the Old Testament is “to confute the false prophets and their scorn of Yahweh’s words by showing his power in the creation and in its maintenance.”^[37] Third, the references to God’s revelation in nature provide “a strong argument against the strange gods.”^[38] The biblical prophets (Gärtner highlights “Deutero-Isaiah”) adduce “the divine revelation in nature and in the march of history to show Yahweh’s power over against the nothingness of the other gods.”^[39]

Knowledge (ידע) of God gained from nature encompasses a sense of experiencing God’s “wisdom, providence, power to intervene, and other sides of his being . . . but no trace of any intellectual reasoning on man’s part.”^[40] In the Old Testament, “to know the God of Israel” (ידע את יהוה) from what he reveals in nature “is not as it were to work him out from actual data by the use of the intellect, but to acknowledge him in his manifestations as a true and living God.”^[41] So when it comes to the knowledge of God gained from nature, “knowledge, recognition, and *obedience* are all part of the same thing.”^[42] In the Old Testament, the knowledge of God carries directly *practical*—that is, *ethical*—consequences: to know, to hear, and to obey all belong closely together. “Thus, the knowledge of God, the worship of God, and moral conduct are linked in a remarkable way.”^[43] Gärtner concludes his examination of natural revelation in the Old Testament by pointing out that “the knowledge of God as an intellectual experience, the apperception of Him as ἀεὶ ὄν, has no place in its scheme of things. This knowledge has its appointed function only in relation to the worship of Yahweh and a life according to Yahweh’s will. In other words, the Old Testament knowledge of God has not a *theoretical* but a *practical* significance, most clearly expressed by ידע and all its senses.”^[44] In short, Gärtner shows that Old Testament expressions of natural revelation do not concern humanity’s philosophical quest to *discover* God, for God’s existence is a given. Rather, where natural revelation is adduced, it is done so in order to say something about God’s *character* and what ethical implications it carries for the people of God. Knowledge of God in nature concerns especially *ethical obedience*, not least in the form of turning from idolatry.

One final point is in order. As Gärtner points out, the revelation of God in creation and the knowledge of God humanity gains from it “has its special characteristics, which have to be analyzed from the perspective of the Yahweh cult. This knowledge had its ‘life-nerve’ in the processes of the cult. Consequently, it takes on a rather institutional stamp, and comes to be associated above all with the Covenant between Yahweh and the Israelites.”^[45] One implication of this “institutional stamp” is that, in the Old Testament, the scope of natural revelation is limited—that is, it concerns *Israel*: “There is no suggestion of any kind of universal revelation over and above Yahweh’s manifestations to his own people . . . knowledge of Yahweh is still an intimately national concern. . . . A universal revelation outside the pales of Israel and the activity of Yahweh simply did not exist for the Old Testament, though it is to be found in the literature of Later Judaism.”^[46]

The literature of later Judaism (including the Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, and rabbinic literature) attests to a shift from the rather “focused” function of natural revelation in its Old Testament expression, as it concerns Israel’s covenant with her God, to more “global” or “universal” implications of natural revelation.^[47] Natural revelation in this literature essentially “follows the tradition applied by the Old Testament to the doctrine of natural revelation and its contents and most usual functions.”^[48] But it also takes on a few additional features: (1) knowledge of God revealed in nature has universal validity; that is, it extends beyond the borders of Israel and affects the pagan nations. (2) Natural revelation is also “presented as the incriminator of all ungodliness and unrighteousness,” demanding that all humanity praise and glorify the living God.^[49] This “incriminating” function reaches out beyond the people of God and holds the pagan nations accountable as well. Gärtner points out that, in texts like *4 Ezra* and *1 Enoch*, as well as Paul’s Letter to the Romans, we find affirmations that “man knows God’s law. But despite this knowledge and the obvious acts of God, they have become transgressors. . . . Their knowledge of God and of His will then rises in judgment against them as transgressors, and they must therefore be punished.”^[50] One text Gärtner highlights is the *Epistle of Jeremiah*, where natural revelation is used to decry idolatry:

So it is better to be a king who shows his courage, or a household utensil that serves its owner's need, than to be these false gods; better even the door of a house that protects its contents, than these false gods; better also a wooden pillar in a palace, than these false gods. For sun and moon and stars are bright, and when sent to do a service, they are obedient. So also the lightning, when it flashes, is widely seen; and the wind likewise blows in every land. When God commands the clouds to go over the whole world, they carry out his command. And the fire sent from above to consume mountains and woods does what it is ordered. But these idols are not to be compared with them in appearance or power. Therefore one must not think that they are gods, nor call them gods, for they are not able either to decide a case or to do good to anyone. Since you know then that they are not gods, do not fear them. They can neither curse nor bless kings; they cannot show signs in the heavens for the nations, or shine like the sun or give light like the moon.^[51]

Nature thus bears witness to the living, almighty, acting God. This testimony of natural revelation renders the idols futile. Again, natural revelation repeatedly links knowledge of God, worship of God, and ethics.^[52]

Now, in terms of natural revelation as it appears in its *Stoic* expression, Gärtner notes that “there is a vast difference between the Stoic and the Old Testament-Jewish theology . . . as regards their respective approaches to the subject of the knowledge of God to be gained from nature.”^[53] For the Stoics, humanity's guiding principle is reason, namely, their portion of the divine Logos. All people possess innate conceptions (ἐμφυτοὶ προλήψεις) of God. Knowledge of God is thus achieved through the awakening to consciousness, by experience, of these innate conceptions. It is the

contemplation of nature that then stimulates humans to develop their reasoning powers. The idea that humanity comes to know God through nature is a common one among the Stoics, for whom the existence of God was something that could be rationally proved from humanity's kinship with God and the experience drawn from sense impressions.^[54] Gärtner has articulated a basic contrast between the Stoic notion of natural revelation and that of "Old Testament Jewish Theology" in the following way:

Another way to define the contrast between the Old Testament and the Stoics [i.e., between the OT conceptions of the relation between the divine revelation and creation, and with the Stoic one of that between God and Cosmos] is to say that, in the former, knowledge of God is imparted by revelation coming from God, i.e. it has a transcendent source; the Stoics, on the other hand, achieved this knowledge by the exercise of the intellect, and it therefore has its mainspring in man, in something immanent in the cosmos.^[55]

In the case of the Old Testament, knowledge about God can be said to derive from "sacred revelation," in that, as Gärtner says, it "is imparted by revelation coming from God." Even so, this revelation still qualifies to be called "natural revelation" (as Gärtner himself designates it in his study, and as so many Old Testament texts make clear), in that nature *bears witness to* God's self-disclosure.^[56] The important differences between the knowledge of God as it is conceived in the Old Testament and as it is conceived in Stoic philosophy are as follows. In the Old Testament and Jewish writings, on the one hand, knowledge of God derives from a *transcendent* source (as testified by nature, and hence a matter of "natural revelation") and elicits *right worship* and *obedience*. For Stoic philosophy, on the other hand, the Logos is *lodged within* the cosmos itself, and this knowledge is rendered accessible, and even guaranteed, by *humanity's own nature*. For the Stoics,

knowledge of God springs from an *immanent* source, and carries moral consequences. The Old Testament, therefore, fuses together (1) knowledge of God, (2) worship, and (3) ethics. The Stoics fuse together (1) knowledge of God (Logos), (2) humanity's kinship with God (οἰκείωσις), and (3) the order (διοίκησις) governing the cosmos. [57]

Where, then, does the Homilist fit into the scheme of things? Above, I noted passages like *Hom.* 2.45 and *Hom.* 3.33–36, where the Homilist points to natural revelation. And I already noted the “anthropocentric” orientation of the Homilist's conception of natural revelation:

ἐάν τις τὸ πᾶν ἀκριβῶς λογισμῷ συνίδῃ, εὐρήσει δι'
ἄνθρωπον τὸν θεὸν πεποιηκότα·

if anyone should look at the whole creation,
accurately and with reason, he will find that God has
made it all for the sake of man. [58]

But, as it is in the Old Testament and later Jewish literature, so it is with the Homilist: at no point does the Homilist use natural revelation as an argument for the *existence* of God. Rather, the Homilist adduces natural revelation for the purpose of what it says about God and (therefore) what it says to humanity. For the Homilist, natural revelation functions (1) to confirm Jewish monotheism; (2) to elicit “piety” (3) to urge repentance/issue warnings of judgment; and (4) to refute idolatry. The first three emerge from *Hom.* 3.37.1–4:

εἰ δὲ εὐγνωμονεῖς, ἄνθρωπε, νενοηκῶς τὸν ἐν πᾶσιν
εὐεργετήσαντά σε θεόν, καὶ ἀθάνατος ἂν ᾖ . . . καὶ
νῦν δὲ γενέσθαι δύνασαι ἄφθαρτος, ἐὰν ἐπιγνῶς ὃν
ἔλαθες, ἐὰν ἀγαπήσῃς ὃν κατέλιπες, ἐὰν αὐτῷ μόνῳ
προσεύχῃ τῷ σῶμά σου καὶ ψυχὴν κολάσαι καὶ σῶσαι
δυναμένῳ. διὸ πρὸ πάντων ἐννοοῦ ὅτι οὐδεὶς αὐτῷ
συνάρχει . . . μόνος γὰρ αὐτὸς καὶ λέγεται καὶ ἔστιν,

ἄλλον δὲ οὔτε νομίσαι οὔτε εἰπεῖν ἔξεστιν· εἰ δέ τις
τολμήσειεν, αἰδίως τὴν ψυχὴν κολασθῆναι ἔχει.

But if you are right-minded, O man, understanding
that God is your benefactor in all things, you may
even be immortal. . . . And now you are able to
become incorruptible, *if you acknowledge him whom
you forgot, if you love him whom you abandoned, if
you pray to him alone* who is able to punish or to save
your body and soul. For this reason, before all else,
keep in mind that no one co-rules with him . . . for *he
alone is both called and actually is God*. Nor is it
permissible to think or to say that there is any other.
*And if any one should dare do so, he has his soul to be
punished eternally.*

This passage concludes Peter's extended exordium (*Hom.* 3.34–37) in which
he appeals explicitly to natural revelation. Here, at the end of Peter's
speech, the Homilist conveys what for him are the implications of the
knowledge about God derived from creation. Thus the way natural
revelation functions for the Homilist is essentially in line with how it
functions in Judaism, as Gärtner has shown from the Old Testament and
later Jewish texts.^[59] In order to acquire any more particular knowledge
about God, however, humanity must look to "sacred revelation." So let us
now turn our attention to the subject of "sacred revelation" and the role of
human reason as it applies to such knowledge about God.

6.2.2. KNOWLEDGE OF GOD GAINED FROM “SACRED REVELATION”

From what we have seen so far, we can identify three distinct sources the Homilist puts forth by which human knowledge about God can be obtained: (1) From “natural revelation,” humans can discover that the Creator God is one and that his creation exists for the benefit of humanity, yet it is from (2) the Scriptures that humans can discover further aspects of God—namely, that God is prescient, wise, and just.^[60] But when it comes to a more “complete” knowledge of “other things appertaining to God”—this is obtained not from natural revelation, nor from Scripture, but (3) from the True Prophet’s teaching. And for the Homilist, the True Prophet’s teaching is an indispensable criterion for adjudicating God’s sacred revelation as it exists in written form. For the True Prophet “sits above” and provides the authoritative instruction for evaluating the Scriptures. I discussed in chapter 4 the True Prophet’s teaching as an exegetical criterion. My purpose in what follows here is to examine how the Homilist conceptualizes the function of the True Prophet in connection with humanity’s ability to know God. I will also address the question of how human reason is brought to bear on this process.

By “sacred revelation,” I am referring to the knowledge about God that, according to the Homilist, is revealed to humans via two distinct routes: (1) the written Scriptures and (2) the True Prophet and his teaching. Beyond natural revelation, then, it is Scripture that can afford humanity a more *particular* knowledge about God. For it is from the Scriptures that humanity obtains the knowledge about things like God’s foreknowledge, that God speaks the truth, that God administers justice, or that God makes humans wise.^[61] As Peter points out,

καὶ ἄλλη που λέγει ἡ γραφὴ τῷ Ἰουδαίῳ ὄχλῳ . . . Ὁ θεὸς ὁ μέγας καὶ ἀληθινός, ὃς οὐ λαμβάνει πρόσωπον οὐδὲ μὴ λάβῃ δῶρον, ποιῶν κρίσιν ὁρφανῶ καὶ χήρᾳ.

Somewhere else the Scripture says to the Jewish multitude. . . . *The great and true God, who does not*

show favoritism, will not take a bribe, executing justice for the orphan and widow. [62]

Characterizations of God like this cannot be obtained from the natural world of creation. In order for humanity to get *this* type of knowledge of God, Scripture is needed. As another example, in *Hom.* 2.42–45, the Homilist raises some twenty-four rhetorical questions that hint at the sort of scriptural texts which reveal things about the character of God. [63] A good many attributes of God are given that provide a reference point against which the (other) Scriptures should be checked:

καὶ ψεῦδός ἐστιν τὸ γεγράφθαι· Ἐνεθυμήθη ὁ θεός, ὥς λογισμῷ χρησαμένου διὰ τὴν ἄγνοιαν. ἔτι μὴν καὶ εἰ ἐπείραζεν κύριος τὸν Ἀβραάμ, ἵνα γνῶ εἰ ὑπομενεῖ. Καὶ τὸ γεγραμμένον· Καταβάντες ἴδωμεν εἰ κατὰ τὴν κραυγὴν αὐτῶν τὴν ἐρχομένην πρὸς μὲ συντελοῦνται· εἰ δὲ μή, ἵνα γνῶ.

The Scripture is false that says, *God reflected*, as though God would resort to reasoning because of ignorance. Again, [the Scripture is false that says], *The Lord tested Abraham*, in order that God might learn whether Abraham would endure. So also the Scripture that says, *Let us go down to see whether they completely correspond with the cry which comes to me; and if not, that I may know.* [64]

The assumption underlying these statements is that the Scriptures reveal certain things about God’s character, things not necessarily seen in creation. Furthermore, such “positive” statements can be used to counter other passages in Scripture that say otherwise. So, for example, with regard to God’s foreknowledge, the Homilist rejects as “false” the introduction to the

flood story in Gen. 6:6. He also evokes the Akedah and rejects it (or at least a portion of it) as false, since the opening line suggests ignorance on God's part. Likewise, the representation of God's inquiry into the conduct of the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah is rejected, for it too is contaminated with the spurious notion that something may have slipped God's notice. In each case, the fact of God's prescience—which is revealed to humanity by the “true” passages of Scripture—comes to serve as an external reference point, according to which other (“false”) Scriptures are adjudicated.^[65] In short, “sacred revelation” in the form of Scripture offers to humanity a certain kind of knowledge about God that is not readily attainable from observing the natural world.

And yet, even though the Scriptures constitute one aspect of “sacred revelation,” in their present form they are yet in some sense *incomplete*.^[66] For the Torah of God as it now exists in its written form has been contaminated with falsehoods. The theory of the false pericopes renders the Pentateuch as a sort of sacred revelation in want of emendation.^[67] For this reason, we can say that the Homilist envisions something of a “lower level” and a “higher level” of sacred revelation.^[68] For if the Scriptures, since they are laced with contaminations, constitute a “lower level” of sacred revelation, then the True Prophet and his teaching, by comparison, constitute a “higher level.” Indeed,

πολλῶν γὰρ καὶ διαφόρων ἀγαθῶν ὄντων . . . τὸ πάντων μακαριώτατον, εἴτε αἰδιός ἐστιν ζωὴ ἢ παράμονος ὑγεία ἢ τέλειος νοῦς ἢ φῶς ἢ χαρὰ ἢ ἀφθαρσία ἢ καὶ ἄλλο τι ὃ ἐν τῇ τῶν ὄντων φύσει ὑπερέχον ὑπάρχει καλὸν ἢ ὑπάρξαι δύναται τοῦτο,—οὐκ ἄλλως ἐστὶν αὐτὸ κτήσασθαι, μὴ πρότερον γνόντα τὰ ὄντα ὡς ἐστίν· τῆς δὲ γνώσεως οὐκ ἄλλως τυχεῖν ἐστίν, ἐὰν μὴ πρότερόν τις τὸν τῆς ἀληθείας προφήτην ἐπιγνῶ.

For of many and diverse good things which exist . . . the most blessed of all—whether it is eternal life, enduring health, complete understanding, light, joy,

immortality, or whatever else is, in the nature of things as they are, supremely good—this cannot otherwise be possessed without first knowing things as they are; and *this* knowledge cannot be otherwise obtained unless one first becomes acquainted with the Prophet of the truth.^[69]

And,

ὅθεν, ὦ φίλε Κλήμης, εἵγε τὰ τῷ θεῷ διαφέροντα
γινῶναι θέλεις, παρὰ τούτου μόνου μαθεῖν ἔχεις, ὅτι
μόνος οἶδεν τὴν ἀλήθειαν.

Hence, dear Clement, *if you desire to know the things appertaining to God*, you need to learn them from him [i.e., the True Prophet] alone, because he alone knows the truth.^[70]

A “truer” knowledge of God and of reality requires sacred revelation, which comes via the True Prophet alone. Sacred revelation as it comes in the form of the True Prophet and his teaching constitutes a “higher level” than that of Scripture (or of natural revelation for that matter).

Now, it remains to be seen how the Homilist articulates the place of human reason in connection with sacred revelation. In order to do so, we can look to the opening chapters of *Hom.*, where the author relates the young Clement’s interest in philosophical questions concerning the nature of the soul, its status after death, and the origins and fate of the cosmos. The young Clement is driven to find answers, “compelled to come to the search and the discovery of things.”^[71] From his youth, he would frequent the stomping grounds of the philosophers. But the philosophers were not able to impart Clement with any “certain” knowledge, leaving him grieved, disappointed, and restless:^[72]

ἀλλ' οὐδὲ τί ποτέ ἐστιν δίκαιον ἀρέσκον θεῷ
πεπληροφόρημαι οὔτε εἰ ἡ ψυχὴ ἀθάνατος ἢ θνητὴ
γινώσκω οὔτε τίς λόγος βέβαιος εὐρίσκεται, οὔτε τῶν
τοιούτων λογισμῶν ἡσυχάζειν δύναμαι.

But I am not at all convinced about what is that
righteous thing that is pleasing to God, nor do I know
whether the soul is immortal or mortal. Nor can I find
any certain doctrine, nor can I rest from such
philosophical issues. [73]

Part of Clement's frustration stems from the way in which

πᾶσα ὑπόθεσις ἀνασκευάζεται καὶ κατασκευάζεται καὶ
πρὸς τὴν τοῦ ἐκ' δικοῦντος δύναμιν ἡ αὐτὴ ἀληθὴς καὶ
ψευδὴς νομίζεται, ὥς μηκέτι τὰς ὑποθέσεις φαίνεσθαι
ὅ εἰσίν, ἀλλὰ παρὰ τοὺς ἐκδικοῦντας φαντασίαν
λαμβάνειν τοῦ εἶναι ἢ μὴ εἶναι ἀληθεῖς ἢ ψευδεῖς.

every statement is assembled and overturned.
According to the ability of whomever decides it to be
so, the same thing is deemed true and false, with the
result that statements are no longer seen for what they
really are [i.e., as either true or false], but [any]
grasping of an impression of something being or not
being or as either true or false—this resides with
whomever decides it to be so. [74]

Then, a significant moment occurred in Clement's life when he heard
reports (coming first out of Judea and, later, announced in Rome) about
how God has been made known. It is this news that thrusts Clement into a
journey to Judea in order to see for himself whether it really is the case

ὅτι υἱὸς θεοῦ ἐπιδεδήμηκεν τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ, ἀγαθῆς καὶ αἰωνίας ἐλπίδος χάριν τὴν τοῦ ἀποστείλαντος πατρὸς βούλησιν ἐκφαίνων.

that the son of God has come into Judea in order to *reveal the will of the Father* who sent him, for the sake of a good and eternal hope.^[75]

At this point, I wish to highlight three other short passages from *Hom.* that illustrate how the Homilist articulates knowledge about God by sacred revelation. In the first passage, the Homilist reports:

ἐκάστοτε οὖν πλείων καὶ μείζων ἐγίνετο, λέγουσα ὥς τίς ποτε ἐν Ἰουδαίᾳ . . . Ἰουδαίοις τὴν τοῦ αἰδίου θεοῦ εὐαγγελίζεται βασιλείαν, ἧς ἀπολαύειν λέγει ἐάν τις αὐτῶν προκατορθώσῃ τὴν πολιτείαν.

Therefore, [the report] everywhere became widespread, saying that someone in Judea . . . was preaching to the Jews the kingship of the invisible God, and saying that whoever of them would straighten out his conduct should enjoy it.^[76]

The Homilist goes on to say that Jesus' proclamation was accompanied by and substantiated with miraculous healings. But the key thing to note from this passage is that (1) Jesus is the one who reveals something about God, and, once again, (2) proper ethical conduct (ἡ πολιτεία) is the correlative about knowledge of God (in this case, God's kingship).^[77]

The next passage contains elements of both natural and sacred revelation:

Ἀνδρες Ῥωμαῖοι, ἀκούσατε· ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ υἱὸς ἐν
Ἰουδαίᾳ πάρεστιν, ἐπαγγελλόμενος πᾶσιν τοῖς
βουλομένοις ζωὴν αἰώνιον, ἐὰν [τὰ] κατὰ γνώμην τοῦ
πέμψαντος αὐτὸν πατρὸς βιώσωσιν. διὸ μεταβάλλεσθε
τὸν τρόπον ἀπὸ τῶν χειρόνων ἐπὶ τὰ κρείττονα, ἀπὸ
τῶν προσκαίρων ἐπὶ τὰ αἰώνα· γινῶτε ἓνα θεὸν εἶναι
τὸν ἐπουράνιον, οὗ τὸν κόσμον ἀδίκως οἰκεῖτε
ἔμπροσθεν τῶν αὐτοῦ δικαίων ὀφθαλμῶν. ἀλλ' ἐὰν
μεταβάλησθε καὶ κατὰ τὴν αὐτοῦ βούλησιν βιώσητε...
τῶν ἀπορρήτων αὐτοῦ ἀγαθῶν ἀπολαύσετε.

Men of Rome, listen up. The son of God has arrived
in Judea, proclaiming eternal life to all who will,
provided they live according to the counsel of the
Father who sent him. So change your manner of life
from the worse to the better, from things temporal to
things enduring. Know that there is one heavenly God,
whose cosmos you unrighteously inhabit before his
righteous eyes. But if you are changed, and live
according to his counsel . . . you shall enjoy his
unspeakable good things. [\[78\]](#)

In this passage, the *fact that* God exists is a given. But it is a knowledge
about God—here in the form of both sacred and natural revelation—
coupled with a proper ethical orientation.

In a third passage, Peter himself explains to Clement the mechanics of
how God was made known more fully, that is, *beyond* natural revelation,
and by means of the True Prophet. What is more, this passage is important
for what it shows about the way in which the Homilist describes the role of
human reason in this process. The text is cited here in full:

ἡ τοῦ θεοῦ βουλὴ ἐν ἀδήλῳ γέγονεν κατὰ πολλοὺς
τρόπους. τὰ μὲν πρῶτα εἰσαγωγῇ κακῇ, συντροφία

πονηρᾶ, συνηθεία δεινῇ, ὁμιλία οὐ καλῇ, προλήψει
οὐκ ὀρθῇ. διὰ ταῦτα πλάνη, εἴτα ἀφοβία, ἀπιστία,
πορνεία, φιλαργυρία, κενοδοξία καὶ ἄλλα τοιαῦτα
μυρία κακά, ὥσπερ καπνοῦ πλῆθος, ὡς ἓνα οἶκον
οἰκοῦντα τὸν κόσμον <ἔπλησεν, καὶ> τῶν ἔνδοθεν
οἰκούντων ἀνδρῶν ἐπιθολῶσαν τὰς ὁράσεις, οὐκ
εἶασεν ἀναβλέψαντας . . . τὸν δημιουργήσαντα νοῆσαι
θεὸν καὶ τὸ τοῦτο δοκοῦν γινώσκειν. διὸ τοὺς
φιλαλήθεις ἔσωθεν χρὴ ἐκ στέρνων βοήσαντας
ἐπικουρίαν προσκαλέσασθαι φιλαλήθει λογισμῶ, ἵνα
τις ἐκτὸς ὧν τοῦ οἴκου τοῦ πεπλησμένου καπνοῦ
προσιῶν ἀνοίξῃ θύραν, ὅπως δυνηθῇ τὸ μὲν ἐκτὸς τοῦ
ἡλίου φῶς εἰσκριθῆναι τῷ οἴκῳ, ὃ δὲ ἐντὸς τοῦ πυρὸς
ὧν ἐκβληθῆναι καπνός.

The will of God has been kept in obscurity in many ways. First, by bad instruction, by corrupt company, by terrible society, by unseemly conversation, and by preconceptions which are not correct. Owing to such things is error, then fearlessness, unbelief, fornication, money-lust, vainglory, and ten thousand other such evils, which fill the world like an abundance of smoke fills a house. [These] have clouded the sight of the men inhabiting the world, not allowing them to look up . . . and to perceive the Creator as God, and to know what is pleasing to him. For this reason, it is necessary for lovers of truth to call out for aid—crying out inwardly from their chests, and with truth-loving reason—in order that someone outside the smoke-filled house may approach and open the door so that the light of the sun outside may be admitted into the house, that the smoke inside from the fire may be dispelled.^[79]

This simile of the smoke-filled house tells us something about how the Homilist thinks of the relationship between “reason” and “knowledge about God.” The simile illustrates a problem: humanity’s knowledge of God is obstructed by human corruptions. “Truth-loving reason” (φιλαλήθης λογισμός) recognizes this problem, but cannot itself provide the solution. While aware of the problem, reason can only “gesture for help,” but someone “outside the house” is needed to solve it. *This circumstance implies that obtaining knowledge of God requires moving beyond reason by means of revelation.* Hence the True Prophet:

τὸν μὲν οὖν βοηθὸν ἄνδρα τὸν ἀληθῆ προφήτην λέγω,
ὃς μόνος φωτίσαι ψυχὰς ἀνθρώπων δύναται, ὥστ’ ἂν
αὐτοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς δυνηθῆναι [ἡμᾶς] ἐνιδεῖν τῆς
αἰωνίου σωτηρίας τὴν ὁδόν . . . τούτου ἕνεκεν
προφήτου ἀληθοῦς ὅλον τὸ τῆς εὐσεβείας ἐδεήθη
πρᾶγμα, ἵνα ἡμῖν ἐρεῖ τὰ ὄντα ὡς ἔστιν καὶ ὡς δεῖ περὶ
πάντων πιστεύειν . . . διὸ πρὸ πάντων τὸν ἀληθῆ
προφήτην ζητεῖν δεῖ, ὅτι ἄνευ τούτου βέβαιόν τι
προσεῖναι ἀνθρώποις ἀδύνατον.

The helper is the man whom I call the True Prophet, who alone is able to enlighten the souls of humankind, so that with our own eyes we may be able to see the path of eternal salvation. . . . this is why the whole business of piety needed a True Prophet, that he might tell us the reality of things, as they are, and how we ought to believe concerning all things. . . . Wherefore before all else it is necessary to seek the True Prophet, because without this one it is not possible that any bit of certainty can come to humanity.^[80]

The Homilist describes the general plight of humanity and their need for God’s revelation, in the form of the True Prophet, by saying that humanity’s

knowledge of God’s will has been obfuscated by human evils, “which fill the world as smoke fills a house,” with the result that humanity is unable to perceive God.^[81] Someone “outside the house” is needed who can “open the door and let the smoke escape.” The Homilist identifies the True Prophet as this person.^[82] In this way, the True Prophet functions as an agent of divine revelation. Knowledge about God’s will, which is “clouded” by the “smoke” of human corruption, is attainable only with the aid of a certain “helper” (ὁ βοηθός), namely, the True Prophet. For, as Peter puts it a little later,

ὁ γὰρ τὴν ἀλήθειαν ζητῶν παρὰ τῆς ἑαυτοῦ ἀγνοίας
λαβεῖν πῶς ἂν δύναιτο;

for how can he obtain the truth who seeks it from
his own ignorance?^[83]

And as Clement reports in *Hom.* 1.20.1:

καὶ ὁμῶς ἀνέπαυσέν με, ἐκθέμενός μοι τίς ἐστὶν καὶ
πῶς εὐρίσκεται, καὶ ἀληθῶς εὐρετόν μοι παρασχὼν
αὐτόν, τῶν παρὰ ὀφθαλμοῖς ὀρωμένων ἐμφανεστέραν
τῆς <περὶ> τοῦ προφήτου ὁμιλίας τοῖς ὡσὶν δείξας τὴν
ἀλήθειαν.

At the same time, after [Peter] had shown me that the truth is more evident to the ears from the discourse about the prophet than things seen with the eyes, [Peter] satisfied me by explaining to me who [the True Prophet] is, how he is discovered, and by presenting him to me as he really ought to be discovered.

Now, like the smoke-filled-house analogy given above, *Hom.* 1.19 illustrates a similar solution to a similar predicament. Knowledge of God—in this case

“the whole business of religion” (ὅλον τὸ τῆς εὐσεβείας πρᾶγμα)—is obstructed by seemingly arbitrary philosophical discourse, as Peter explains to Clement:

ὥς οἴσθα καὶ σύ, μικρῷ τάξιον εἰπὼν ὥς πᾶσα
ὑπόθεσις ἀνασκευάζεται καὶ κατασκευάζεται καὶ πρὸς
τὴν τοῦ ἐκδικοῦντος δύναμιν ἢ αὐτὴ ἀληθὴς καὶ
ψευδὴς νομίζεται, ὥς μηκέτι τὰς ὑποθέσεις φαίνεσθαι ὅ
εἰσίν, ἀλλὰ παρὰ τοὺς ἐκδικοῦντας φαντασίαν
λαμβάνειν τοῦ εἶναι ἢ μὴ εἶναι ἀληθεῖς ἢ ψευδεῖς.
τούτου ἔνεκεν προφήτου ἀληθοῦς ὅλον τὸ τῆς
εὐσεβείας ἐδεήθη πρᾶγμα, ἵνα ἡμῖν ἐρεῖ τὰ ὄντα ὥς
ἔστιν καὶ ὥς δεῖ περὶ πάντων πιστεύειν.

As you also know, since you said just a moment ago, that every statement is assembled and overturned. According to the ability of whomever decides it to be so, the same thing is deemed true and false, with the result that statements are no longer seen for what they really are [i.e., as either true or false], but [any] grasping of an impression of something being or not being or as either true or false—this resides with whomever decides it to be so. On account of this circumstance the whole business of piety needed a True Prophet, that he might tell us the reality of things, as they are, and how we ought to believe concerning all things.^[84]

The relationship between “reason” and “knowledge of God” is described in terms similar to the smoke-filled-house passage we saw. Here, however, knowledge of God is obstructed by the apparent arbitrariness of philosophical discourse; “real comprehension” (φαντασίαν λαμβάνειν) merely depends on the rhetorical skill of the person making a particular

argument at the moment. “Right reason” (ὀρθὸς λογισμός, cf. *Hom.* 1.19.7) recognizes that this is so, but reason cannot of its own accord engender a more sure knowledge of things “as they really are,” much less any sure knowledge of God. Like the problem with the smoke-filled house, here too the solution is to be found in the person of the True Prophet. From the Homilist’s perspective, *what is needed is a move beyond reason by means of sacred revelation.*^[85]

Now, it is part of the Homilist’s general theory of knowing (not least when it comes to knowledge about God) that he quite strongly and consistently emphasizes prophecy over against philosophy, and revelation beyond reason.^[86] As Clement says at one time to his father,

Πολλὴ διαφορά . . . μεταξὺ τῶν θεοσεβείας λόγων καὶ
τῶν τῆς φιλοσοφίας. ὁ γὰρ τῆς ἀληθείας ἀπόδειξιν
ἔχει τὴν ἐκ προφητείας, ὁ δὲ τῆς φιλοσοφίας
καλλιλογίας παρέχων ἐκ στοχασμῶν δοκεῖ παριστᾶν
τὰς ἀποδείξεις.

There is a great difference . . . between the
principles of piety and those of philosophy; for the
former receives its proof from prophecy, while the
latter, though offering beautiful sentences, seems to
furnish proofs from conjectures.^[87]

It should be noted, however, that the Homilist does not favor abandoning philosophy or reason altogether. Indeed, “reason” is in large measure the animating force sustaining the harmony criterion itself. For even as the True Prophet’s teaching brings illumination to humanity, at the same time humanity’s “right reason” (ὀρθὸς λογισμός) serves to check, verify, and substantiate the authenticity of the True Prophet:

ὥστε πρῶτον χρῆ τὸν προφήτην πάσῃ τῇ προφητικῇ
ἐξετάσει δοκιμάσαντα καὶ ἐπιγνόντα ἀληθῆ, τοῦ

λοιποῦ τὰ πάντα αὐτῷ πιστεύειν καὶ μηκέτι τὸ καθ' ἓν ἕκαστον τῶν ὑπ' αὐτοῦ λεγομένων ἀνακρίνειν, ἀλλὰ λαμβάνειν αὐτὰ βέβαια ὄντα . . . ἀποδείξει γὰρ μιᾷ τῇ ἀπ' ἀρχῆς καὶ ἀκριβεῖ ἐξετάσει τῇ πανταχόθεν τὰ ὅλα ὀρθῶ εἴληπται λογισμῷ. διὸ πρὸ πάντων τὸν ἀληθῆ προφήτην ζητεῖν δεῖ, ὅτι ἄνευ τούτου βέβαιόν τι προσεῖναι ἀνθρώποις ἀδύνατον.

So first of all—after testing the Prophet by every means of testing prophecy, and after deciding he is true—it is necessary to trust him regarding all the rest; not to prejudge each one of his sayings, but to accept them as being certain. . . . For by means of a single, one-off demonstration and accurate examination from every angle, everything is received *by means of right reason*. This is why before all else it is necessary to seek the True Prophet, because without this one it is not possible that any bit of certainty can come to humanity.^[88]

As this passage shows, “right reason” (ὀρθὸς λογισμός) plays an important role in its capacity to “verify” the True Prophet’s credibility. Humanity is to receive by means of “right reason” (ὀρθῶ λαμβάνειν λογισμῷ) God’s revelation, both “natural” and “sacred.” Even so, God’s revelation is itself initially subject to a demonstration (ἀπόδειξις) and close scrutiny (ἀκριβὴς ἐξετάσις) for its validation.^[89] And it would seem from the passage above that this process of verification is a temporary, “one-time” event when it comes to “testing” the True Prophet. For once the True Prophet has been authenticated by means of right reason, henceforth the True Prophet sits above authentication.

Still, if humanity’s “right reason” can be applied to the True Prophet and his teaching—even if only for an “initial stage”—and if the True Prophet’s teaching is itself a criterion for evaluating the Torah in its written form, one can see how it is that the written Torah itself is also to be

evaluated by the application of this same “reason.” But when it comes to verifying sacred revelation in the form of Scripture, nothing is said about “restricting” the application of that reason to some “initial” phase of testing, as is the case when it comes to validating the True Prophet by means of right reason. The Homilist advocates the evaluation of Scripture by the application of reason in a much more sustained way. The harmony criterion—whereby the Scriptures are to be “checked against” creation, or at other times “checked” with reference to God’s character—requires the sustained use of humanity’s critical faculties—that is, right reason—and careful attention given to “what is rational” (τὸ εὖλογον). For the harmony criterion is in part an expression of the Homilist’s desire to uphold in Scripture what from his perspective is “rational,” particularly when it comes to what is known about God and ethical living.^[90] The goal of the next section is to examine further these rational elements characteristic of the Homilist’s approach, beginning with the theme of Scripture’s “agreement with creation.”

6.3. AGREEMENT WITH CREATION

The Homilist maintains that the “true” Scriptures are in agreement with creation. As a result of this situation, those Scriptures that do not “agree with” creation are deemed “false.” This idea represents what I earlier introduced as the primary element of the harmony criterion. That is, the Homilist shares the Judeo-Hellenistic distinction made between the Creator and the *creation*.^[91] The following five passages illustrate most clearly the essential idea of the first element of the harmony criterion:

1. τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ χειρόγραφον (λέγω δὲ τὸν οὐρανόν)
καθαράν καὶ βεβαίαν τὴν τοῦ πεποιηκότος δείκνυσιν
γνώμην.

God’s handwriting (I mean the heaven) displays the
intent of the One who made [the heaven] exact and
constant.^[92]

This passage reveals something essential about the Homilist’s thinking: God is revealed through creation. As Schoeps renders *Hom.*3.45.4, “die Schöpfung ist ein ‘Dokument, geschrieben mit Gottes Hand.’”^[93] (“Creation is a ‘document, written with God’s hand.’”) Thus, according to the harmony criterion, the natural world—God’s creation—serves as a reference point against which the Scriptures are to be checked:

2. Ὅσαι τῶν γραφῶν φωναὶ συμφωνοῦσιν τῇ ὑπ’
αὐτοῦ γενομένη κτίσει, ἀληθεῖς εἰσιν, ὅσαι δὲ
ἐναντία, ψευδεῖς τυγχάνουσιν.

Whatever expressions of the Scriptures are *in
harmony with the creation* that was made by [God]—
those expressions are true. But whatever expressions

are opposite to creation—those expressions are false.

[94]

The same idea is put in the mouth of Simon Magus, who, for the sake of argument, grants Peter's point in this regard:

3. τὰ περὶ θεοῦ (ὡς ἔφησ) ἐκ τῆς πρὸς τὴν κτίσιν
παραβολῆς ἔστι νοῆσαι.

One must understand the things [in Scripture]
concerning God (as you say) *by comparing them to the
creation*. [95]

The Homilist claims that the creation can serve as a source for human knowledge of God, for creation reflects something of God's own nature:

4. πῶς δὲ σκότος καὶ γνόφος καὶ θύελλα συνεῖναι
ἐδύνατο (καὶ γὰρ τοῦτο γέγραπται) τῷ καθαρὸν
συστήσαντι οὐρανὸν καὶ φῶς φαίνειν δημιουργήσαντι
τὸν ἥλιον καὶ πᾶσιν τοῖς ἀναριθμήτοις ἄστροις
ἀμεταμέλητον ὀρίσαντι τῶν δρόμων τὴν τάξιν;

As for the one who created a pure heaven—who
fashioned the sun to shine, and who assigned the
unchangeable course of revolutions to all the
innumerable stars—how is it possible for him to be
associated with *darkness, gloom, and tempest* (for this
is also written)? [96]

The reference to “darkness, gloom, and tempest” is from LXX Deut. 4:11, where Moses describes the peoples’ encounter at the foot of the mountain. Part of the Homilist’s aversion to this language is what it suggests of God if the verse is taken at face value. I will discuss the Homilist’s explanation of Deut. 4:11 in greater detail below. For the present, I simply note that the “pure heaven” here is believed to reflect in some sense the “purity” of the one who made it. *Hom.3.45.3* serves to highlight by way of stark contrast the light, salubrity, and constancy of the Creator God who made this “pure heaven.”^[97] The same passage also goes on to explain how this circumstance provides a litmus test for the scriptural “sayings accusatory of God,” that is, the false pericopes themselves:

5. οὕτως αἱ τοῦ τὸν οὐρανὸν κτίσαντος θεοῦ διάβολοι
φωναὶ καὶ ὑπὸ τῶν σὺν αὐταῖς ἐναντίων φωνῶν
ἀκυροῦνται καὶ ὑπὸ τῆς κτίσεως ἐλέγχονται· οὐ γὰρ
ὑπὸ χειρὸς προφητικῆς ἐγράφησαν, διὸ καὶ τῇ τοῦ τὰ
πάντα κτίσαντος θεοῦ χειρὶ ἐναντίαι φαίνονται.

In this way, the sayings accusatory of God who made the heaven are both rendered void by the opposite sayings which are alongside them, and *are censured by creation*, for they were not written by a prophetic hand. For this reason, they also appear opposite to *the hand of God* who made all things.^[98]

The Mosaic legislation in its pure, unadulterated form is in agreement with creation. The “true” passages of Scripture were handed down orally from the prophet Moses to the Seventy, and these passages are therefore in agreement with creation; they are in agreement with the “hand of God.” Conversely, the Pentateuch came to exist in its written form at the hands of subsequent transcribers who were not themselves prophets. Certain passages were therefore not written by “a prophetic hand,” and so they are not in agreement with the “hand of God.” The Pentateuch in its written

form is laced with false interpolations, which are at odds with and censured by creation.

As the above passages show, the Homilist maintains that expressions in Scripture are to be evaluated according to the degree to which they are perceived to be “in harmony” with God’s creation (from συμφωνεῖν, *Hom.*3.42.3).^[99] These passages represent the clearest, most explicit articulations of the harmony criterion at the theoretical level. I noted at the beginning of this chapter how Philo and Ptolemy provide relevant antecedents to the harmony criterion in a general way. At this point, we might inquire whether the harmony criterion in its theoretical formulation can be elucidated further by consultation with patristic sources. To this we now turn.

I have established that the Homilist categorically rejects allegorism as a matter of principle. The Homilist indeed espouses a “literalist” approach to the Scriptures. Now, we also know that the “literalist” method was taken up by Christian exegetes and practiced especially in Antioch.^[100] Earlier we identified linkage between the Homilist and Diodore of Tarsus at the level of shared terminology in their respective discussions of the allegorical method. Second, the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* are generally believed to derive from Syria. Third, scholars generally assign the composition/redaction of *Hom.* to the third or fourth centuries.^[101] These factors invite us to enquire further into Antiochene sources for any light they shed on the Homilist’s notion of the harmony criterion.

Let us then first consult Diodore of Tarsus (d. 392), who is regarded as the founder of Antiochene exegesis in its classical formulation. Diodore’s commentary on the Psalms is relevant to my study because it is of roughly the same vintage and provenance as *Hom.* Earlier I discussed his preface to his *Commentary on the Psalms*, where Diodore describes the advantage of the “literalist” approach he promotes. In particular, I called attention to the terminology Diodore employs when he faults pagan allegorism on the grounds that it “introduces foreign material” (ἀλλόκοτα ἐπείσφerein). We identified parallel terminology in the Homilist. In his *Commentary on the Psalms*, Diodore also affirms a general agreement between the “law of God” and the “law discerned in nature.” The relevant passage is worth citing in full:

καὶ ἐπάγει λοιπὸν καθόλου· Ὁ νόμος κυρίου ἄμωμος, ἐπιστρέφων ψυχάς. Ὁ νόμος κυρίου ἀντὶ τοῦ ὁ διὰ τῆς κτίσεως θεωρούμενος. Ὁ γὰρ ποιεῖ, φησὶν, ὁ γραπτὸς νόμος παιδεύων τοὺς εἰδότας τὰ γράμματα τὸ οἰκεῖον βούλημα, τοῦτο, φησί, ποιεῖ καὶ ὁ διὰ τῆς κτίσεως νόμος παιδεύων τοὺς συνετῶς ὁρῶντας ὅτι ἔστι τις δημιουργὸς τῶν ὁρωμένων. Ἡ μαρτυρία κυρίου πιστή, σοφίζουσα νήπια. Τὸ αὐτὸ λέγει πάλιν. Ὡς περ γὰρ ἐπὶ τοῦ νόμου τοῦ γραπτοῦ τὸν αὐτὸν καὶ νόμον καλεῖ καὶ μαρτυρίαν καὶ δικαίωμα καὶ ἐντολήν, κατὰ τὸν αὐτὸν τύπον καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς κτίσεως τὰ αὐτὰ τίθησιν ὀνόματα ἵνα δείξῃ ὅτι ὡς ὁ νόμος ὁ γραπτὸς τοὺς ἀνοήτους πεπαιδευμένους ἀποτελεῖ, οὕτως καὶ ὁ διὰ τῆς κτίσεως νόμος τοὺς εὐσεβεῖν ἐπιθυμοῦντας εὐσεβεστέρους ποιεῖ. . . . Εἰπὼν οὖν· Ἡ μαρτυρία κυρίου, ἐπάγει· Τὰ δικαιώματα κυρίου εὐθέα, εὐφραίνοντα καρδίαν. Τὸ αὐτὸ πάλιν λέγει καὶ ἐξῆς· Ἡ ἐντολὴ κυρίου τηλαυγής, φωτίζουσα ὀφθαλμούς. Ἀντὶ τοῦ τοῦ πρόσταγμα τὸ κελεῦον ἡμᾶς διὰ τῆς κτίσεως ἀναλογίζεσθαι τὸν πεποιηκότα κατὰ τὸ γεγραμμένον τῷ σοφῷ Σολομῶντι ὅτι Ἐκ γὰρ μεγέθους καὶ καλλονῆς κτισμάτων ἀναλόγως ὁ δημιουργὸς αὐτῶν θεωρεῖται.

He then goes on in general terms, *The law of the Lord is faultless, correcting souls*(v. 7). *The law of the Lord means that discerned in nature*. What the written law does by teaching its intentions to those with a knowledge of writing the law in nature does by teaching those with an understanding eye that there is a Creator of visible realities. *The testimony of the Lord is reliable, giving wisdom to the simple*. Once again it says the same thing: just as in the case of the written law he refers also to the same law as testimony, ordinance, commandment, in terms of the same figure in the case of nature he employs the same words to

show that as the written law makes simple people learned, so too the law in nature makes more religious those with a yen to be religious. . . . Having mentioned *the testimony of the Lord*, then, he goes on, *The ordinances of the Lord are right, gladdening the heart*(v. 8). He says the same thing also in what follows, *The commandment of the Lord is clear, giving light to the eyes*, that is, the command given us in nature to use our reason to find the Creator, according to the text from the wise Solomon, “From the greatness and the beauty of created things the Creator is discerned by reasoning” [*Wis.* 13:5].^[102]

In Diodore’s thinking, there exists a rather close connection between the “law of the Lord” and the “natural law.” Indeed, here the “law of the Lord” is interpreted as “standing for” (ἀντί) the “law discerned through nature” (ὁ διὰ τῆς κτίσεως θεωρούμενος). For Diodore, the written Scripture and the natural world share overlapping functions: the written law stimulates “education”; the natural law stimulates “piety.” Furthermore, the “commandment of the Lord” (which, for Diodore, is the equivalent of “the law of the Lord”) is interpreted as “the command given us in nature to use our reason to find the Creator” (τὸ κελεῖν ἡμᾶς διὰ τῆς κτίσεως ἀναλογίζεσθαι τὸν πεποιηκότα). Thus, in Diodore’s thinking, there exists linkage between (1) Scripture’s agreement with nature, (2) “reason” (ἀναλογίζεσθαι), and (3) knowledge of God revealed in nature—“natural revelation.” Finally, when Diodore speaks of the natural world, he, like the Homilist, consistently uses κτίσις (and not φύσις).

Another important passage comes from Theodoret of Cyrrhus (c. 393–c. 453), who was “the last of the famous theologians of the Antiochene school.”^[103] In his commentary on Psalm 19, Theodoret discusses three “laws,” which exist “in harmony with” each other:

Τῶν θείων νόμων εἶδη τρία παρὰ τοῦ μακαρίου διδασκόμεθα Παύλου. Τὸν μὲν γὰρ δίχα γραμμάτων ἔφη διὰ τῆς κτίσεως καὶ τῆς φύσεως τοῖς ἀνθρώποις δεδόσθαι. Τὰ γὰρ ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ, φησὶν, ἀπὸ κτίσεως κόσμου τοῖς ποιήμασι νοούμενα καθορᾶται· καὶ πάλιν· Ὅταν γὰρ ἔθνη, τὰ μὴ νόμον ἔχοντα, φύσει τὰ τοῦ νόμου ποιεῖ, οὗτοι νόμον μὴ ἔχοντες, ἑαυτοῖς εἰσι νόμος· τὸν δὲ διὰ τοῦ μεγάλου Μωσέως ἐν γράμμασι παρεσχῆσθαι. Τῶν παραβάσεων γὰρ, φησὶ, χάριν ὁ νόμος προσετέθη, διαταγὴς δι’ ἀγγέλων ἐν χειρὶ μεσίτου. Οἶδε δὲ καὶ τρίτον μετὰ τούτους τεθέντα, τὸν τῆς χάριτος· Ὁ γὰρ νόμος, φησὶ, τοῦ πνεύματος τῆς ζωῆς ἠλευθέρωσέ με ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου τῆς ἁμαρτίας καὶ τοῦ θανάτου. Σύμφωνα τούτοις καὶ ὁ μακάριος Δαβὶδ ἐν τῷδε τῷ ψαλμῷ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους παιδεύει, καὶ κατὰ τὴν αὐτὴν τάξιν. Πρῶτον μὲν τὸν ἐν τῇ κτίσει κηρύττοντα τὸν δημιουργόν· εἶτα τὸν διὰ Μωσέως δοθέντα, τοῦ δημιουργοῦ πλείονα γινῶσιν τοῖς προσέχειν ἐθέλουσιν ἐντιθέντα· μετὰ τοῦτον, τὸν τῆς χάριτος, τέλεον τὰς ψυχὰς ἀποκαθαίροντα, καὶ τῆς παρούσης ἐλευθεροῦντα φθορᾶς· οὗ δὲ χάριν καὶ εἰς τὸ τέλος ἡμᾶς ὁ ψαλμὸς παραπέμπει, τὴν καινὴν ἐν τῷ τέλει διαθήκην προαγορεύων.

We learn three kinds of divine laws from blessed Paul. One unwritten kind he said was given to human beings in creation and nature: “From the creation of the world,” he says, “his invisible attributes have been understood and espied in created things”; and again, “For when the Gentiles, who do not have the law, practice the obligations of the law instinctively, despite having no law they are a law to themselves.” He says another law was provided in writing through the mighty Moses; “The law was added because of transgressions,” he says, “ordained through angels in the hand of a mediator.” He knew also of a third one

imposed after these, the law of grace: “For the law of the Spirit of life,” he says, “has set me free from the law of sin and death.” Blessed David in this psalm teaches human beings the harmony between these, following the same order: firstly the one the Creator preaches in creation; then the one given through Moses, instilling a greater knowledge of the Creator to those willing to attend; after that, the law of grace, perfectly purifying souls and freeing them from the present destruction. This is in fact the reason the psalm also refers us “to the end,” naming the New Testament in the end.^[104]

Theodoret’s point of departure for his comment on Psalm 19 is (his interpretation of) Paul’s words. Theodoret understands Paul as teaching three distinct “laws”: (1) an unwritten, “natural” law, (2) the written, Mosaic law, and (3) the “law of grace.” For my present purposes, I am focusing only on the first two. What is especially noteworthy in this regard is that Theodoret asserts that the “natural law” (ὁ διὰ τῆς κτίσεως καὶ τῆς φύσεως) and the Mosaic legislation (ὁ διὰ τοῦ μεγάλου Μωσέως) are “in harmony with” each other. As Theodoret puts it, “Blessed David in this psalm teaches human beings the harmony between these” (σύμφωνα τούτοις). Theodoret’s terminology at this point is strikingly close to that of the Homilist.

Antiochene sources, represented here by Diodore of Tarsus and Theodoret of Cyrrhus, espouse the notion that there exists congruity between the Scriptures and the natural world. In the case of Diodore, he identifies the “law of God” with “the law discerned in nature.” In the case of Theodoret, he says there exists “harmony” between the unwritten “natural law” and the written Mosaic legislation. The Homilist’s position accords well with these Antiochenes on this point. But the Homilist moves a step beyond the Antiochenes. *For the Homilist will appropriate the circumstance of Scripture’s “harmony with creation” and employ it as a*

criterion for evaluating those Scriptures—something not done by the Antiochenes. How the Homilist does so remains to be seen.

6.4. AGREEMENT WITH GOD

The notion that the Scriptures are to be evaluated with reference to the degree to which they are “in agreement with God” represents the secondary element of the harmony criterion. Though these are to be distinguished from one another, the Homilist sees a close connection between “agreement with creation” and “agreement with God.” This connection emerges in the dispute between Peter and Simon in *Hom.* 3.40–42, which concerns (among other things) contrary statements about God in the Scriptures. The specific terminology employed in both *Hom.* 3.42.3 and in *Hom.* 3.42.5 is instructive. For both passages employ συμφωνεῖν/συμφώνως (“in harmony with”). In *Hom.* 3.42.3, the reference point for συμφωνεῖν is creation:

Ὅσαι τῶν γραφῶν φωναὶ συμφωνοῦσιν τῇ ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ
γενομένη κτίσει, κτλ.

Whatever expressions of the Scriptures are in
harmony with the creation, etc.

Then, in *Hom.* 3.42.5, the reference point for συμφωνεῖν is the Creator. Peter and Simon are engaged in a dispute over the question of Adam’s “blindness.” On Simon’s reading, Adam was created blind (Ἀδὰμ καὶ τυφλὸς κτίζεται).^[105] The biblical basis for Simon’s claim that Adam was created blind comes from Gen. 3:5 and 7, which say “your eyes will be opened” (διανοιχθήσονται ὑμῶν οἱ ὀφθαλμοί), and “the eyes of both were opened” (διηνοιχθησαν οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ τῶν δύο).^[106] Initially, Simon maintains that these words in Genesis 3 meant that Adam was indeed physically blind. But Peter pushes him on this, pointing out that God “would not have pointed out the tree of knowledge to a blind man.”^[107] Simon replies that Genesis 3 is saying Adam’s “mind was blind” (τυφλὸν ἔλεγεν τὸν νοῦν αὐτοῦ).^[108] To which Peter then replies,

Πῶς καὶ τὸν νοῦν τυφλὸς εἶναι ἐδύνατο, ὁ . . .
συμφώνως τῷ κτίσαντι αὐτὸν, κτλ.

How could he be blind with respect to his mind,
who, in harmony with his Creator, etc.

The parallel terminology in *Hom.* 3.42.3 and 3.42.5 illustrates the close connection between “agreement with creation” on the one hand and “agreement with God” on the other. Thus Peter maintains,

ἐγὼ φημι ὅτι εἰ τὰ κατὰ τοῦ θεοῦ γεγραμμένα ἀληθῆ
εἴη, οὕπω τὸν θεὸν δείκνυσιν μοχθηρόν. καὶ ὁ Σίμων
ἔφη· Πῶς τοῦτο συστήσαι δύνασαι; καὶ ὁ Πέτρος·
Ὅτι ταῖς αὐτὸν κακῶς λεγούσαις φωναῖς τὰ ἐναντία
γέγραπται, οὗ ἕνεκεν οὐδ’ ὁπότερον βεβαιωθῆναι
δύναται. καὶ ὁ Σίμων· Πῶς οὖν τῶν γραφῶν μὲν αὐτὸν
κακὸν λεγουσῶν, τῶν δὲ ἀγαθόν, τὸ ἀληθὲς ἔστιν
ἐπιγινῶναι;

“I say that even if the things written [in Scripture]
against God should be authentic, they in no way
demonstrate that God is actually wicked.” Then
Simon asked, “How is it possible to maintain this?”
Then Peter said, “Because opposite things are written
[which are contrary] to those sayings that speak evil of
God. Therefore, neither one can be substantiated [by
itself].” Then Simon said, “So how is it possible to
know the truth when some Scriptures say God is
wicked, while others say he is good?”^[109]

As Peter sees it, passages of Scripture that speak evil of God are “canceled out” by passages that say the opposite.^[110] How, then, would one move

forward from this dilemma? It is precisely at this very point that Peter answers Simon’s question with one of the key statements about the harmony criterion I listed above and now repeat here:

“Ὅσαι τῶν γραφῶν φωναὶ συμφωνοῦσιν τῇ ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ
γενομένη κτίσει, ἀληθεῖς εἰσιν, ὅσαι δὲ ἐναντίαι,
ψευδεῖς τυγχάνουσιν.

Whatever expressions of the Scriptures are in
harmony with the creation that was made by [God]—
those expressions are true. But whatever expressions
are opposite to creation—those expressions are false.

[111]

The harmony criterion can be used to deal with contradictory statements about God in the Scriptures. In the case of such opposing, contrary statements, the one deemed to be “in harmony with creation” is the one that is taken as the “true” Scripture. But as the debate between Simon and Peter continues, Peter also maintains that the Scriptures are to be evaluated by the degree to which they are “in harmony with the Creator.” Thus the Homilist appeals to the criterion of “agreement with God” in order to deal with other difficulties, such as the “offensive” language of Deut. 4:11:

καὶ προσήλθετε καὶ ἔστητε ὑπὸ τὸ ὄρος καὶ τὸ ὄρος
ἐκαίετο πυρὶ ἕως τοῦ οὐρανοῦ σκότος γνόφος θύελλα.

You approached and stood at the foot of the
mountain, and the mountain was burning with fire up
to the sky—darkness, gloom, tempest.

The association of gloomy darkness with God in this biblical passage was of interest (and potential embarrassment) to some ancient interpreters. It seemed to make room for critics to say harsh things of God.^[112] Origen, for example, attests to certain “heterodox” exegetes who derived proof from such language in passages like Deut. 4:11 that the Old Testament portrays an inferior Creator God. In this case, the language of “darkness” (σκότος) incited the heterodox to, as Origen puts it, “accept most shameful doctrines about the Maker” and to give themselves over to “fiction and myths.” As Origen writes in his *Commentary on the Gospel of John*,

Ἀναγκαῖον δὲ ἐν τούτοις ἡμᾶς γενομένους
ἐπισημειώσασθαι ὅτι οὐ πάντως, εἴ που ὀνομάζεται
σκότος, ἐπὶ τοῦ χείρονος λαμβάνεται, ἔσθ' ὅτε δὲ καὶ
ἐπὶ τοῦ κρείττονος ἀναγράφεται· ὅπερ οἱ ἑτερόδοξοι
μὴ διαστειλάμενοι δυσφημώτατα περὶ τοῦ δημιουργοῦ
δόγματα παραδεξάμενοι ἀπέστησαν αὐτοῦ,
ἀναπλάσμασιν μύθων ἑαυτοὺς ἐπιδεδωκότες. Πῶς οὖν
καὶ πότε καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ κρείττονος τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ σκότους
παραλαμβάνεται, παραδεικτέον ἤδη. Σκότος, γνόφος,
θύελλα ἐν τῇ Ἐξόδῳ περὶ τὸν θεὸν εἶναι λέγεται καὶ ἐν
τῷ 13' ψαλμῷ· Ὁ θεὸς ἔθετο σκότος ἀποκρυφὴν
αὐτοῦ, κύκλῳ αὐτοῦ ἡ σκηνὴ αὐτοῦ, σκοτεινὸν ὕδωρ
ἐν νεφέλαις ἀέρων. . . . Ἐὰν δέ τις ταῖς τοιαύταις
προσκόπτῃ ἐκδοχαῖς, προαγέσθω ἀπὸ τε τῶν
σκοτεινῶν λόγων καὶ τῶν διδομένων ὑπὸ θεοῦ Χριστῷ
θησαυρῶν σκοτεινῶν, ἀποκρύφων, ἀοράτων· οὐκ
ἄλλο γάρ τι ἡγοῦμαι εἶναι τοὺς σκοτεινοὺς θησαυροὺς
ἐν Χριστῷ ἀποκαλυπτομένους—τὸ σκότος ἔθετο ὁ
θεὸς ἀποκρυφὴν ἑαυτοῦ ἢ ὁ ἅγιος νοήσῃ παραβολὴν
καὶ σκοτεινὸν λόγον.

With reference to these things, we must point out that darkness is not to be understood in a bad sense every time it is mentioned. There are times when Scripture speaks of it in a good sense. The heterodox

do not make this distinction, thereby accepting most shameful doctrines about the Creator. They have revolted from him, and given themselves to fictions and myths. Therefore, we must now show how and when the name “darkness” is taken in a good sense. Darkness, gloom, tempest in Exodus is said to be round about God, and in the seventeenth Psalm:^[113] he made darkness his secret place, his tent round about him, dark water in clouds of the air. . . . Should any be offended by these interpretations, let him be led forth from both the dark sayings and from the hidden and invisible treasures of darkness which are given to Christ by God. In the same way I regard the treasures of darkness hidden in Christ [on the basis of when it says] God made darkness his secret place, or the saint shall understand a parable and dark saying.^[114]

Now, by “the heterodox” in this passage, Origen has in mind the Gnostics broadly speaking, the Valentinians especially, and often Heracleon (fl. c. 155–180 ce) in particular. According to Joseph W. Trigg, “Of the Gnostics, Valentinus and his followers had the most profound influence on Origen.”^[115] In fact, Eusebius reports that Ambrose (to whom Origen’s commentary is dedicated) had been a Valentinian before Origen converted him.^[116] Irenaeus mentions that the Valentinians used John’s Gospel extensively, and Valentinus’s disciple Heracleon wrote the earliest known commentary on John’s Gospel.^[117] Ronald E. Heine suggests,

While Origen obviously intended to refute Heracleon’s understanding of John, he seems to have had a broader goal in mind. Heracleon’s comments are not the focus of Origen’s arguments in the Commentary on the Gospel of John in the way that Celsus’ comments are the focus of his arguments in

Against Celsus. . . . There are, however, large sections in the Commentary on the Gospel of John where there is no reference to Heracleon. Heracleon's work may have been the stimulus that moved Origen to action, but he seems to have intended to write a commentary that would be independent of Heracleon's work, and that would provide an interpretation of John's Gospel that would appeal to Christian intellectuals. [\[118\]](#)

We have already seen a number of points of contact between the Homilist and Ptolemy, another personal disciple of Valentinus.

Marcion, too, was known to associate the Creator God of the Bible with "darkness," and the alien god with "light":

Quam ob rem, inconsiderantissime Marcion, alium deum lucis ostendisse debueras, alium vero tenebram, quo facilius alium bonitatis, alium severitatis persuasisses.

Therefore, most thoughtless Marcion, you ought rather to have shown that there is one god of light and another of darkness: after that you would have found it easier to persuade us that there is one god of kindness and another of severity. [\[119\]](#)

Similarly,

Prius itaque debueras alium deum luminis, alium tenebrarum determinasse, ut ita posses alium legis, alium evangelii asseverasse.

And so you ought first to have laid it down that there was one god of light and another of darkness: then you could have affirmed that there was one god of the law and another of the gospel.^[120]

In *Hom.* 3.45, the Homilist himself takes issue with the Gnostic and/or Valentinian association of “darkness” with the Creator God of the Scriptures, and rejects such an association:

πῶς δὲ σκότος καὶ γνόφος καὶ θύελλα συνεῖναι
ἐδύνατο (καὶ γὰρ τοῦτο γέγραπται) τῷ καθαρὸν
συστήσαντι οὐρανὸν καὶ φῶς φαίνειν δημιουργήσαντι
τὸν ἥλιον καὶ πᾶσιν τοῖς ἀναριθμήτοις ἄστροις
ἀμεταμέλητον ὀρίσαντι τῶν δρόμων τὴν τάξιν;

As for the one who created a pure heaven—who fashioned the sun to shine, and who assigned the unchangeable course of revolutions to all the innumerable stars—how is it possible for him to be associated with darkness, gloom, and tempest (for this is also written)?^[121]

In this passage, the Homilist is addressing the second of two related problematic issues: (1) the association of God with animal sacrifice and (2) the association of God with “darkness.”^[122] The Homilist (like Origen) is responding to the Gnostic/Valentinian charge that the lesser Creator God of the Scriptures is associated with gloomy darkness. For his part, the Homilist maintains that such Scriptures that speak of “darkness, gloom, and tempest” in connection with God are to be rejected as false, for they do not accord with the nature of God. The Homilist is consistent in his exegetical approach; he does not seek to sanitize the noxious imagery of Deut. 4:11 by recourse to the allegorical method. His concern for the *sensus litteralis* is

maintained, if only to reject the passage after subjecting it to the harmony criterion.

Origen's words above serve to illustrate that Deut. 4:11 was indeed used by "heterodox" critics. Origen sought to sanitize the offensive language by looking to other passages in Scripture (i.e., in the New Testament) that use "darkness" in what Origen calls a "good sense." The Homilist is faced with the same difficulty posed by the same offensive language. He differs from Origen in his own reply to the critics of Scripture. The Homilist employs his harmony criterion, determines that Deut. 4:11 is not in agreement with God, and therefore rejects it as false.

6.5. THE HARMONY CRITERION AND THE PROBLEM OF POLYTHEISM IN THE PENTATEUCH

I have thus far examined how the Homilist articulates the question of how humanity can know God. We have seen that, for the Homilist, knowledge of God can be had from natural revelation and from sacred revelation. It remains to be seen how the harmony criterion finds expression in actual practice. The remainder of this chapter considers how the harmony criterion is “practically applied” to two specific “problems” within the Pentateuch. The problems under consideration are (1) the presence of polytheism in the Pentateuch, and (2) the problem of animal sacrifice. For some Scriptures imply the existence of more than one god. And a good deal of the Pentateuch pertains to the sacrificial cultus in general, and advocates animal sacrifice in particular. In the Homilist’s estimation, both types of Scripture fail to pass muster, for they do not meet the “rational” demands of the harmony criterion.

Given the general Jewish-Christian coloring of the Pseudo-Clementines, it comes as no surprise that the Homilies are thoroughly monotheistic in orientation. To waver in one’s commitment to monotheism, or to entertain worshiping any other (so-called) gods is to run the risk of committing a heinous impiety. Schoeps has already pointed out, “Monotheism or polytheism is the theme of the dialogue of the fourth book of the *Kērygmata Petrou*.”^[123] As Peter makes clear,

πασῶν οὖν μείζων ἐστὶν ἀσέβεια τὸ τὸν μόνον πάντων
καταλείψαντα δεσπότην πολλοὺς τοὺς οὐκ ὄντας ὡς
ὄντας σέβειν θεούς.

Forsaking the only Master of all [and] worshiping
many who are not actually gods, as if they were gods
—this constitutes an impiety greater than all.^[124]

Throughout *Hom.*, “piety” and “monotheism” are closely linked. Conversely, “impiety” (ἡ ἀσέβεια) and “polytheism” are equally linked. As *Hom.* 3.7.1. makes clear,

ἡ δὲ εἰς αὐτὸν ἀσέβειά ἐστιν τὸ ἐν τῷ τῆς θεοσεβείας
λόγῳ ὄντα τελευτᾶν λέγοντα ἄλλον εἶναι θεόν, ἢ ὥς
κρείττονα ἢ ὥς ἥττονα ἢ ὁπώσποτε λέγοντα παρὰ τὸν
ὄντως ὄντα.

Impiety against [God] is, in the matter of religion, to die saying that there exists another god, whether as superior or inferior, or, however, saying that there is one besides the one who actually exists.

Simon sets out to argue that the Creator God of the Scriptures is a lower deity, inferior to another God, who is “perfect, unknown, good, and impervious to passions” (τέλειος, ἀνενδεής, ἀγαθός, πάντων χαλεπῶν ἀπηλλαγμένος παθῶν).^[125] Simon intends to argue his position on the basis of Scripture. Peter makes it clear that the only way Simon can do this, however, is on the basis of the false pericopes.^[126] Simon, at his first appearance in the narrative (*Hom.* 3.38), counters Peter by adducing the testimony of the Scriptures:

Τί ψευδόμενος ἀπατᾶν θέλεις τὸν παρεστῶτά σοι
ιδιώτην ὄχλον, πείθων αὐτὸν θεοὺς μήτε νομίζειν μήτε
λέγειν ἐξὸν εἶναι, τῶν παρὰ Ἰουδαίοις δημοσίων
βίβλων πολλοὺς θεοὺς εἶναι λεγουσῶν;

Why do you wish to lie and deceive the unlearned crowd standing around you, persuading them that it is illegitimate either to think or say that there are [many] gods, given that the Jewish books themselves say there are many gods?^[127]

Simon sets Scripture's own witness to the presence of polytheism against Peter's opposing claim for creational monotheism, the "one and only God who made heaven and earth" (ὁ εἷς καὶ μόνος θεός ὃς οὐρανὸν ἔκτισε).^[128] Peter takes creational monotheism as a given. Clement likewise advocates philosophical monotheism:

οὕτως ἀνάγκη τινὰ εἶναι νοῦν ἀγέννητον τεχνίτην, ὃς
τὰ στοιχεῖα ἢ διεσπῶτα συνήγαγεν ἢ συνόντα
ἀλλήλοις πρὸς ζώου γένεσιν τεχνικῶς ἐκέρασεν καὶ ἔν
ἐκ πάντων ἔργον ἀπετέλεσεν· ἀδύνατον γὰρ ἄνευ
τινὸς νοῦ μείζονος πάνου σοφὸν ἔργον ἀποτελεῖσθαι.

Thus we are compelled to believe that there is some unbegotten craftsman, who either assembled the raw elements together (if they were separate) or (if they were together) he artistically mixed them together in order to generate life, and bring to completion one work out of it all. For it is impossible, without a certain mind which is greater than it, for such intelligent work to be wrought.^[129]

Both Peter and Clement are used by the Homilist to convey his philosophical outlook underlying the harmony criterion. According to Simon, the witness of Scripture (sacred revelation) argues against the witness of creation (natural revelation). On the other hand, Peter employs the witness of creation together with "what is rational" (τὸ εὐλογον) as a criterion for assessing Scripture.

The debates between Peter and Simon in *Hom.* 16 address the recurring problem of those passages within the Pentateuch that, taken at face value, seem to make the case for polytheism. Peter has already offered something of a rule of thumb for recognizing false pericopes: "Everything that is spoken or written against God is false," he says.^[130] In particular, a

false pericope is easily recognized if it contains traces of polytheism. As Peter asks,

πῶς δὲ ἔστιν αὐτόν τινα μοναρχικὴν ψυχὴν ἔχειν καὶ
ὅσιον γενέσθαι, προειληφότα ὅτι πολλοὶ εἰσιν θεοὶ καὶ
οὐχ εἷς;

How is it that he can have a monarchic soul, and be
holy, who supposes that there are many gods, and not
only one? [\[131\]](#)

The term “monarchic soul” (μοναρχικὴ ψυχή) is only attested in *Hom.*
However, something similar can be seen in the work of Gregory of Nyssa
(c. 335–395), a rough contemporary of the Homilist, who describes the soul
as being in some sense “adapted for royalty”:

σκεῦος εἰς βασιλείας ἐνέργειαν ἐπιτήδειον τὴν
ἡμετέραν φύσιν ὁ ἀριστοτέχνης ἐδημιούργησε . . . καὶ
αὐτῷ τῷ τοῦ σώματος σχήματι τοιοῦτον εἶναι
παρασκευάσας, οἷον ἐπιτηδείως πρὸς βασιλείαν ἔχειν.

The best craftsman [i.e., God] fashioned our nature
as an implement fitting for royal activity . . . preparing
[our nature] by the very form of the body to be such as
to be carefully adapted for royalty. [\[132\]](#)

As he continues, Gregory emphasizes this “royal” aspect of the soul:

ἡ μὲν γὰρ ψυχὴ τὸ βασιλικόν τε καὶ ἐπηρμένον
αὐτόθεν δείκνυσι . . . ἐκ τοῦ ἀδέσποτον αὐτὴν εἶναι
καὶ αὐτεξούσιον ἰδίῳις θελήμασιν αὐτοκρατορικῶς
διοικουμένην. Τίνος γὰρ ἄλλον τοῦτο, καὶ οὐχὶ
βασιλέως ἐστίν;

For right away the soul shows its royal and exalted aspect . . . from the fact that it is independent of a master, and is self-governed, ordered autocratically by its own will. For to whom else does this belong if not a king?^[133]

Furthermore, Gregory explains how this “royal” character of the soul is also linked with the idea that “human nature” (ἡ ἀνθρωπίνη φύσις) has been “impressed” with God’s nature (“shape”?), on the analogy of craftsmen who manufacture statuettes of rulers:

γὰρ κατὰ τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην συνήθειαν οἱ τὰς εἰκόνας
τῶν κρατούντων κατασκευάζοντες, τὸν τε χαρακτῆρα
τῆς μορφῆς ἀναμάσσονται . . . καὶ λέγεται κατὰ
συνήθειαν καὶ ἡ εἰκὼν, βασιλεύς· οὕτω καὶ ἡ
ἀνθρωπίνη φύσις, ἐπειδὴ πρὸς τὴν ἀρχὴν ἄλλων
κατεσκευάζετο, διὰ τῆς πρὸς τὸν βασιλέα τοῦ παντὸς
ὁμοιότητος, οἷόν τις ἔμψυχος εἰκὼν ἀνεστάθη,
κοινονοῦσα τῷ ἀρχετύπῳ καὶ τῆς ἀξίας καὶ τοῦ
ὀνόματος.

Ordinarily those who manufacture images of rulers impress the mark of their shape . . . and the image is commonly called a “king.” So also the human nature, since it was prepared with a view to dominion over the rest (owing to its likeness with the King of all), was

set up as a “living image,” sharing with the Archetype both rank and name.^[134]

Both the “royal” imagery and the “impression” terminology here in Gregory may help shed light on the Homilist’s μοναρχικὴ ψυχὴ, as well as his own use of similar “impression” language (see below). For the Homilist’s part, the basic meaning of μοναρχικὴ ψυχὴ is to be seen as a reference to the harmony criterion. Μοναρχικὴ ψυχὴ refers to the soul that is “in harmony” with its Creator by virtue of the fact that it reflects especially the “singularity” of its Creator.^[135]

Even so, the Pentateuch contains just as many texts supporting the idea that there are many gods as those that say there is only one. One passage in particular, Gen. 1:26, seems to explicitly refute the idea that God alone created the cosmos. The first person plural in the phrase “let us make humankind” does not seem to allow much room for such an idea to stand.

For his part, Simon adduces several texts that, he thinks, seem to “prove” the existence of more than one god. But Peter asserts that there is “one God who made heaven, earth, and everything in them” and that “it is not permitted to speak or think there is another.”^[136] Simon points out that, on the contrary, the Scriptures do in fact mention that there are many gods. The following list emerges from *Hom.* 16.6, representing the passages Simon adduces to support his position:

1. “You shall become like gods” (Gen. 3:5).
2. “Look, Adam has become like one of us” (Gen. 3:22).
3. “You shall not revile the gods, nor curse the rulers of your people” (Exod. 12:27).
4. “Did another god dare to enter and take for himself a nation from the midst of another nation as did I the Lord God?” (Deut. 4:34).
5. “Take heed lest you go and serve other gods whom your fathers did not know” (Deut. 13:6).
6. “Your God is the Lord, he is God of gods” (Deut. 10:17).

Peter, in turn, matches Simon's catalog with six pentateuchal texts of his own. These passages, Peter maintains, either explicitly or implicitly verify that only one God really exists—the God of the Jews. They are as follows:^[137]

1. “Look, the heaven of heavens belongs to the Lord your God” (Deut. 10:14).
2. “The Lord your God, he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth below, and there is none other except him” (Deut. 4:39).
3. “The Lord your God, he is God of gods” (Deut. 10:17).^[138]
4. “The great and true God, who does not show favoritism nor accept bribes, implements justice for the orphan and widow” (Deut. 10:17).
5. You shall fear the Lord your God, and you shall fear him only” (Deut. 6:13).
6. “Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is one” (Deut. 6:4).

So Peter and Simon come to an impasse. Each has brought forth scriptural proofs for their own contrary positions. Simon puts it well when he says,

ἐπεὶ οὖν αὐταὶ αἱ γραφαὶ πολλοὺς λέγουσιν εἶναι
θεοὺς καὶ ἄλλοτε ἓνα μόνον εἶναι . . . πρὸς τοῦτο τί δεῖ
λογίσασθαι ἢ ὅτι αὐταὶ ἡμᾶς αἱ γραφαὶ πλανῶσιν;

Since these very Scriptures say at one time that there are many gods, and at another time that there is only one . . . what are we to make of this, but that the Scriptures themselves lead astray?^[139]

Such is the question. What follows, then, in *Hom.* 16.10.1–10 is Peter's solution to this particular exegetical “problem”:

Οὐ πλανῶσιν, ἀλλ' ἐλέγχουσιν καὶ εἰς φανερόν
ἄγουσιν τὴν ἐν ἐκάστῳ κατὰ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐνδομυχοῦσαν
ὥσπερ ὄφεως κακὴν προαίρεσιν. πολλοῖς γὰρ καὶ
διαφόροις τύποις ἐοικυῖαι πρόκεινται. ἕκαστος οὖν
κηρῷ ἐοικυῖαν τὴν αὐτοῦ προαίρεσιν ἔχων,
περιβλεψάμενος αὐτὰς καὶ πάντα εὐρών ἐν αὐταῖς,
ὅποιον θεὸν εἶναι θέλει, τὴν (ὡς ἔφην) κηρῷ ἐοικυῖαν
προαίρεσιν ἐπιβαλὼν ἀπομάσσεται. ἐπεὶ οὖν ὅτι ἅν
βούληταί τις περὶ θεοῦ φρονεῖν, ἐν αὐταῖς εὐρίσκει,
τούτου χάριν ὁ μὲν πολλῶν θεῶν ιδέας ἀπομάσσεται
ἀπ' αὐτῶν, καὶ ἡμεῖς τὴν τοῦ ὄντως [ὄντος]
ἀπεμαξάμεθα ιδέαν, ἐκ τῆς ἡμετέρας μορφῆς τὸν
ἀληθῆ ἐπιγνόντες τύπον. ἀλλὰ καὶ ἡ ἐνδοθεν ἡμῶν
ψυχὴ τὴν αὐτοῦ εἰκόνα πρὸς ἀθανασίαν ἡμφίεσται.
ταύτης τὸν γεννήτορα ἐὰν καταλίπω, δικαίᾳ κρίσει καὶ
αὐτὴ με καταλιπεῖν ἔχει (αὐτῷ τῷ τολμήματι
γνωρίσασα ἄδικον) καὶ ὡς ἀπὸ δικαίου δικαίως
καταλείπει με, καὶ οὕτως τὴν ψυχὴν μετὰ κόλασιν,
τῆς ἀπ' αὐτῆς ἀπολειφθείσης βοηθείας, φθαρήσομαι.
εἰ δὲ ἔστιν ἕτερος, πρῶτον ἐνδυσάτω ἑτέραν ιδέαν,
ἑτέραν μορφήν, ἵνα διὰ τῆς τοῦ σώματος καινῆς
μορφῆς τὸν καινὸν ἐπιγνῶ θεόν. εἰ δὲ καὶ τὴν μορφήν
ἀλλάξει, μήτι καὶ τῆς ψυχῆς τὴν οὐσίαν; εἰ δὲ καὶ
ἀλλάξει, οὐκέτι ἐγὼ εἰμι, ἄλλος γενόμενος καὶ μορφῇ
καὶ οὐσίᾳ. ἄλλους οὖν πλαττέτω, εἰ ἄλλος ἐστίν. οὐκ
ἔστιν δέ. εἰ δὲ ἦν, ἔπλασεν ἅν. ἐπεὶ οὖν οὐκ ἔπλασεν,
ὡς οὐκ ὢν τὸν ὄντα τῷ ὄντι καταλιπέτω. οὐδεὶς γὰρ
ἔστιν ἢ μόνη γνώμη Σίμωνος. ἐγὼ ἄλλον θεὸν οὐ
παραδέχομαι πλὴν τὸν κτίσαντά με μόνον.

[The Scriptures] do not lead astray, but they
examine and expose the corrupt inclination against
God, which lurks like a serpent in each person. For
they are arranged like many diverse molds. Each
person, having his own inclination like wax, examines
the Scriptures, finds everything in them, and casts

what sort of god he wishes by pressing upon them his own inclination, which is, as I said, like wax. Since then he finds in the Scriptures whatever he wishes to think about God, for this reason [Simon] fashions from them the impressions of many gods, while we fashioned the impression of the One who actually exists, recognizing the true form on the basis of our own shape. Indeed, the life within us is clothed with his image for immortality. If I abandon the parent of this soul, it is able to abandon me to appropriate judgment, exposing my unjust deed by my very act of daring [to flee], it will rightly abandon me. . . . But if there is another [god], then let him put on another form, another shape, in order that by the new shape of the body I may recognize this new god. But if he changes the shape, [does he not also change] the essence of the soul? And if he does that, then I am no longer myself, having become another in both shape and essence. So if there really is another [god], let him fashion others. But there is not. For if there were, he would have done so. Since then he did not create, let the one who does not exist leave what does exist to the one who exists. For he is nothing, except only in the opinion of Simon. I do not accept any other god, save for the One alone who created me.^[140]

There are two basic elements to Peter's approach here. First, he describes the general character of the Scriptures. He explains that the Scriptures "are arranged like many diverse molds" (πολλοῖς γὰρ καὶ διάφοροις τύποις ἐοικυῖαι πρόκεινται). This description of Scripture's multivalent quality is in keeping with what we find elsewhere in the corpus, particularly in *ep. Petr.*, where the Scriptures are said to have a "sinewy" quality.^[141] Again, it should be noted that Scripture's polysemous quality is not itself taken as an inherent problem, only a potential one. But in addition to this, the Scriptures

also function to “examine and expose the corrupt inclination against God latent in each person.” This notion illustrates a basic pedagogical function of the false pericopes.^[142]

Second, the theoretical basis for Peter’s argument is made clear from *Hom.* 16.10.4–5, where he says, “We fashioned the impression of the One who actually exists, recognizing the true form [τὸν ἀληθῆ ἐπιγνόντες τύπον] on the basis of our own shape [ἐκ τῆς ἡμετέρας μορφῆς].”^[143]

For the Homilist, it is this notion that illustrates how the harmony criterion can be evoked as a solution to the problem of polytheism in the Pentateuch. In this case, Peter refers to a feature of the natural world, in this instance the “physical” composition of a “singular” human. The human being is regarded as having been fashioned “in the image of God” and possessing a “monarchic soul” (μοναρχικὴ ψυχή). The philosophical basis underlying this concept of a “monarchic” or “single-ruling” soul is difficult to ascertain. The most carefully worked out theories of the soul in ancient philosophy are those of various pre-Socratics, followed by Plato and Aristotle, then Epicurus and the Stoics. Plato (*Rep.* 437b–441c) envisioned the soul as “tripartite,” composed of “the appetitive” (ἐπιθυμητικόν), “the rational” (λογιστικόν), and “the spirited” (θυμοειδές). Lucretius (*De nat.* 3) distinguishes “mind” (*animus*) from “spirit” (*anima*), but he also says the two are “firmly interlinked and constitute a single nature” (*una natura*).^[144] But the notion here of a “monarchic soul” (μοναρχικὴ ψυχή) may be based on something akin to what Christopher Gill has identified as “psychophysical holism”: “a key innovative feature of Hellenistic thought about personality, the idea of the person as a psychophysical unit or whole in Stoicism and Epicureanism. . . . Psychophysical holism in Stoicism and Epicureanism is illustrated by reference to their views about the physical nature of the psyche and the development of human beings (and other animals) as embodied psychological wholes.”^[145] The Homilist reads Gen. 1:26-27 in light of his notion of the μοναρχικὴ ψυχή. In *Hom.* 16.19.1, the Homilist takes the idea that humans are made “in the image of God” to mean that “the shape of man has been impressed with the shape of God.”^[146] This means that one can reasonably deduce the fact of God’s “singularity” from the “singularity” of the human being whose stamp it bears. If there were other, different gods, humans would have been stamped with a different “shape” altogether. But such did not happen. Thus, when

the Scriptures are checked against God's creation, the false pericopes can be recognized and properly handled. In this case, Scriptures that smack of polytheism are rejected as false. The rational demands of the harmony criterion would have it no other way.

6.6. THE HARMONY CRITERION AND THE PROBLEM OF ANIMAL SACRIFICE

A second area in which the harmony criterion is brought to bear is the problem of animal sacrifice.^[147] We have already seen that, according to the True Prophet's teaching, God never ordained animal sacrifices in the first place (ὥς οὐκ ὄντα θεοῦ προστάγματα).^[148] It is difficult for the Homilist to see what is "rational" about the slaughter of animals, or how it could be that the God reflected in creation would actually require their flesh. The Homilist's attitude in this regard is akin to that of Porphyry (c. 232–305), a rough contemporary of the Homilist, who said,

ὕστερα μὲν τοίνυν καὶ νεωτάτῃ ἢ διὰ τῶν ζώων θυσία,
τὴν δὲ αἰτίαν λαβοῦσα οὐκ εὐχάριστον . . . ἀλλὰ λιμοῦ
ἢ τινος ἄλλης δυστυχίας περίστασιν.

The sacrifice of animals is later than other forms [i.e., of sacrifice], indeed the most recent, and its cause is not a benefit . . . but a problem arising from famine or some other misfortune.^[149]

That the Homilies display an aversion to the sacrifice and consumption of animal flesh has been noted by scholars.^[150] Schoeps, for example, has suggested,

Their [i.e., the Ebionites'] hostility toward the cult of animal sacrifice clearly manifests their tendency to restore the original Pentateuch, purged of false pericopes. Whether or not they actually created such a purged Pentateuch or employed it in their congregations cannot be demonstrated from the available sources. Their scribe Symmachus translated all the questionable passages along with the rest, so it

is not likely that they used a purged Pentateuch. The only certain thing is that they denied the revelatory character of many passages of the Pentateuch.^[151]

My interest here is to inquire further into the exegetical and philosophical dimensions of this aversion in *Hom.*, particularly with reference to the harmony criterion. The immediately relevant passage in this regard is *Hom.* 3.45:

τὸ δὲ θυσιῶν αὐτὸν μὴ ὀρεχθῆναι φαίνεται ἐκ τοῦ
τούς ἐπιθυμήσαντας κρεῶν ἅμα τῷ γεύσασθαι
ἀναιρεθῆναι καὶ χωσθέντας ἐπὶ τῷ τάφῳ βουνὸν
ἐπιθυμιῶν προσαγορευθῆναι. ὁ δὲ τὴν ἀρχὴν ἐπὶ θύσει
ζώων χαλεπαίνων, θύεσθαι αὐτὰ μὴ θέλων, θυσίας ὡς
ἐπιθυμιῶν οὐ προσέτασεν καὶ ἀπαρχὰς οὐκ ἀπῆτει·
ἄνευ θύσεως ζώων οὔτε θυσίαι τελοῦνται οὔτε
ἀπαρχαὶ δοθῆναι δύνανται.

That God has no desire for sacrifices is evident from [the Scripture that tells how] those who lusted after flesh were slain the very moment they tasted it, and then they were heaped into a burial mound, so that it was called “grave of lusts.” But God, who has always been offended by animal sacrifice and who does not desire them to be slain, did not order sacrifices (as though he actually wanted them), nor he did request firstfruits. For without the sacrifice of animals, neither are sacrifices accomplished nor can firstfruits be given.^[152]

The Homilist claims here in *Hom.* 3.45–46 that without the sacrifice of animals “neither are offerings accomplished nor can firstfruits be given.”

But on what basis does he make this assertion? For there is nothing in the Mosaic legislation itself that makes the giving of the firstfruits (ἀπαρχαί) contingent on the animal sacrifice. And when the Pentateuch does set forth instructions for the ἀπαρχαί, there is normally not any reference to killing animals at all. Two possible explanations for this circumstance may be found from the following observations. First, we read in Deut. 12:6, 11,

You will bring there your whole burnt offerings and your sacrifices [θυσιάσμα] and your firstfruits [ἀπαρχαί], etc.

There you shall bring all that I command you today —your whole burnt offerings and your sacrifices (θυσιάσμα) and your tithes and the firstfruits (ἀπαρχαί) of your hands, etc.

Since the word “sacrifices” appears in the text before the word “firstfruits,” it would seem the Homilist takes from this that the latter is contingent on the former. If so, this could serve (in part) as the textual basis for the otherwise-odd assertion that “neither are offerings accomplished nor can firstfruits be given without the sacrifice of animals.” Such an explanation would also fit well with the general “literalist” approach characteristic of the Homilist’s exegesis we have seen thus far. In this case, the author demonstrates something of a sensitivity for the actual word order of the biblical lemma, with a view to advancing his argument.

The notion that Scripture’s very word order conveys normative exegetical practice was familiar to the rabbis. The following relates a rabbinic discussion concerning whether “anything may precede the tamid offering”:^[153]

Scripture teaches: And he shall lay the burnt offering in order upon it (Lev. 6:5). Raba said, “The burnt offering (העלה) refers to the first burnt offering (עלה)

(ראשונה). And the meal offering (מנחה) [precedes] the cakes (חביתין) [For Scripture teaches]: Burnt-offering and meal-offering (Lev. 23:27). And the cakes [precede] the drink offerings (נסכים), they too are considered a category of a meal offering. And the drink offerings [precedes] the additional offerings (מוספין) as it is written: A sacrifice and drink-offerings (Lev. 23:37).”^[154]

Here it is understood that each type of offering mentioned precedes the next, in keeping with the word order as it appears in Lev. 6:5 and 23:27. The burnt offering (העלה), which would include animal sacrifices, precedes all else. Raba identifies the burnt offering as the “first” burnt offering (ראשונה = ἀπαρχή?). It is quite possible that some such discussion as this one underlies the Homilist’s claim that “firstfruits” cannot be given without the prior sacrifice of animals.^[155]

Another way we might explain the Homilist’s claim (i.e., without the sacrifice of animals neither are offerings accomplished nor can firstfruits be given) is that the Homilist is here using ἀπαρχή according to Greek understanding, as a kind of sacrifice. Porphyry (Abst. 2.5–8, 23–24) says something to this effect:

πόρρω δὲ τῶν περὶ τὰς θυσίας ἀπαρχῶν τοῖς
ἀνθρώποις προΐουσῶν παρανομίας, ἢ τῶν δεινοτάτων
θυμάτων παράληψις ἐπεισέχθη, ὁμότητος πλήρης, ὥς
δοκεῖν τὰς πρόσθεν λεχθείσας καθ’ ἡμῶν ἀρὰς νῦν
τέλος εἰληφέναι, σφαζάντων τῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ τοὺς
βωμοὺς αἱμαζάντων, ἀφ’ οὗ λιμῶν τε καὶ πολέμων
πειραθέντες αἱμάτων ἤψαντο.

But when the first-fruits offered by people in sacrifice went further in unlawfulness, the use of the most terrible sacrifices was introduced, full of

savagery, so that the curses once pronounced against us seemed now to have reached their fulfillment: people slaughtered, and stained the altars with blood, from the time when, having experienced famine and war, they had blood on their hands.^[156]

The sacrifices Porphyry would have people offer to the gods are of a different sort:

ὅλως δ' εἰ τὸ τῆς θυσίας ἀπαρχῆς ἔχει ἀξίαν καὶ
εὐχαριστίας ὧν παρὰ θεῶν ἔχομεν εἰς τὰς χρείας,
ἀλογώτατον ἂν εἴη αὐτοὺς ἀπεχομένους τῶν ἐμπύχων
τοῖς θεοῖς τούτων ἀπάρχεσθαι. οὔτε γὰρ χείρους ἡμῶν
οἱ θεοί, ἵνα τούτων αὐτοὶ δέωνται, ἡμῶν μὴ δεομένων,
οὔτε ὅσιον ἀπαρχὴν διδόναι ἧς ἡμεῖς ἀπεχόμεθα
τροφῆς . . . ἀλλὰ θύσωμεν, ὡς προσήκει, διαφόρους
τὰς θυσίας ὡς ἂν διαφόροις δυνάμεσι προσάγοντες·
θεῶ μὲν τῷ ἐπὶ πᾶσιν, ὥς τις ἀνὴρ σοφὸς ἔφη, μηδὲν
τῶν αἰσθητῶν μήτε θυμιῶντες μήτ' ἐπονομάζοντες.

In any case, if the act of sacrifice has the value of a first-fruit offering and of thanksgiving to the gods for what we have from them for our needs, it would be quite irrational to abstain from animate creatures ourselves, yet make offerings of them to the gods. The gods are not worse than we are so that they need what we do not, nor is it holy to give first-fruits of a food from which we ourselves abstain . . . but we shall make, as is fitting, different sacrifices to different powers. To the god who rules over all, as a wise man said, we shall offer nothing perceived by the senses, either by burning or in words.^[157]

Porphyry's terminology for firstfruits as a kind of sacrifice elucidates the Homilist's words above in *Hom.* 3.45–46.^[158] Like Porphyry, the Homilist sees nothing “rational” about the slaughter of animals. The True Prophet himself teaches that God never ordained animal sacrifices in the first place (ὥς οὐκ ὄντα θεοῦ προστάγματα).^[159] What the Homilist says elsewhere of idolatry fits with his attitude toward animal sacrifice:

διὸ νήψατε ὑπὲρ τῆς σωτηρίας τὰ εὐλόγα νοεῖν. ὁ θεὸς
γὰρ ἀνενδεὴς ὢν αὐτὸς οὐδενὸς δεῖται οὔτε
βλάπτεται. ἡμῶν γὰρ ἐστὶν τὸ ὠφελεῖσθαι ἢ
βλάπτεσθαι.

So be deliberate, with regard to matters of salvation,
to bear in mind the reasonable aspects. For God
himself needs nothing nor is disturbed by anything,
since he exists without lacking anything. For
“benefitting” or “being disturbed” are things
characteristic of us [but not of God].^[160]

Aside from the fact that the consumption of meat is “contrary to nature,” God has no need for anything in the first place. Those Scriptures that prescribe animal sacrifice do not stand up to the secondary element of the harmony criterion. For to associate God with the blood sacrifice, or to imagine that God has needs, would be “unreasonable.” Scriptural passages that advocate animal sacrifices are consistently identified throughout *Hom.* as false pericopes.^[161] According to the harmony criterion, the “sayings accusatory of God” (αἱ τοῦ θεοῦ διάβολοι φωναί, *Hom.* 3.46)—which are thought to include sayings that promote the sacrificial cultus—fail to pass the harmony criterion since they too are, in the words of *Hom.* 3.46, “censured by creation” (ὕπὸ τῆς κτίσεως ἐλέγχονται). In fact, the consumption of animal meat is thought to be “contrary to nature” (παρὰ φύσιν).^[162]

Numbers 11:30-34, where God provides quail meat for the Israelites, is interpreted by the Homilist as a demonstration that God never desired sacrifices of animals in the first place. The use of Num. 11:30-34 as scriptural proof that God desires vegetarianism is novel.^[163] According to the story as it appears in Numbers 11, when the Israelites had grown tired of the manna, they “craved exceedingly” (ἐπεθύμησαν ἐπιθυμίαν) for meat to eat. Moses finds himself frustrated by the insatiable crowd, and so he voices his complaint to God. God orders Moses to assemble seventy men of the elders of Israel.^[164] These seventy elders are to aid Moses, bearing with him the responsibility of meeting the needs of the people. So God “takes some of the spirit that is on Moses” and puts it on them.^[165] The story continues by telling how God proceeds to glut the Israelites with the meat of the quail blown in from the sea.^[166] While the Israelites’ mouths have been stuffed with the quail meat, God strikes them with a severe plague. This constitutes the divine punishment the people received for their ingratitude and greed. The episode concludes with an etiology for the place where they died and were buried—the “Graves of Craving” (μνήματα τῆς ἐπιθυμίας).

When we consider the account given in *Hom.* 3.45–46, we see three basic ways in which it differs from the biblical version. These may be cataloged in the following way. According to the biblical version of the story:

1. While the meat was still between their teeth, before it “expired” (πρὶν ἢ ἐκλείπειν)
2. The Lord struck his people with a severe plague (πληγὴν μεγάλην σφόδρα).
3. The place was called Tombs of Craving (μνήματα τῆς ἐπιθυμίας), because there they buried the people that craved.

According to the interpretation of this story given in *Hom.* 3.45.1-4 the people were killed as soon as they tasted the meat. Also noteworthy is that there is no mention of any quail, only meat. Second, there is no mention of any plague; the people were simply killed. Finally, the episode ends with a

slightly different etiology for the place name. So the primary differences from the biblical account are as follows:

1. As soon as they tasted the meat (ἄμα τῷ γεύσασθαι)
2. They were killed (ἀναιρεθῆναι).
3. The place was called Mound of Cravings (βουνὸς ἐπιθυμιῶν), for the people were heaped into a pile upon a burial mound (χωσθέντας ἐπὶ τῷ τάφῳ).

Such are the basic differences between the two accounts. I should of course point out that the LXX has μνήματα while *Hom.* 3.45 has βουνός.^[167] In addition to this, the Hebrew construction for the place name is קברות התאווה, in which the plural קברות is followed by the singular התאווה. This same construction comes through in the translation of the LXX; the plural μνήματα is followed by the singular τῆς ἐπιθυμίας. Curiously, in *Hom.*, the construction is reversed, where the singular βουνός precedes the plural ἐπιθυμιῶν.^[168]

Now according to the form of the story as it appears in the Pentateuch, the reason for their punishment and consignment to the “Graves of Desire” (קברות התאווה) was clearly owing to the Israelites’ ingratitude and greed. The people are said to have had a strong craving for meat, but the narrative tells us that the people only craved meat because they had grown so tired of the manna. As punishment for their ingratitude for the manna with which God had hitherto been providing for them, God gluts the people with meat. Consequently, the meat itself actually plays only a secondary role to the underlying problem—namely, the people’s discontent, which prompted their insatiability. It is this notion on which the etiology in the biblical version is predicated, and the place is given its name μνήματα τῆς ἐπιθυμίας.

This peculiar episode did not receive much attention from Christian exegetes in antiquity. Where they do appear, interpretations of this episode generally focus on a moral lesson to be learned. Tertullian’s comments on Num. 11:34 are a good example. Toward the end of his *De Ieiunio adversus Psychicos*, Tertullian draws from this episode a basic lesson about the

importance of curbing the appetites of the body by rigorous fasting. For according to Tertullian, this constitutes the only sort of “sacrifice” with which God is pleased. He says,

Nam et si manuult opera iustitia, non tamen sine sacrificio, quod est anima conflictata ieuniis. Ille certe deus, cui nec populus incontinens gulae placuit, nec sacerdos nec prophetae. Manet adhuc monumenta concupiscentiae ubi sepultus est populus carnis audivissimus usque ad cholera ortygometras cruditando.

For even if he desires “works of righteousness,” yet not without a “sacrifice,” which is a soul disciplined by fasts.^[169] Surely he is the God to whom neither a people of insatiable appetite, nor a priest, nor a prophet, was pleasing. To this day the “monuments of lust” remain, where the people, “greedy of flesh,” were buried from gorging themselves with the quails, to the point of contracting cholera.^[170]

The place name *monumenta concupiscentiae* reflects the μνήματα τῆς ἐπιθυμίας given in the LXX. In his discussion of the passage, Tertullian does link the place name with the idea that the people were “greedy of flesh” (*carnis audivissimus*), though this is not reflected explicitly in his account of the place name itself—*monumenta concupiscentiae*. In a similar way, Eusebius’s account of the same passage illustrates his understanding of the etiology behind the place name. Under the entry for μνήματα ἐπιθυμίας in his *Onomasticon*, Eusebius has this to say:

Μνήματα ἐπιθυμίας. σταθμὸς τῶν Ἰσραὴλ ἐπὶ τῆς ἐρήμου ἔνθα διεφθάρησαν ἀπὸ τῆς κρεωφαγίας.

Tombs of lust. A marker in the wilderness
designating the place where those of the Israelites
perished from their “gluttonous appetite for meat.”^[171]

Eusebius understands the meaning of ἐπιθυμίας specifically as κρεωφαγίας—the gluttonous appetite for meat. Κρεωφαγία is in essence the same as Tertullian’s *carnis avidissimus*. But neither Tertullian nor Eusebius makes any connection between the place name and God’s displeasure with animal sacrifice. This of course comes as no surprise, given that the quail episode in Numbers also makes no such link. In this regard, however, *Hom.* 3.45.1 is unique for the way in which it links the place name with God’s general displeasure with meat per se and its particular association with animal sacrifice.

The aversion to animal meat appears also in the Homilist’s version of the Enochic tale in *Hom.* 8. The Homilist casts the Enochic myth of the rogue angels in such a way as to explain why God never desired animal sacrifices and why it is wrong to desire even the taste of meat whatsoever. After all, God struck dead those who hardly tasted it:

ὁ οὖν θεὸς εἰδὼς αὐτοὺς πρὸς τὸ θηριῶδες
ἐξηγριωμένους καὶ πρὸς τὴν ἑαυτῶν πλησμονὴν τὸν
κόσμον οὐκ ἔχοντας αὐτάρκη (πρὸς γὰρ ἀνθρώπων
ἀναλογίαν ἐδημιουργήθη καὶ χρῆσιν ἀνθρωπίνην), ἵνα
μὴ ἐνδεία τροφῆς ἐπὶ τὴν παρὰ φύσιν τῶν ζώων βορὰν
τρεπόμενοι ἀνεύθυνοι δοκῶσιν εἶναι, ὥς δι’ ἀνάγκην
τοῦτο τετολμηκότες, μάννα αὐτοῖς ὁ παντοδύναμος
θεὸς ἐπώμβρισεν ἐκ ποικίλης ἐπιθυμίας, καὶ παντὸς
οὐπερ ἐβούοντο ἀπήλαυνον· οἱ δ’ ὑπὸ νόθου φύσεως
τῷ καθαρῷ τῆς τροφῆς οὐκ ἀρεσκόμενοι, μόνης τῆς
τῶν αἱμάτων γεύσεως ἐγλίχοντο. Διὸ καὶ πρῶτοι
σαρκῶν ἐγεύσαντο.

God saw that they had become wildly savage to brutality, and that the world was not sufficient to satisfy them (for it was fashioned according to human proportion and for human use). So, lest they should turn, owing to a lack of food, to the consumption of animal meat—which is contrary to nature—and lest they should yet seem to be innocent on the assumption that they ventured to do this only out of sheer necessity, the Almighty God rained manna upon them, [suited to] their various tastes; and they enjoyed as much as they wished. But on account of their spurious nature, they were not pleased with pure food and longed only after the taste of blood. Wherefore they first tasted flesh. [\[172\]](#)

The consumption of animal flesh (βορὰ ζώων) is here glossed as being “contrary to nature” (παρὰ φύσιν)—a reference to the harmony criterion. The implication is that animal sacrifice and the eating of animal flesh are “contrary to nature” and are therefore not “ethically reasonable” (εὐλογον, discussed below). [\[173\]](#) From the Homilist’s perspective, the scriptural injunctions regarding animal sacrifice are neither “in agreement with God” nor “in agreement with creation.” [\[174\]](#)

6.7. THE HARMONY CRITERION AND “WHAT IS RATIONAL”

In this chapter, I have been attempting to elucidate the “rationalism” that some scholars (e.g., Schoeps and Strecker) have detected in *Hom.* Such rationalism can especially be seen at work in the Homilist’s use of (what I am calling) the harmony criterion. One important aspect of the harmony criterion in particular, and of the Homilist’s thinking in general, is the concept τὸ εὖλογον (and its cognates)—“what is rational.” As Leslie Kline has noted, “εὖλογος and εὐλόγως are frequently used terms” on the part of the Homilist.^[175]

Now, in chapter 4, I noted an important agraphon attributed to Jesus that has particular relevance for the theory of the false pericopes. The immediate context of that agraphon is highly significant for my study of τὸ εὖλογον and worth citing in full. Here are Peter’s words as he relates what the True Prophet once said to the Sadducees:

Ὅτι μέμικται τὰ ἀληθῆ τοῖς ψευδέσι, μέμνημαί που αὐτὸν αἰτιώμενον τοὺς Σαδδουκαίους εἰπεῖν· Διὰ τοῦτο πλανᾶσθε, μὴ εἰδότες τὰ ἀληθῆ τῶν γραφῶν, οὗ εἵνεκεν ἀγνοεῖτε τὴν δύναμιν τοῦ θεοῦ. εἰ δὲ τὰ ἀληθῆ τῶν γραφῶν ἀγνοεῖν αὐτοὺς ὑπέβαλεν, δῆλον ὡς ὄντων ψευδῶν· ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν τῷ φῆναι· Γίνεσθε τραπεζίται δόκιμοι, ὡς δοκίμων καὶ κιβδήλων λόγων ὄντων. καὶ τῷ εἰπεῖν· Διὰ τί οὐ νοεῖτε τὸ εὖλογον τῶν γραφῶν; βεβαιότερον τοῦ αὐθαιρέτως εὐγνωμονοῦντος τίθησιν τὸν νοῦν . . . τὸ δὲ καὶ εἰπεῖν αὐτόν· Οὐκ ἦλθον καταλῦσαι τὸν νόμον καὶ φαίνεσθαι αὐτὸν καταλύοντα σημαίνοντος ἦν ὅτι ἅ κατέλυεν οὐκ ἦν τοῦ νόμου. τὸ δὲ εἰπεῖν· Ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ γῆ παρελεύσονται, ἰῶτα ἓν ἢ μία κεραία οὐ μὴ παρέλθῃ ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου τὰ πρὸ οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς παρερχόμενα ἐσήμανεν μὴ ὄντα τοῦ ὄντως νόμου.

As to the mixture of truth with falsehood, I remember how once he, finding fault with the

Sadducees, said, “For this reason you err, not knowing the true things of the Scriptures. This is why you are ignorant of God’s power.” But if he put it up to them that they knew not the true things of the Scriptures, it is clear that there are also false things in them. But also, when he said “Be prudent bankers,” [he said so] on the assumption that there are genuine and spurious words. And when he said, “Why do you not perceive what is rational in the Scriptures?” he substantiates the intuition of the person who, of his own initiative, makes a reasonable assessment [of the Scriptures]. And when he said, “I have not come to destroy the law,” and yet the fact that he appeared to be destroying it, [this comes from] one hinting that the things he did destroy were not actually part of the law. When he said, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but not one jot or one tittle shall pass from the law,” he indicated that the things that do pass away before heaven and earth [pass away], those things do not belong to the law in reality.^[176]

In this passage, Peter recalls some of the True Prophet’s teaching about the false portions of Scripture. At the heart of the passage, we find two key *agrapha* attributed to Jesus.

1. Γίνεσθε τραπεζίται δόκιμοι.
Be prudent bankers.

2. Διὰ τί οὐ νοεῖτε τὸ εὖλογον τῶν γραφῶν;
Why do you not recognize that which is rational in the Scriptures?

The exegetical significance of these two sayings emerges clearly from the immediate context of Peter's report cited above. As for the first *agraphon*, Peter makes quite clear that it concerns the false pericopes. As for the second, the context suggests that it too refers to the theory of the false pericopes.^[177] Furthermore, the significance of τὸ εὖλογον in the Homilist's approach to the Pentateuch can be seen in the fact that the True Prophet accosts his interlocutors for their failure to perceive "what is rational" in (or about) the Scriptures.^[178]

Regarding the use of τὸ εὖλογον in particular, two key points are in order. The first is that in this passage τὸ εὖλογον is clearly *exegetical in orientation*. For Peter explains that Jesus' words in *Hom.* 3.50–51 are to be understood in connection with how one approaches the Scriptures (βεβαιότερον τοῦ ἀϋθαιρέτως εὐγνωμονοῦντος τίθησιν τὸν νοῦν). The participle ὁ εὐγνωμονῶν refers to the person who is "prudent" or "reasonable" in their approach to, that is, their "thinking about" (ὁ νοῦς) the Scriptures.^[179] Second, τὰ ἀληθῆ τῶν γραφῶν stands as the antonym of τὰ ψεύδη τῶν γραφῶν, and τὰ ἀληθῆ τῶν γραφῶν is thus implicitly linked with τὸ εὖλογον τῶν γραφῶν. That which is "rational" about the Scriptures is to be differentiated from its falsehoods, falsehoods that "pass away before heaven and earth."^[180] The implication is that the "rational" parts of Scripture are also those that, in some sense, remain in agreement with creation ("heaven and earth") as it still stands—a clear reference to the harmony criterion. In this way, τὸ εὖλογον is brought into direct relationship with the harmony criterion. In sum, we can see that τὸ εὖλογον is (1) of exegetical significance and (2) linked with the harmony criterion. This circumstance demands a closer investigation into the notion of τὸ εὖλογον and its use in the Pseudo-Clementine Homilies.

The precise nature of the relationship between τὸ εὖλογον and the harmony criterion cannot be further elucidated on the basis of *Hom.* alone. We simply lack sufficient data to do so. Still, the fact that τὸ εὖλογον is exegetically significant is made clear from *Hom.* 3.50–51, as I noted above. But since the Homilist does not himself spell out this exegetical significance in any great detail, we need to begin by first looking at how τὸ εὖλογον is used in a number of other relevant exegetical sources outside *Hom.* in order to better understand the Homilist's use of τὸ εὖλογον in its exegetical capacity. For this task, I have isolated a number of key exegetical

sources in the Hellenistic and patristic literary traditions. For the present investigation, the most relevant texts include Philo, Origen, Eusebius, and Theodoret of Cyrrhus.^[181] As a result, we should find ourselves in a better position to appreciate this important aspect of “rationalism” in *Hom.* as it finds particular expression in the term τὸ εὖλογον.

We begin with a passage from Philo:

ταῦτα δὲ πάντα γίνεσθαι, ὅταν ὁ βασιλεὺς Αἰγύπτου
τελευτήσῃ· τὸ παραδοξότατον· εἰκὸς γὰρ ἦν
ἀποθανόντος τυράννου χαίρειν καὶ γεγηθέναι τοὺς
τυραννουμένους· ἀλλὰ τότε λέγονται στενάζειν· μετὰ
γὰρ τὰς ἡμέρας τὰς πολλὰς ἐκείνας ἐτελεύτησεν ὁ
βασιλεὺς Αἰγύπτου, καὶ κατεστέναξαν οἱ υἱοὶ Ἰσραήλ.
πρὸς μὲν οὖν τὸ ῥητὸν ἡ λέξις τὸ εὖλογον οὐ περιέχει,
πρὸς δὲ τὰς ἐν ψυχῇ δυνάμεις τὸ κατ’ αὐτὴν
ἀκόλουθον εὐρίσκεται.

All these things happen after the king of Egypt has died—something most contrary to expectation. For it would be likely, when a tyrant dies, that those who have been oppressed would be glad and rejoice. But rather it is then that they are said to lament. For “after those many days the king of Egypt died, and the children of Israel lamented greatly.” Now then, as for the literal sense, the expression does not contain what is rational; but with reference to the faculties in the soul, its consistency is discovered.^[182]

Here too we see τὸ εὖλογον used in an exegetical context. In this text, Philo is commenting on Exod. 2:23. Philo thinks it makes no sense that God’s people would lament as a result of the tyrant’s death—they should be rejoicing over it. In this way, the “literal sense” (τὸ ῥητόν) of the biblical lemma does not contain “what is rational” (τὸ εὖλογον).^[183] But when

taken allegorically, that is, “with reference to the faculties in the soul,” Scripture’s “consistency” (ἀκολουθία) emerges. The main significance of this passage for us is that Philo proceeds on the assumption that Scripture does in fact “contain” (περιέχειν) “what is rational.” Like Philo, the Homilist also shares this same assumption (Διὰ τί οὐ νοεῖτε τὸ εὖλογον τῶν γραφῶν;). Unlike Philo, however, the Homilist will not resort to allegorism in order to attain “what is rational” in the Scriptures.

The next passage under consideration comes from Origen’s Commentary on Matthew:

Ὦνιοντο γὰρ κοινὰς μὲν καὶ ἀκαθάρτους εἶναι χεῖρας τὰς τῶν μὴ νιψαμένων πρὸ τοῦ ἄρτοφαγεῖν, καθαρὰς δὲ καὶ ἁγίας γεγονέναι τὰς τῶν ἀποπλυνομένων ὕδατι, οὐ συμβολικῶς, ἀλλ’ ἀνάλογον τῷ κατὰ τὸ γράμμα Μωσέως νόμῳ. Ἡμεῖς δὲ οὐ κατὰ τὴν τῶν παρ’ ἐκείνοις πρεσβυτέρων παράδοσιν, ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὸ εὖλογον καθαίρειν πειρώμεθα ἑαυτῶν τὰς πράξεις καὶ οὕτως τὰς τῶν ψυχῶν νίπτεσθαι χεῖρας, ὅταν μέλλωμεν ἐσθίειν οὓς αἰτοῦμεν ἀπὸ τοῦ φίλου ἡμῖν θέλοντος εἶναι Ἰησοῦ τρεῖς ἄρτους· κοιναῖς γὰρ καὶ ἀνίπτοις καὶ οὐ καθαραῖς χερσὶν οὐ χρὴ τῶν ἄρτων μεταλαμβάνειν.

For they thought that the hands of those who did not wash before eating bread were common and ritually unclean, but that the hands of those who had washed them with water became ritually pure and holy—not figuratively, but quite in keeping with the Mosaic legislation, according to the letter. But let us attempt to purify our own deeds—not according to ancestral tradition among the Jews, but according to what is rational—and so to wash the hands of our souls, when we are about to eat the three loaves which we ask from Jesus, who desires to be a friend with us.^[184] For we

must not partake of the bread with hands that are defiled, unwashed and impure.^[185]

This passage is part of Origen's comment on Matt. 15:1-2, where some Pharisees and scribes ask Jesus why it is that Jesus' disciples do not wash their hands before eating bread, and so transgress their ancestral tradition. In his comment above, Origen draws a distinction between (1) the purity regulations for hand washing required by the Jews' ancestral tradition, and (2) "what is rational" (τὸ εὖλογον). The primary significance of this passage from Origen, therefore, *is the presence of τὸ εὖλογον in an explicitly exegetical context, and the basic ethical connotation of τὸ εὖλογον within that exegetical context*. Origen here exhorts his readers to seek a more "rational" course of action—to purify their deeds in keeping with what is rational (κατὰ τὸ εὖλογον). Origen thus appeals to the use of τὸ εὖλογον as a criterion for elucidating the account presented in Matthew. This "rational" orientation on the part of Origen also contributes to the way in which he exhorts his readers to do good deeds. It is noteworthy that Origen here advocates τὸ εὖλογον in contradistinction to, and indeed in place of, the Jewish ancestral tradition for his interpretation of this episode in Matthew. The Homilist, on the other hand, is not so quick to dispense with the ancestral tradition of his own Jewish contemporaries.^[186] Moving from Origen, we now turn to consider how τὸ εὖλογον is used in a passage taken from Eusebius. In his Commentary on Isaiah, we read the following:

Εἴτ' ἐπιλέγει· καὶ ἀπ' αὐτῶν λήψομαι· ποίων δὲ αὐτῶν
ἢ ἀφ' ὧν εἶρηκεν ἐθνῶν μικρῶ πρόσθεν ὀνομάσας·
θαρσεῖς καὶ Φοῦδ καὶ Λοῦδ καὶ Μοσὸχ καὶ Θεοβέλ
καὶ εἰς τὴν Ἑλλάδα καὶ εἰς τὰ νήσους τὰς πόρρω, οἱ
οὐκ ἀκηκόασι τὸ ὄνομά μου οὐδὲ ἐώρακάσι τὴν δόξαν
μου, ἐξ αὐτῶν τούτων λήψομαί φησιν ἱερεῖς καὶ
Λευίταις, εἶπε κύριος. ἐπάγει δὲ συλλογισμὸν τὸ
εὖλογον δεικνὺς τοῦ λόγου· ὃν τρόπον γὰρ φησιν ὁ
οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ γῆ καὶ ἡ γῆ καὶ ἡ θάλασσα, ἃ ἐγὼ ποιῶ, μένει

ἐνώπιόν μου, λέγει κύριος, οὕτως στήσεται τὸ σπέρμα ὑμῶν καὶ τὸ ὄνομα ὑμῶν· εἰ γὰρ ὁ οὐρανὸς καινὸς ἔσται καὶ ἡ γῆ καινὴ καὶ Ἱερουσαλὴμ καινὴ, ἀκόλουθον ἂν εἶη καὶ τοὺς ἱερεῖς καὶ Λευίτας καινοὺς ἔσεσθαι. διὸ καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἔμπροσθεν ἐλέγετο· οὐ μὴ μνησθῶσι τῶν προτέρων, οὐκ ἀναβήσεται αὐτῶν ἐπὶ τὴν καρδίαν. λήψομαι τοίνυν ἐξ αὐτῶν ἐκείνων, ὧν προεῖπον ἱερεῖς καὶ Λευίτας· οὐδὲ γὰρ πιθανὸν ἦν περὶ τοῦ Ἰουδαίων λαοῦ λέγεσθαι τό· λήψομαι ἱερεῖς καὶ Λευίτας, προῦφεστώτων ἤδη παρ’ αὐτοῖς τούτων, ἀλλ’ οὐδὲ οἷόν τε ἦν ἀπὸ Λευιτῶν Λευίτας λαμβάνειν οὐδ’ ἀπὸ ἱερέων ἱερέας διὰ τὸ πάντας ἀπαξιαπλῶς τοὺς ἐκ φυλῆς Λευὶ ἱερεῖς εἶναι καὶ Λευίτας, νῦν δὲ ἐκλογὴν ἐπαγγέλλεται ποιήσιν ἐκ τῆς τῶν ἐθνῶν κλησεως. καὶ ταῦτα ἔσται, ἐπειδὴ καὶ ὁ οὐρανὸς ἔσται καινὸς καὶ ἡ γῆ καινὴ, ἃ ἐγὼ ποιῶ μένειν.

Then [Scripture] goes on to say: “I shall take from them.”^[187] But what sort [of people is meant by the term] “from them”—or from which nations—Scripture mentioned just a little earlier when it named Tharsis, and Phud, and Lud, and Mosoch, and Thobel, and to Greece, and to the isles afar off, to those who have not heard my name, nor seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles—from these very nations, Scripture says, “I shall take priests and Levites,” says the Lord.^[188] But Scripture provides a rationale, indicating what is reasonable about the verse. [It does so when it goes on to say,] “For as the new heaven and the new earth, which I make, remain before me,” says the Lord, “so shall your seed and your name continue.” For if there will be a new heaven and a new earth, and even a new Jerusalem, it would follow that there would also be new priests and Levites. This is why it was said earlier they shall not at all remember the former, neither shall they at all

come into their mind [65:17]. Thus the expression “I shall take from them” means [I shall take] priests and Levites from those very peoples I mentioned earlier. For it would not be likely if the expression “I shall take priests and Levites” was said of the Jewish people themselves, given that [priests and Levites] had already existed among the Jews previously. Indeed, it would not be possible to take Levites from Levites, nor priests from priests, owing to the fact that priests generally belong to the tribe of Levi, as do Levites. But now a proclamation is given to make a selection by this summoning of the gentiles. And these things shall be, since it shall be that the new heaven and the new earth, which I make, shall remain. [\[189\]](#)

In this passage, Eusebius tries to explain what Scripture could mean when it says that God will take priests and Levites “from the nations,” and not from his own people. On the face of things, it makes little sense for God to do so, thinks Eusebius. But, “scripture provides a rationale [συλλογισμός], indicating what is rational about the scriptural statement” (τὸ εὖλογον δεικνὺς τοῦ λόγου). As the rest of Eusebius’s comment reveals, τὸ εὖλογον connotes the “rational explanation” for an otherwise-odd passage of Scripture. (Surely God would not really acquire priests and Levites from the pagan nations, would he?) The exegetical function of τὸ εὖλογον in this example sheds some light on the Homilist’s use of τὸ εὖλογον. For the construction τὸ εὖλογον with the genitive τοῦ λόγου is parallel to the construction in the second agraphon cited earlier: Διὰ τί οὐ νοεῖτε τὸ εὖλογον τῶν γραφῶν. In the agraphon, τὸ εὖλογον is something to be identified in and/or characteristic of the Scriptures (τῶν γραφῶν). The same can be seen in Eusebius’s comment here: τὸ εὖλογον is also something identified in and/or characteristic of the scriptural verse (τοῦ λόγου) on which he comments. For Eusebius, one portion of Scripture can reveal “what is rational” about another part of Scripture, thereby resolving an apparent ἄλογον. For the Homilist, however, “what is rational” in Scripture

is not revealed by other scriptural texts *but by that which is “in agreement with creation.”*

Finally, for our last passage, we move from Alexandrian sources to consider one important representative of the Antiochene school: Theodoret of Cyrrhus. In his Commentary on Isaiah, we read the following:

Τίς (ἐν) ὑμῖν, ὅς ἐνωτιεῖται ταῦτα, προσέξει καὶ εἰσακούσεται εἰς τὰ ἐπερχόμενα; Τίς ἔδωκεν (εἰς διαρ)παγὴν Ἰακώβ καὶ Ἰσραὴλ τοῖς προνομεύουσιν αὐτόν; Ταῦτα κατ’ ἐρώτησιν εἰρηκῶς ἐπιδεί[κνυσι σα]φῶς τὸν τοῦτο πεποιηκότα, ἐπιδείκνυσι δὲ <καὶ> τῆς αἰτίας τὸ εὖλογον. Οὐχὶ ὁ θεός, ᾧ ἥμαρτον αὐτῷ καὶ οὐκ ἐβούλοντο ἐν ταῖς ὁδοῖς αὐτοῦ πορεύεσθαι οὐδὲ ἀκούειν τοῦ νόμου αὐτοῦ; Προῦδωκέ φησιν (αὐτοὺς ὁ νο)μοθέτης, ἐπειδὴ τὴν παρανομίαν ἡγάπησαν.

Who is there among you that will give ear to these things? Listen to the things which are coming to pass. Who gave Jacob for spoil, and Israel to them that plundered him? Having said these things in the form of a question, Scripture shows clearly the one who did it, and it also indicates what is rational about the charge [against them]: Did not God do it against whom they sinned? But they would not walk in his ways, nor heed his law. The Lawgiver abandoned them, says Scripture, since they loved lawlessness. [\[190\]](#)

Here Theodoret makes an exegetical move somewhat similar to that of Eusebius. That is, both Theodoret and Eusebius assert that Scripture itself “indicates” (from δεικνύειν) what is “rational” (τὸ εὖλογον) about the particular verses that elicit their respective comments.

Having surveyed a number of cases in Hellenistic and patristic literature where τὸ εὖλογον is used in explicitly exegetical contexts, we can now summarize the results of our findings:^[191] (1) Philo uses the term τὸ εὖλογον functionally as the opposite of the Aristotelian ἄλογον, and Philo proceeds on the assumption that Scripture contains what is rational. The Homilist shares this assumption. (2) Origen distinguishes between τὸ εὖλογον and the Jewish ancestral tradition. In Origen, τὸ εὖλογον also functions exegetically. (3) Eusebius and Theodoret both share in common the belief that Scripture itself can indicate (δεικνύειν) “what is rational” (τὸ εὖλογον) therein.

These findings can help us to construct both a philological and a theoretical framework within which we might begin to understand more clearly the exegetical dimension of τὸ εὖλογον as it is used in *Hom.* 3.50–51:

καὶ τῷ εἰπεῖν· Διὰ τί οὐ νοεῖτε τὸ εὖλογον τῶν
γραφῶν; βεβαιότερον τοῦ ἀνθαιρέτως
εὐγνωμονοῦντος τίθησιν τὸν νοῦν.

And when he said, “Why do you not perceive what is rational in the Scriptures?” he substantiates the intuition of the person who, of his own initiative, makes a reasonable assessment [of the Scriptures].

Jesus faults the Sadducees for their failure to recognize “what is rational” in the Scriptures. Although the Homilist does not explicitly disclose for us what τὸ εὖλογον entails, the findings above permit us to extrapolate that “perceiving what is rational” most likely has to do with variations on the following exegetical practices: (1) detecting various ἄλογα in Scripture (as implied in Philo and Aristotle before him); (2) distinguishing Scripture’s “rational” mandates regarding, say, philanthropy and good deeds, over against the “irrational” prescriptions put forth in the Mosaic legislation (as in Origen), especially animal sacrifice—a maneuver quite in keeping with

the harmony criterion; and (3) identifying when Scripture provides a “rationale,” or clear explanation for some earlier statement (as in Eusebius and Theodoret).

6.8. CONCLUSION

The goal of this chapter has been to elucidate the final criterion in the Homilist's exegetical schema—the harmony criterion. According to the Homilist, the Torah in its written form acquired various falsehoods, owing to the fact that those who eventually did transcribe it “were not prophets,” with the result that certain passages of Scripture conflict with and are censured by the very “handwriting of God” (τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ χειρόγραφον), that is, “creation.” So the written Torah is now to be “checked against” God's own handwriting, his creation. This phenomenon represents the essence of what I am calling the harmony criterion.

In this chapter, I also examined the two primary modes whereby knowledge about God is made possible—“natural revelation” and “sacred revelation.” For the harmony criterion itself is predicated on certain assumptions concerning human knowledge about God. Thus we have seen that, according to the Homilist, knowledge about God can be inferred from the natural world:

τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ χειρόγραφον (λέγω δὲ τὸν οὐρανόν)
καθαρὰν καὶ βεβαίαν τὴν τοῦ πεποιηκότος δείκνυσιν
γνώμην.

God's handwriting (I mean the heaven) displays the
intent of the One who made [the heaven] exact and
constant.^[192]

I noted that the general function of this natural revelation is very much in line with Old Testament and Jewish understandings of natural revelation: (1) to confirm Jewish monotheism; (2) to elicit “piety” and “ethics”; (2) to invite repentance/warn of judgment; and (4) to refute idolatry.

Next we turned to the question of “sacred revelation.” It is from the Scriptures that humanity discovers aspects of God that cannot otherwise be

obtained from the natural world, namely, that God is prescient, wise, and just. Furthermore, when it comes to a more “complete” knowledge of “other things appertaining to God,” the True Prophet’s teaching is required. And as we saw from the Homilist’s analogy of the smoke-filled house, knowledge about God is obstructed by a variety of evils, not least of which is the arbitrariness of philosophical discourse. From the Homilist’s perspective, then, what is needed is a move beyond reason to sacred revelation in the form of the True Prophet and his teaching.

We then turned to consider the role of “right reason” (ὀρθὸς λογισμός) in the process of “verifying” the True Prophet’s credibility. Once the True Prophet has been authenticated by means of “right reason,” henceforth the True Prophet sits above further question. But when it comes to the Scriptures, reason is to be applied in a much more sustained way. Indeed, the harmony criterion—whereby the Scriptures are to be “checked against” creation, or at other times “checked” with reference to God’s character—requires the sustained use of humans’ critical faculties, their “right reason,” and careful attention given to “what is rational” (τὸ εὖλογον) in the Scriptures.

After this, we turned to examine a number of key statements that articulate, at a theoretical level, how the Scriptures are “in agreement” with creation and also with God. Next we moved from matters of “theory” to “practice.” That is, I examined how the harmony criterion finds expression in actual practice, that is, how it is “practically applied” to specific “problems” within the Pentateuch. For this task, we isolated the specific issues of polytheism and animal sacrifice, and how the Homilist employs the harmony criterion to resolve such problems.

Finally, I identified τὸ εὖλογον as a key concept in the Homilist’s thinking, investigating how this term is used in a number of relevant Hellenistic and patristic exegetical sources outside *Hom.* in order to help us understand the Homilist’s use of the term in its exegetical dimension. Taken together, these findings help elucidate the “rationalistic” tendencies operative throughout *Hom.* in general, and in the harmony criterion in particular.

1. But see also *Hom.* 2.49–50. [↩](#)

2. See also *Hom.* 3.47.4. According to Karl Evan Shuve (“The Doctrine of the False Pericopes and Other Late Antique Approaches to the Problem of Scripture’s Unity,” in *Nouvelles intrigues pseudo-clémentines—Plots in the Pseudo-Clementine Romance: Actes du deuxième colloque international sur la littérature apocryphe chrétienne*, ed. Frédéric Amsler et al. [Lausanne: Editions du Zebre, 2008], 440), “The key contrast is not between oral and written but rather between prophetic transmission and non-prophetic transmission.”[↗](#)
3. As Hans Joachim Schoeps puts it (*Jewish Christianity: Factional Disputes in the Early Church*, trans. Douglas R. A. Hare [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969], 81), “The Creation is a ‘document written with God’s hand,’ or God’s *diagraphē* (*Hom.* 1:18).” The expression τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ χειρόγραφον as a reference to creation is not attested elsewhere. For God’s “hand” involved in creation, see also *Hom.* 11.22.3. See Origen, *Philoc.* 22.21; *Fr. 1 Reg.* 15.9–11 (GCS 295.26; M.12.992A); Cyril of Alexandria, *Is.* 4.4; Procopius of Gaza, *Is.* 26:8 (M.87.2217A).[↗](#)
4. See, e.g., Philo, *Leg.* 2.1; *Somn.* 1.73; Roberto Radice, “Philo’s Theology and Theory of Creation,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Philo*, ed. Adam Kamesar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 124–31.[↗](#)
5. See Georg Strecker, *Das Judenchristentum in den Pseudoklementinen*, 2nd ed., TUGAL (Berlin: Akademie, 1981), 179, 186.[↗](#)
6. Schoeps, *Jewish Christianity*, 94.[↗](#)
7. Philo, *Opif.* 3. The English translation given here is that of David T. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria: On the Creation of the Cosmos according to Moses* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 45. Commenting on *Opif.* 3, Runia writes, “There is a direct relation between legislation for human life and the rational structure of the cosmos. The person who observes the Law of Moses will feel at home in the cosmos as totality. The guiding thought behind this idea is the concept of the law of nature” (99).[↗](#)
8. *Flor.* 3.4.[↗](#)
9. *Hom.* 3.45.4.[↗](#)
10. *Flor.* 5.1.[↗](#)
11. See Matt. 5:38–39. For the *lex talionis*, see Exod. 21:23–25.[↗](#)
12. *Flor.* 3.4.[↗](#)
13. *Hom.* 2.9.2. This particular passage is one of the Homilist’s several “introductions” to the True Prophet.[↗](#)
14. Both points can be understood as part of an anti-Marcionite polemic. The unity of God and the goodness of creation were disputed by Marcion and his followers. Moreover, in the Homilist’s thinking, natural revelation is

characterized as being particularly “anthropocentric” (see especially *Hom.*3.36).[↩](#)

15. Each of these is discussed in greater detail below. For the key texts illustrating how natural revelation functions in these four ways, see *Hom.*3.37.3 on “monotheism;” *Hom.*3.32.1–2 on “piety” and “ethics;” *Hom.*3.37.1–2, 4 on “repentance” and “judgment;” *Hom.*10.9–10 on the “refutation of idolatry.” The Homilist’s understanding of the function of natural revelation is in line with the general function of natural revelation as it emerges from the writings of the Old Testament, about which see especially Bertil Gärtner, *The Areopagus Speech and Natural Revelation*, trans. Carolyn Hannay-King (Uppsala: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1955), 85–105, discussed below.[↩](#)
16. Gärtner, *Areopagus Speech*, 138n3.[↩](#)
17. Here marks another difference between Philo and the Homilist. Although both share the assumption that the Mosaic legislation is in agreement with the natural world, Philo (see *Opif.* 3.) is willing to say this is so with reference to φύσις. Indeed, for Philo, who is deeply influenced by Stoicism, the proper life is one lived in accordance with nature (τὸ ἀκολύθως τῇ φύσει ζῶν, *Her.*48.233). The Homilist tends not to use φύσις in this way.[↩](#)
18. See Georg Strecker, *Die Pseudoklementinen*, vol. 3, *Konkordanz zu den Pseudoklementinen* (Berlin: Akademie, 1989), 394–95. For φύσις in the sense of a “property,” “trait,” or “attribute” of something, see *Hom.*1.8.3, 22.6; 2.5.2, 26.3, 4, 34.2; 3.21.1, 22.2, 33.1, 34.3, 35.5, 68.2; 4.24.4; 5.24.6; 6.4.2, 7.3, 9.4, 12.3–4, 13.1, 25.2; 8.12.2, 13.2, 15.5; 9.11.3, 20.1; 10.8.1, 16.1; 12.5.3, 33.5; 17.3.2, 16.4; 18.22.5; 19.15.1, 16.1, 19.8, 20.7; 20.6.6, 7.1, 3, 5, 12.6. Likewise, for “nature of God,” see *Hom.*2.13.1; 3.6.1; 4.13.3; 9.1.2; 10.19.1; 16.17.1; 17.9.1, 3; 19.5.2. For “nature of the True Prophet,” see *Hom.*2.11.1, 2. For “nature of man,” see *Hom.*2.14.2, 42.2; 3.24.1, 31.4; 4.18.4; 8.13.1–2 (characterized especially by lust, 12.5.3; 19.21.6); 19.15.6, 7; 20.2.6, 6.4.[↩](#)
19. It can be said that, in his representation of those with whom he disagrees, the Homilist has in mind Stoics and Epicureans, whose terminology he assimilates (see *Hom.*6.19.1–5, above): ἀποφηνάμενοι μὲν φύσει δεδημιουργῆσθαι τὸ πᾶν...παρεμπλέκουσιν καὶ τοῦ νοῦ τὴν πρόνοιαν (Stoic); ἐξ αὐτομάτου φύσεως ὁ κόσμος γέγονεν (Epicurean). Josephus (*Ant.*10.276–80) makes a similar move when he assimilates the two: καὶ τοὺς Ἐπικουρείους ἐκ τούτων εὕρισκιν πεπλανημένους οἱ τὴν τε πρόνοιαν ἐκβάλλουσι τοῦ βίου . . . ἄμοιρον δὲ ἡνιόχου καὶ ἀφρόντιστον τὸν κόσμον αὐτομάτως φέρεσθαι λέγουσιν. “[The reader of Daniel’s prophecy] may discover from these things that the Epicureans

are in error, who cast *Providence* out of human life . . . [who say] that the world—thoughtless and out of control—is carried along *of its own accord*.” For a discussion of this passage, see W. C. van Unnik, “An Attack on the Epicureans by Flavius Josephus,” in *Romanitas et Christianitas*, ed. W. den Boer et al. (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1973), 341–55. There are two cases where the Homilist does employ φύσις in reference to an “ethical standard” of sorts, whereby one might detect a Stoic coloring. First, in *Homily* 8.15.3, the consumption of animal meat is deemed “contrary to nature” (ἡ παρὰ φύσιν τῶν ζώων βορά), and for this reason it is to be avoided. Second, in 18.22.4, Peter argues with Simon about the question of humanity’s “affection” (στοργή) toward God. Peter says that if one “has affection toward another god,” they do so “contrary to nature” (εἰ δὲ ἔχει πρὸς ἕτερον, παρὰ φύσιν ἔχων). These are the only two clear cases where the Homilist uses the term φύσις to refer to “nature” *per se*, in the sense either of the physical world as a whole or as an ethical standard. [↩](#)

20. *Hom.* 12.32.1. [↩](#)

21. *SVF* 1.552; *D.L.*, 7.87. See Seneca, *Ep.* 124.7, “*Dicimus beata esse, quae secundum naturam sint.*” [↩](#)

22. See the *Yezer ha-Rain* rabbinic tradition (*Sukkah* 52b; *b. Qid.* 30b; ‘*Abot R. Nat.* 16), against which Torah functions as the “antidote.” [↩](#)

23. *Hom.* 12.32.1. See the σοφίας διδαχή in *Let. Aris.* 207; *Tob.* 4:15; *Luke* 6:32–33, 35. [↩](#)

24. We will examine the notion of “what is (ethically) reasonable,” τὸ εὖλογον, in greater detail below. [↩](#)

25. *Civ.* 22.22. See also *enarrat. Ps.* 9.5; 41.13; 55.9. For these and other references, see Albrecht Dihle, *The Theory of the Will in Classical Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 235n27. See also Dihle, “Demut,” *RAC* 3 (1957): 735–78. [↩](#)

26. Albrecht Dihle, in *Die Goldene Regel* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962) 109–27, suggests that “love for one’s enemy” could be added to “love for one’s neighbor” by extending the definition of “neighbor” to humanity more broadly—a move that actually did occur within Hellenistic cosmopolitanism and in Christianity. [↩](#)

27. See Gärtner, *Areopagus Speech*, 72–105. [↩](#)

28. *Hom.* 3.34.1–4. [↩](#)

29. *Hom.* 3.36.1–2. [↩](#)

30. (1) *praesensione rerum futurarum*, (2) *magnitudine commodorum, quae percipiuntur caeli temperatione fecunditate terrarum aliarumque commoditatum conplurium copia*, (3) *quae terrert animos fulminibus*

tempestatibus nimbis etc., (4) *aequabilitatem motus conversionumque caeli, solis lunae, etc.* See also Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 12.32.

31. More than any other system of philosophy, that of the Stoics is perhaps the most relevant for understanding the “rational” tendencies and the ethical statements put forth in the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*.
32. Gärtner (*Areopagus Speech*, 73n2) makes a distinction between “natural revelation” and “natural theology.” The latter “brings in the view, associated to some extent with the Stoic theory of affinity with God, that man’s reason is akin to God”—a view foreign to the Old Testament (and, in Gärtner’s opinion, the New Testament). “Natural revelation,” however, connotes “divine revelation testified by the creation.” That is, by the testimony of nature, humans can acquire (certain kinds of) knowledge about God. In the following discussion, I adopt Gärtner’s distinction between “natural theology”/“natural revelation” and his usage of the latter.
33. Gärtner, *Areopagus Speech*, 81.
34. *Ibid.*, 86. Gärtner calls attention to the references to nature especially in the Psalms and the Prophets.
35. *Ibid.*, 87. As Ps. 97:6, puts it “The heavens declare his righteousness, and all the peoples see his glory (כבוד).” See also Ps. 19:2; 57:6; Isa. 6:3; Hab. 2:14.
36. Gärtner suggests that it is particularly within the context of the cult festivals that all the different hymns in the Psalter that sing of God’s creative power are to be understood.
37. Gärtner, *Areopagus Speech*, 88.
38. *Ibid.*, 88.
39. *Ibid.*, 89.
40. *Ibid.*, 91.
41. *Ibid.*
42. *Ibid.*, 92 (italics mine).
43. *Ibid.*, 93–94.
44. *Ibid.*, 95 (italics mine).
45. *Ibid.*, 85.
46. *Ibid.*, 96–97.
47. *Ibid.*
48. *Ibid.*, 7.
49. *Ibid.*, 99. See *1 Enoch* 36:4; Sir. 17:8, 10; Rom. 1:21; *4 Ezra* 7:22–25.
50. Gärtner, *The Areopagus Speech*, 99–100.
51. Ep. Jer. 1:59–67 (NRSV).
52. See Gärtner (*Areopagus Speech*, 102), citing *1 Enoch* 99:7; *2 Enoch* 10:1–6; *T. Naph.* 3; Pss. Sol. 18:10–12.

53. Gärtner, *Areopagus Speech*, 105. [↗](#)
54. On this point Gärtner (111n1) cites Cicero, *Tusc.* 1.70; Xenophon, *Mem.* 4.3.1-12; Sextus Empiricus, *Math.* 9.26-27. [↗](#)
55. Gärtner, *Areopagus Speech*, 115. [↗](#)
56. See my discussion above, and especially Gärtner, *Areopagus Speech*, 73–74, 76, 80–82, 86–91, 95–97. [↗](#)
57. *Ibid.*, 115–16. [↗](#)
58. *Hom.* 3.36.1. [↗](#)
59. One noteworthy exception is the complete absence of “the covenant” from the Homilist’s thinking. In the Old Testament, natural revelation is conceptualized primarily with reference to God’s covenant with Israel. The Homilist, on the other hand, never mentions the covenant in his own references to natural revelation. [↗](#)
60. It should be noted that, for the Homilist, “the Scriptures” refers to the Jewish Scriptures (in Greek form)/the Old Testament alone and *not* the New Testament. See the list of Scripture citations set forth in Strecker, *Das Judenchristentum*, 117–36. When it comes to the (now-canonical) Gospels, the Homilist employs the True Prophet’s words as *sayingsremembered* and not as *writingsconsulted*. [↗](#)
61. See the list of rhetorical questions laid out in *Hom.* 2.42–45. [↗](#)
62. *Hom.* 16.7.3–4. See Deut. 10:17-18. [↗](#)
63. These are also noted by Schoeps (*Jewish Christianity*, 123), “Thus we have in *Homilies* 2.43ff. a catalogue of twenty-four biblical passages which compromise the character of God.” [↗](#)
64. *Hom.* 3.43.2–3. See Gen. 6:6; 22:1; 18:21. [↗](#)
65. *Hom.* 3.44 essentially applies to Moses what is said of Abraham in *Hom.* 3.43. The same process is at work. [↗](#)
66. That the Scriptures could be both “sacred revelation” and at the same time “incomplete” can be seen in Ptolemy’s *Flor.* 5.1. The “pure legislation” (ἡ καθαρὰ νομοθεσία) needed to be fulfilled (ἔδει δὲ πληρώσεως) because it was not complete (οὐ γὰρ εἶχεν τὸ τέλειον). [↗](#)
67. See the similar notion in Ptolemy, *Flor.* 5.1. [↗](#)
68. See Ptolemy’s three gradations of the Mosaic legislation in the form of (1) God’s own words, (2) Moses’ own words, and (3) the legislation introduced by the elders. [↗](#)
69. *Hom.* 2.5.2–3. [↗](#)
70. *Hom.* 2.12.1. [↗](#)
71. εἰς τὴν τῶν πραγμάτων ζητησιν καὶ εὗρεσιν ἡναγκάσθηεν ἐλθεῖν (*Hom.* 1.2.3). [↗](#)
72. See *Hom.* 1.3-8. [↗](#)

73. *Hom.* 1.4.6. It should be noted that at no point is Clement grappling with the question of whether God *exists*.[↗]
74. *Hom.* 1.19.2–3. Stoic terminology is evoked by the phrase φαντασίαν λαμβάνειν. See, e.g., Diogenes Laertius (*Vit. philos.* 7.45); *SVF*1, fr. 58, 484; *SVF*2, fr. 53. For the apologetic theme of sophistic relativism and uncertainty on the part of philosophers, see Lactantius (c. 250–325), *Inst.* 1.7–11; 3.1–10; 4.1–8. For this theme, Lactantius is dependent on a (now lost) work of Cicero in which a certain Q. Hortensius Hortalus (114–49 bce) was the main speaker. For Cicero’s *Hortensius*, see L. Straume-Zimmermann, *Ciceros Hortensius* (Bern: Herbert Lang, 1976). An introduction and commentary is also provided by A. Grilli, *Hortensius* (Milan: Cisalpino, 1962).[↗]
75. *Hom.* 1.7.7.[↗]
76. *Hom.* 1.6.2.[↗]
77. This is in keeping with the linkage between knowledge of God and ethical obedience, as put forth in the Old Testament and in extrabiblical Jewish and rabbinic writings.[↗]
78. *Hom.* 1.7.2–5.[↗]
79. *Hom.* 1.18.1–4. Note the Stoic terminology evoked by the phrase προλήψει οὐκ ὀρθῇ.[↗]
80. *Hom.* 1.19.1, 4, 8. See *Hom.* 3.11–15, 54.[↗]
81. See *Hom.* 1.18–19.3.[↗]
82. See Dio Chrysostom, *Dei cogn.* 12:39–47.[↗]
83. *Hom.* 2.6.3.[↗]
84. *Hom.* 1.19.2–4.[↗]
85. See Shuve (“Doctrine of the False Pericopes,” 440): “Central to the text’s epistemology is the decisive opposition between philosophy and prophetic revelation. The former is rejected because it rests on the arrogant assumptions that humans possess all the tools they need in order to acquire knowledge of eternal matters. . . . As Clement learns by experience and Peter explicitly points out, it is impossible for people to learn truth apart from divine revelation.” See also Philo (*Spec.* 2.165–167) and Josephus (*C. Ap.* 2.168, 257, 281), for whom Greek philosophy cannot attain to the whole truth, for this is found only in Moses and in the revelations he received from God.[↗]
86. See above, ch. 4. See also Nicole Kelley, *Knowledge and Religious Authority in the Pseudo-Clementines: Situating the Recognitions in Fourth-Century Syria* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 57–81.[↗]
87. *Hom.* 15.5.3. The Homilist’s predilection in this passage (and elsewhere) for prophecy over against philosophy and for revelation beyond reason finds antecedents in the writings of Justin Martyr. See Craig D.

- Allert, *Revelation, Truth, Canon and Interpretation: Studies in Justin Martyr's Dialogue with Trypho* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), esp. 63–77.
88. *Hom.* 1.19.4–8. See also *Hom.* 2.5–6.
 89. See above, *Hom.* 1.19.4–8.
 90. In this regard what Eric Osborn has observed in his study of Clement of Alexandria applies equally well to the Homilist: “God, we are told . . . in *Stromateis* V, gave us life and reason; he wished that our life be both reasonable and good. From Justin’s *logos spermatikos* onwards, this was a constant theme of early Christian thought: reason and goodness stand together” (*Clement of Alexandria* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005], 191).
 91. See, e.g., Philo, *Leg.* 2.1; *Somn.* 1.73; Roberto Radice, “Philo’s Theology and Theory of Creation,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Philo* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 124–31.
 92. *Hom.* 3.45.4. Only in this passage is the term τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ χειρόγραφον attested to as referring to creation (lit., “heaven,” ὁ οὐρανός).
 93. Hans Joachim Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte des Judenchristentums* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1949), 154.
 94. *Hom.* 3.42.3. See the words of Alain Le Boulluec (“Roman pseudo-clémentin: *Homélies*,” in *Écrits apocryphes chrétiens*, ed. Pierre Geoltrain and Jean-Daniel Kaestli [Paris: Gallimard, 2005], 1299n42.3), “Le recours à un critère extérieur aux Écritures, la foi en l’unicité de Dieu, créatur, dissipe les concessions provisoires faits par Pierre en *Hom.* III, 41, 4 et 42, 1 et conduit à la thèse affirmée en 46, qui répond à question relative à l’écrivain biblique (41, 2).”
 95. *Hom.* 3.48.1. It should be noted that the harmony criterion is not limited only to sayings “concerning God” *per se*. *Hom.* 3.42.3 makes this clear by its reference to ὅσαι τῶν γραφῶν φωναί.
 96. *Hom.* 3.45.3.
 97. See also *Hom.* 2.45.
 98. *Hom.* 3.46.
 99. In addition to *Hom.* 3.42.3, see also 2.43–46 and 2.48.2, where such texts are false “not only because the passage speaks against God, but because it *really is* false” (ὅτι μόνον κατὰ τοῦ θεοῦ εἴρηται, ἀλλ’ ὅτι ὄντως ψευδὴς ἐστίν). According to 3.51.3, Jesus intimated which parts do not *actually* belong to the law (ἐσήμανεν μὴ ὄντα τοῦ ὄντως νόμου).
 100. For an overview of the Antiochene school, see Manlio Simonetti, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church: An Historical Introduction to Patristic Exegesis* (New York: T&T Clark, 2001), 67–77.
 101. Recent scholarship in particular has become increasingly interested in situating the Pseudo-Clementines within a fourth-century Syrian context.

- See, e.g., Shuve, “Doctrine of the False Pericopes”; Han Jan Willem Drijvers, “Adam and the True Prophet in the Pseudo-Clementines,” in *History and Religion in Late Antique Syria* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1994); Annette Yoshiko Reed, “‘Jewish Christianity’ after the ‘Parting of the Ways’: Approaches to Historiography and Self-Definition in the Pseudo-Clementines,” in *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003); Kelley, *Knowledge and Religious Authority*.⁴
102. The English translation given here is that of Robert C. Hill, *Diodore of Tarsus: Commentary on Psalms 1–51* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 62 (italics original; the underlining is mine).⁴
103. Sten Hidal, “Exegesis in the Antiochene School,” in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation*, vol. 1, part 1, *Antiquity*, ed. Magne Sæbø (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1996), 563.⁴
104. Theodoret of Cyrrhus, Ps. 1–150 (PG 80.989.34–992.9). The English translation given here is that of Robert C. Hill, Theodoret of Cyrus: *Commentary on the Psalms, Psalms 1–72*, Fathers of the Church (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 133 (italics, underlining mine).⁴
105. *Hom.* 3.39.1.⁴
106. See also *Hom.* 16.6.2, where Simon claims that the serpent “made them able to see” (αὐτοὺς ἀναβλέψαι ἐποίησεν). Augustine (Civ. 14.17) attests to some in his own day who believed Adam was created blind: “Neque enim caeci creati erant, ut inperitum uulgus opinatur.”⁴
107. *Hom.* 3.42.4.⁴
108. *Hom.* 3.42.5.⁴
109. *Hom.* 3.41.4–42.2.⁴
110. See Flor. 6.2–3.⁴
111. *Hom.* 3.42.3.⁴
112. See Origen, Comm. in Jo. 2.172; Sel. Deut. (PG 12:808A); Philo, Decal. 44; QE 2.28; Theodoret, Interp. in Ep. (PG 82:776D); Eusebius, Praep. ev. 8.10.13.⁴
113. Origen here says “Exodus,” but the lemma eliciting his comment is actually from Deuteronomy.⁴
114. Origen, Comm. Jo. 2.171–73.⁴
115. Joseph W. Trigg, Origen (New York: Routledge, 1998), 8.⁴
116. Eusebius, HE 6.18.1. Jerome (Vir. ill., 56, 61) says Ambrose had been a Marcionite before Origen converted him.⁴
117. See Irenaeus, Haer. 3.11.7. Elaine Pagels has identified John’s Gospel as the favorite of especially the Valentinians. See her *The Johannine Gospel*

- in Gnostic Exegesis: Heracleon's Commentary on John (New York: Abingdon, 1973), 16. [↩](#)
118. Ronald E. Heine, Origen: Commentary on the Gospel According to John Books 1–10, Fathers of the Church (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1989), 6–7. See Joseph W. Trigg, Origen: The Bible and Philosophy in the Third-Century Church (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1983), 149. [↩](#)
 119. From Tertullian, Marc. 2.29.4. The English translation given here is that of Ernest Evans, Tertullian: Adversus Marcionem (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 169. [↩](#)
 120. Tertullian, Marc. 4.1.11. The translation given here is that of Evans, Tertullian, 262. Tertullian also mentions Marcion's reference to that "darkness which Christ was sent to disperse" (*immo in tenebris Creatoris, quibus discutiendis erat missus*, Marc. 4.22.2). [↩](#)
 121. *Hom.* 3.45.3. See Exod. 10:23; Deut. 4:11; Ps. 17:10-13. [↩](#)
 122. See *Hom.* 3.45.1–3. The rejection of animal sacrifice is based on a particular understanding of the place name given in Num. 11:34. I will examine the Homilist's interpretation of Num. 11:33-34 below. [↩](#)
 123. Schoeps, Jewish Christianity, 122. Schoeps explains the dialogue between Simon and Peter as directed against "the whole of Gnosticism," whereby Simon stands for Marcion. [↩](#)
 124. *Hom.* 10.1.2. Those who would entertain such notions are liable to eternal punishment (see *Hom.* 3.38.3). [↩](#)
 125. *Hom.* 3.38.3. See Marcion's "unknowable Father" (Tertullian, Marc. 5.16). [↩](#)
 126. See *Hom.* 3.3. [↩](#)
 127. *Hom.* 3.38.1. [↩](#)
 128. See *Hom.* 3.2.3. [↩](#)
 129. *Hom.* 6.25.1. See also *Hom.* 6.24.1–3. [↩](#)
 130. *Hom.* 2.40.1. [↩](#)
 131. *Hom.* 2.42.2. Cf. the translation given by Le Boulluec (1272), "Comment pourrait-il donner un maître unique à son âme et devenir saint s'il a préjugé qu'il y a de nombreux dieux et non un seul?" Le Boulluec comments on the phrase donner un maître unique à son âme with these words, "littéralement: avoir une âme monarchique, c'est-à-dire soumise au Dieu unique, à la monarchie divine. . . . Autre traduction possible, une âme qui règne seule, donc maîtresse du corps" (p. 1272n42.4, italics mine). [↩](#)
 132. *Hom.* opif. 4.18–22. [↩](#)
 133. *Hom.* opif. 4.23–27. [↩](#)
 134. *Hom.* opif. 4.30–39. [↩](#)

135. For which, see the discussion (below) on *Hom.* 16.10.1–10. [↩](#)
136. See *Hom.* 16.7.2. [↩](#)
137. Other passages cited from outside the Pentateuch include Isa. 49:18; 45:21; 44:6. [↩](#)
138. Compare this saying to number 6 above. There is some inconsistency here; both Simon and Peter include Deut. 10:17 in their lists. [↩](#)
139. *Hom.* 16.9.4. [↩](#)
140. Schoeps (*Jewish Christianity*, 124) attributes this passage to a “specifically anti-Marcionite polemic.” According to Schoeps, this passage characterizes “the procedure followed by Marcion and other Gnostics of basing their teaching on biblical citations.” [↩](#)
141. *Ep. Petr.* 1.4. See also *Rec.* 10.42.1–4. [↩](#)
142. See *Hom.* 2.38.2; see also *Hom.* 16.21.3, ὁ κατὰ τοῦ θεοῦ πρὸς πειρασμὸν ἀνθρώπων λόγος. [↩](#)
143. See also *Hom.* 3.7.2. See also m. Sanh. 4.5. [↩](#)
144. See Stephen Everson, “Epicurean Psychology” in *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy*, ed. K. Algra et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 543–46. [↩](#)
145. Christopher Gill, *The Structured Self in Hellenistic and Roman Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 3. In the first part of his book, Gill explores what he calls “core-centered” or “essence-centered” thinking about the human person, as seen in Plato and Aristotle. The Stoic and Epicurean mode, by contrast, sees the conception of human beings as “cohesive psychophysical and psychological wholes” (4). [↩](#)
146. ἡ ἀνθρώπου μορφή πρὸς τὴν ἐκείνου μορφήν διατετύπεται. A fuller discussion of God’s “shape” is found at *Hom.* 17.7–10. [↩](#)
147. See Schoeps (*Jewish Christianity*, 100), “The abhorrence of bloodshed and any use of blood is a characteristic feature of the Kerygmata Petrou.” [↩](#)
148. See *Hom.* 3.52.1. [↩](#)
149. Porphyry, *Abst.* 2.9. The translation give here is that of Gillian Clark, *Porphyry: On Abstinence from Killing Animals* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000), 58. [↩](#)
150. See, e.g., Strecker, *Das Judenchristentum*, 179–84. [↩](#)
151. Schoeps, *Jewish Christianity*, 84. [↩](#)
152. *Hom.* 3.45.1–2. [↩](#)
153. B. Yoma 33b. [↩](#)
154. B. Yoma 34a. [↩](#)
155. See also 1 Sam. 2:29, καὶ ἵνα τί ἐπέβλεψας ἐπὶ τὸ θυμίαμά μου καὶ εἰς τὴν θυσίαν μου ἀναιδεῖ ὀφθαλμῶ καὶ ἐδόξασας τοὺς υἱούς σου ὑπὲρ ἐμέ ἐνευλογεῖσθαι ἀπαρχῆς πάσης θυσίας Ἰσραὴλ ἔμπροσθέν μου (“Why did

you look with greedy eye at my incense and my sacrifice and honored your sons above me, to bless themselves with the firstfruit of every sacrifice of Israel before me?”).

156. Porphyry, Abst. 2.7.2. See also Aristotle, Eth. nic. 8.1160a 25–7.
157. Porphyry, Abst. 2.33.2–34.2.
158. Origen has a vague reference to the effect that “Celsus would have us offer firstfruits to demons” (ἀπαρχὰς Κέλσος μὲν δαιμονίοις ἀνατιθέναι βούλεται, Cels. 8.34). 1 Sam. 2:29.
159. See *Hom.* 3.52.1.
160. *Hom.* 11.9.5–6.
161. See, e.g., *Hom.* 3.45.1–2; 3.52.1; 18.19.1–3.
162. Likewise, according to *Hom.* 18.22.4, having “affection” toward a deity other than the Creator God is deemed “contrary to nature” (παρὰ φύσιν).
163. See Schoeps (Jewish Christianity, 101), who says that Num.11:30-34 in this regard is “a scriptural proof which, to my knowledge, is unique.”
164. Num. 11:16.
165. Num. 11:17, 25; See also Exod. 24:1, 9-11.
166. Num. 11:31.
167. Strecker (*Das Judenchristentum*, 122) notes the substitute of βουνός for μνήματα, but adds no further comment.
168. Tg. Neof. at Num. 11:35 has “Graves of the Desires”; Tg. Ps.-J. has “Graves of Those Craving Meat.”
169. Lit., “afflicted with fasts” (conflictata ieiuniis).
170. Jejun. 16.1.
171. Eusebius, Onomasticon, in Eusebius’ Werke 3.1, ed. E. Klostermann (GCS 11.1, 1904), 126, 1.6.
172. *Hom.* 8.15.2–4.
173. I ought to point out, however, that this particular usage of φύσις is rare in *Hom.*
174. Schoeps (Jewish Christianity, 106) identifies such food restrictions (together with the purity regulations) as “the areas selected by the Ebionites from the total content of the Torah for intensification beyond Pharisaic halakah.” The notion that the consumption of animal flesh is in some sense “contrary to nature” is typical of ancient vegetarian convictions. Seneca (Ep. 108.22), for example, reports how Sextius taught that “the stuff of luxury [i.e., animal flesh] should be held in check; [Sextius] argued that a varied diet [i.e., one which includes animal flesh] was contrary to good health, and foreign to our bodily makeup” (contrahendam materiam esse luxuriare; colligebat bonae valitudini contraria esse alimenta varia et nostris aliena corporibus). Seneca himself

- took up the practice of abstaining from animal meat for a short time, though eventually he returned to his former eating habits. [↩](#)
175. Leslie Kline, *Sayings of Jesus in the Pseudo-Clementine Homilies*, Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series (Missoula: Society of Biblical Literature, 1975), 167n1. Kline does not, however, make any further comments about τὸ εὖλογον in his study. The precise meaning of τὸ εὖλογον here is not immediately obvious. Liddell and Scott list it as (1) “reasonable, sensible”; (2) “reasonable, fair”; (3) “probable.” G. W. H. Lampe lists it as (1) “rational,” opposite to ἄλογον; (2) “fair, right.” [↩](#)
 176. *Hom.* 3.50–51. [↩](#)
 177. That this agraphon (“Why do you not recognize,” etc.) is also to be understood with reference to the theory of the false pericopes has been noted by both Strecker (*Das Judenchristentum*, 134) and Kline (*Sayings of Jesus*, 167). [↩](#)
 178. *Hom.* 3.50.2. See Strecker, *Das Judenchristentum*, 167. [↩](#)
 179. See *Hom.* 3.10.4, where εὐγνωμοσύνη appears explicitly in the context of an “exegetical” statement: “For the Scriptures are polysemous, in order that no one of those who inquire imprudently may find the truth, but [merely] what he wants to find, since the truth is kept for those who are prudent” (πάντα γὰρ αἱ γραφαὶ λέγουσιν, ἵνα μηδεὶς τῶν ἀγνωμόνως ζητούντων τὸ ἀληθὲς εὕρη, ἀλλ’ ὃ βούλεται, τοῦ ἀληθοῦς τοῖς εὐγνώμοσιν τετηρημένου). See also *Hom.* 16.10.1–4 for a similar description of Scripture’s polysemous aspect. [↩](#)
 180. *Hom.* 3.52 will go on to explain that such passages include those dealing with sacrifices, the monarchy, and “false” prophecies. [↩](#)
 181. A search for τὸ εὖλογον in the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* generates the following results (the numbers listed in parenthesis indicate the number of times the phrase appears). Potentially relevant “Alexandrian” sources include Origen (31), Gregory of Nyssa (9), Gregory of Nazianzus (9), Eusebius (8), Athanasius (6), Basil (4), Didymus (4), Philo (2), and Clement of Alexandria (1). Potentially relevant “Antiochene” sources include John Chrysostom (7), Theodoret (5), Procopius (2), and Cyril (1). As for the Pseudo-Clementine Homilies, τὸ εὖλογον is used 12 times. [↩](#)
 182. Philo, *Det.* 94–95.1. [↩](#)
 183. Philo’s use of τὸ εὖλογον here is indeed the opposite to the Aristotelian ἄλογον (*Poet.* 25, 1460 b 23). See Mitchell Carroll, *Aristotle’s Poetics*, c. XXV, in *the Light of the Homeric Scholia* (Baltimore: Murphy, 1895). [↩](#)
 184. See Luke 11:5. [↩](#)
 185. Origen, *Comm. Matt.* 11.8.53–63. [↩](#)
 186. See ch. 5 above. Also noteworthy is the fact that both Origen and the Homilist employ τὸ εὖλογον in connection with accounts of

Jesus engaged in disputes with his Jewish contemporaries (i.e., Sadducees and/or Pharisees).[↩](#)

187. See Isa. 66:21.[↩](#)

188. See Isa. 66:19.[↩](#)

189. Eusebius, Comm. Isa. 2.58.110–127.[↩](#)

190. Theodoret of Cyrrhus, Is. 13.51–59.[↩](#)

191. The term τὸ εὐλογον appears most frequently in Alexandrian exegetical sources, and the lion's share goes to Origen (owing in part to the sheer volume of his literary output). However, the term appears to be used far less in the Antiochene sources. While both exegetical traditions, in their own ways, show an interest in “what is rational” in the Scriptures, the Alexandrians use the specific term τὸ εὐλογον far more often than do the Antiochenes. And yet, next to Origen, the term appears most frequently in none other than the Pseudo-Clementine Homilies.[↩](#)

192. *Hom.* 3.45.4.[↩](#)

Summary and Conclusion

Charles Bigg wrote long ago,

The interest of the *Homilies* is mainly doctrinal and historical. Where and by whom were these strange doctrines preached? What is their origin and lineage? [What is] their relation to the Gnostic heresies, and to the Catholic Church? . . . The overthrow of the Tübingen School by the critical and historical methods, of which Dr. Harnack is one of the most illustrious living representatives, has relegated the *Homilies* to a place of inferior interest. Yet it is, and must remain, a book of very great importance, and any fresh light that we can get upon its date, meaning, and authorship will be of value. [\[1\]](#)

I have attempted in this study to shed some fresh light on the matter of the Homilist's exegetical theory that guides his interpretation of the Pentateuch, and we are now in a position to summarize the findings of our study. We can enumerate the essence of the Homilist's exegetical method at the theoretical level in the following way, beginning with the Homilist's basic exegetical assumptions about the Pentateuch. In chapter 2, I identified two such assumptions: (1) The Homilist takes it as a given that the Pentateuch exists for moral "benefit"/"instruction" (and not, say, for "entertainment"). As such, the Pentateuch is deemed "useful" and serves as the proper locus for "piety" and "temperate living." (2) At the same time, the Scriptures are also characterized by a "sinewy" (or "polysemous") quality, which allows for the very real possibility of divergent interpretations. This latter circumstance is not *inherently* problematic, though it is

potentially problematic to the extent that divergent and/or undesirable interpretations may result. One manifestation of Scripture’s “sinewy” quality can be seen in its capacity to display “contradictory” statements:

καὶ ὁ Πέτρος· Ὅτι ταῖς αὐτὸν κακῶς λεγούσαις
φωναῖς τὰ ἐναντία γέγραπται, οὗ ἕνεκεν οὐδ’
ὁπότερον βεβαιωθῆναι δύναται.

Then Peter said, “Because *opposite things* are written that are contrary to those sayings which speak evil of God. Therefore neither one can be substantiated [i.e., by itself].”^[2]

And again,

οὕτως αἱ τοῦ τὸν οὐρανὸν κτίσαντος θεοῦ διάβολοι
φωναὶ καὶ ὑπὸ τῶν σὺν αὐταῖς ἐναντίων φωνῶν
ἀκυροῦνται καὶ ὑπὸ τῆς κτίσεως ἐλέγχονται, κτλ.

The sayings [i.e., the “false pericopes”] accusatory of God who made the heaven are both rendered void by the *opposite sayings* that are alongside them, and are censured by creation, etc.^[3]

Now, Scripture’s contradictory statements are not themselves a problem requiring a solution. The Homilist does not seem to feel the need for resolving contradictions *per se*. Like the fact of Scripture’s polysemous quality in general, the presence of contradictory statements can (at worst) create the necessary conditions for divergent interpretations, and (at best) function as a mechanism to “neutralize” other offensive texts, for example, “sayings accusatory of God” or “sayings that speak evil of God.” In short, the Homilist assumes the Pentateuch provides moral instruction and even

what is ethically “rational” (τὸ εὐλογον), but its expressions are not always made in an unambiguous, straightforward manner.

In addition to these two assumptions regarding the nature of the Pentateuch, I also identified in chapter 2 a fundamental principle that underlies the Homilist’s theory of exegesis, namely, that the allegorical method of interpretation is not to be applied to the Mosaic legislation. Whatever moral benefit, whatever ethical instruction the Pentateuch offers—these are not to be attained by the use of the allegorical approach. Nor is allegorism to be used as the safeguard against whatever potential divergent interpretations there may be that take advantage of Scripture’s polysemous character. No, the *sensus litteralis* is to be upheld. I noted the importance of *Rec.* 10.42.1–4 in particular for its unambiguous, explicit statement on the principled rejection of all allegorism. As for the *Homilies* themselves, we saw how the Appion-Clement debates of *Hom.* 4–7 offer a clear example of the Homilist’s estimation of the value of the allegorical method in relationship to Greek myth and how it is to be kept from being used on the Pentateuch. Part of the Homilist’s aversion to the allegorical method is due to the close association between allegorism and pagan Greek mythology. We saw that, when it comes to Greek myth, Clement never comes out against the allegorical method per se; the allegorical defense is simply “set aside as irrelevant.”^[4] As far as the “law of the Greeks” (Greek *paideia*) is concerned, its *content* is rejected outright, while the *method* of allegorical interpretation is declared *irrelevant*. Conversely, regarding the “law of the God” (the Pentateuch), allegorism is categorically rejected, while the content is itself retained and affirmed.^[5] Even in the case of Simon Magus, we are told how he “allegorizes” the Scriptures. Unfortunately, the Homilist does not develop Simon’s allegorical activity in any detail, or in a way comparable to what we find in the Appion-Clement debates of *Hom.* 4–7. Even so, the rejection of allegorism as a matter of principle is made explicit in *Rec.* 10, developed in *Hom.* 4–7, and is then implicitly maintained throughout *Hom.* The Homilist is consistent in his stance against allegorism as a matter of principle.

In chapter 3, I then examined the Homilist’s theory that the Pentateuch, as it has come to exist in its written form, contains troublesome texts—namely, theologically difficult sayings and morally offensive episodes. Certain passages do not, at first glance, appear to be “in harmony” either

with God or his rationally ordered creation. This circumstance presents a challenge for those who would, like the Homilist, derive “benefit” from the Mosaic legislation, or look for what is “reasonable” therein. Compounding the problem is the already “sinewy” quality of the Scriptures noted above, making it all too easy for interpreters to simply “find what they are looking for” in the text of Scripture:

πολλοῖς γὰρ καὶ διαφόροις τύποις εἰκουῖαι πρόκεινται.
ἕκαστος οὖν κηρῶ εἰκουῖαν τὴν αὐτοῦ προαίρεσιν
ἔχων, περιβλεψάμενος αὐτὰς καὶ πάντα εὐρὼν ἐν
αὐταῖς ὅποιον θεὸν εἶναι θέλει, τὴν (ὥς ἔφην) κηρῶ
εἰκουῖαν προαίρεσιν ἐπιβαλὼν ἀπομάσσεται.

For [the Scriptures] are set out like many diverse typecasts. Each person, having his own predisposition [at the outset], then examines the Scriptures, and, once he finds everything in them, he impresses upon them his own predisposition—which (as I said) is like wax—and he forges whatever sort of God he so desires.^[6]

On top of all this, the ban on allegorism only aggravates the whole matter. How, then, are the Scriptures to be handled? What best accounts for the presence of those undesirable passages of Scripture in the first place, and what is the proper way to deal with them? In short, what is the best method to attain the goal of a correct interpretation? The first step given by the Homilist in the theoretical solution to the problem is the notion of the false pericopes, which seeks to give an account for the presence of Scripture’s problematic texts. Moses did not himself commit God’s revelation to writing, because Moses could see in advance what would be the troubled fate of the written Torah. So, in an effort to keep it safe, he communicated the Torah orally to the seventy elders who, in turn, became the first links in the chain of the Torah’s oral transmission. Those who would eventually commit the Mosaic legislation to writing, long after Moses died, were not themselves prophets. As such, they were not privy to the oral tradition. This

is why it is that the Torah in its written form is permeated with “false pericopes.”

Even so, although the theory of the false pericopes offers an account for the *presence* of theologically difficult and morally offensive passages, the theory itself does not automatically bring *resolution to such problems*. As the Homilist puts it:

πᾶν ψεῦσμα, κᾶν μυρίαῖς ἐπινοίαις βοηθῆται, τὸν
ἔλεγχον κᾶν ἐν μακρῷ χρόνῳ λαβεῖν ἔχει.

Every falsehood, even if it should be aided by myriads of clever notions, must [eventually] be refuted, even if it takes a very long time. [\[7\]](#)

The theory of the false pericopes is thus only the first step toward the Homilist’s solution to the problems outlined above. It still remains that one must be able to identify, evaluate, and control Scripture’s falsehoods. Hence, the Homilist’s unique exegetical method is put into effect.

Not only does the Homilist offer an account of the presence of Scripture’s falsehoods (including their origins, character, and function), but he also presents a practical method to deal with them. In order to do so, the Homilist draws on both “traditional” and “philosophical” resources. The essence of the Homilist’s exegetical method, then, is this: The Pentateuch in its written form is to be evaluated with reference to a unified set of three external criteria: (1) the True Prophet’s teaching (“tradition”), (2) the oral tradition (“tradition”), and (3) the harmony criterion (“philosophy”). Thus (1) the words of Jesus are appealed to for the primary purpose of adjudicating which passages are true and which are false. What dominates are the recollections of the True Prophet’s words *as spoken*, not *as written*—that is, not as they appear in any one particular Gospel. The emphasis on the Prophet’s spoken words can be seen as an expression of the parallel circumstance wherein higher status is accorded to the Mosaic legislation *as accompanied by the oral tradition*, over against the Mosaic legislation as it exists in its written form, contaminated as it is with falsehoods. (2)

Independent of the True Prophet's own teaching is the oral tradition. An essential component of the Homilist's theory of the false pericopes is the notion that Moses had communicated the law "with its solutions" (σὺν ταῖς ἐπιλύσεσιν) orally to the seventy elders, who became the first links in a chain of oral transmission. This oral tradition secures a proper understanding of Scripture, with reference to Scripture's polysemous quality in general and Scripture's falsehoods in particular. It is significant that the Homilist, to the extent that he is a "Christian," looks not to the *regula fidei* espoused by, say, Irenaeus, but to something more akin to the oral tradition as it was seen by the rabbis. (3) Finally, that philosophical principle embraced by the Homilist—that the Mosaic legislation exists "in agreement" or "in harmony" with both creation and with God—finds expression as an exegetical method whereby the Scriptures are checked against creation. In order to verify "what is rational" (τὸ εὐλογον), it is vital that one look to God's orderly creation as a criterion. Scriptures that do not square with "what is rational" are readily recognized as false and handled appropriately.

Any approach to Scripture insistent on its "literal sense" is confronted by the difficulty of how to handle those "problematic" and "offensive" passages.^[8] To reject allegorism in this regard is to reject one viable option for handling such problems. In this way, the Homilist is unique for his particular response to this circumstance by avoiding allegorism and asserting the rather sophisticated theory of the false pericopes. Even so, it is one thing to assert that the Pentateuch contains falsehoods; it is another thing to actually identify and evaluate them. How is this to be done? Drawing on "traditional" and "philosophical" resources, the Homilist envisions three distinct external criteria to deal with the Pentateuch's enmeshed falsehoods: the True Prophet's teaching and the oral tradition, in cooperation with the harmony criterion, with a view to identifying "what is rational" in the Scriptures.

In sum, the primary contribution of our study has been the isolation and identification of the most salient features of the Homilist's exegetical theory as it emerges from the text of the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*. We are now in a better position to see how, when confronted with problematic texts, the Homilist evades resorting to the allegorical method and instead uses the three external criteria of the True Prophet's teaching, the oral

tradition, and the harmony criterion. With these in hand, the Homilist would read and interpret the law of God, as it was known to him in its written form.

1. Charles Bigg, “The Clementine Homilies,” in *Studia Biblica et Ecclesiastica: Essays in Biblical and Patristic Criticism* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1890), 157–58. [↩](#)
2. *Hom.* 3.42.1. [↩](#)
3. *Hom.* 3.46. [↩](#)
4. See James Tate, “Plato and Allegorical Interpretation,” *CQ* 23 (1929): 147. [↩](#)
5. That is, the “true” portions of the Pentateuch are retained. For there are indeed certain “false” portions, which are to be rejected. [↩](#)
6. *Hom.* 16.10.2–3. A similar circumstance is described in *Hom.* 3.9. [↩](#)
7. *Hom.* 3.17.6. [↩](#)
8. The difficulty of how to deal with “offensive” passages of Scripture continues in our own day. C.f., e.g., the work of Eric A. Seibert, *Disturbing Divine Behavior: Troubling Old Testament Images of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 169–282, 211. When it comes to Scripture’s “problematic” passages, Seibert calls for a differentiation between the “textual God” and the “actual God.” [↩](#)

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